

Analyzing Community Recruitment Efforts within the Chickasha Fire Department

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Certification Statement

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

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Abstract

The Chickasha Fire Department previously had success with diversity and inclusion while at the same time represented the demographic of the community in which they serve. The problem was the Chickasha Fire Department had not identified methods to recruit a diverse group of firefighter candidates that are representative of the community. The purpose of this research study was to identify methods to recruit a diverse group of firefighter candidates that would be representative of the community. To achieve the purpose of this research study, the descriptive research methodology was utilized to answer the following research questions:

- 1) What are the formal and informal methods of recruitment currently being utilized by the Chickasha Fire Department?
- 2) What are other organizations doing to increase diversity within their organization?
- 3) Are there programs that could be developed that would promote the Chickasha Fire Department as a career choice?

Procedures used for this Applied Research Project were a personal interview guided by a questionnaire, a national survey, and a literature review of best practices in recruiting for diversity. The results of the interview, survey, and literature review identified methods to recruit a diverse group of firefighter candidates that would be representative of the community. Recommendations were to develop a recruitment plan that was inclusive of the entire community; utilizing explorer programs, colleges, minority leaders, and a physical assessment that was job task oriented.

Keywords: diversity, inclusion, recruitment, minority, women, physical ability.

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Introduction

It is easy to see that the United States is one of the most diverse countries in the world. As such, there should be similar diversity within the job force whether it is healthcare, sales, business, or professional trades. While one would expect that each career field would naturally represent the diverse population that it serves, there is disconnect between community demographics and those that are employed in the job market.

The United States fire service, while taking some steps forward, is really lagging behind in representing the communities in which they represent. The fire service currently boasts 306,000 firefighters and of those, 3500 are women, 11,400 are black or African American, 700 are Asian, and 8,500 are Hispanic or Latino (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2013). These national statistics correlate with local government statistics in much the same way. As the national demographic constantly undergoes change, primarily due to the rapid influx of immigrants, the state and local demographics are changing with it. This brings on new challenges for first responders in areas far removed from large cities. Identifying these changes in demographics does very little to ease the responsibility on first responders and the duty it has to the public. Instead, there is a need to become culturally competent; developing increased awareness, knowledge, and skills that place a high value on multicultural inclusion.

The problem was that the Chickasha Fire Department had not identified methods to recruit a diverse group of firefighter candidates that are representative of the community. The City of Chickasha has a female, Black, and Hispanic community that is 52.1%, 7.1%, and 6.5%

respectively (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Table 1 identifies a complete demographic representation.

Table 1: Diversity and Gender of Chickasha, Oklahoma

Ethnicity	Percentage of Population
White	80%
Black or African American	7.1%
American Indian	4.8%
Asian	0.5%
Two or More Races	5.4%
Hispanic or Latino	6.5%
Female	52.1%

Source: Census.org

Knowing this, the fire department has never been proactive about recruiting these groups and has relied on candidates to show up for the application process. The passive manner of recruitment has discouraged those unlike our own selves to attempt the hiring process with the fire department. The additional side effects of passive recruitment brings about vacancies that must be filled in a rapid manner and with people that have similar skill sets to those personnel that vacated the position. In turn, there is a vicious cycle of word-of-mouth recruitment that prevents any chance for inclusion from other groups that are unlike ourselves.

The purpose of this research study was to identify methods to recruit a diverse group of firefighter candidates that would be representative of the community it serves. The descriptive research method was used to answer the following research questions: a) What are the formal and informal methods of recruitment currently being utilized by the Chickasha Fire Department?

b) What are other organizations doing to increase diversity within their organizations? c) Are there programs that could be developed that would promote the Chickasha Fire Department as a career choice?

Background and Significance

The City of Chickasha Fire and Emergency Medical Service serves a citizen population of just over 16,000 according to the latest census information (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). With the current oil boom, it is estimated that our population has grown to over 25,000. The department covers a 26 square mile first due fire district as well as a 360 square mile EMS district. The county emergency medical service run area increases the population served by another 13,000 people making a citizen potential contact demographic of 29,000 to 38,000. The area is considered rural and encompasses a considerable amount of farmland. The largest employers are the oil and gas industry followed closely by healthcare facilities and the local school systems (<http://www.chickashachamber.com/facts.html>).

The 38 member department is responsible for advanced life support care and transport of medical and trauma patients. In addition, the department handles fire, hazardous materials, fire prevention, and fire investigation duties. The department utilizes three engines, one squad, one brush unit, and one quint to respond to and mitigate fire related emergencies. The middle third of Grady County and the City of Chickasha receive emergency medical services out of two stations and four advanced life support ambulances.

While the department continues to expand services being provided to the community in the areas of public education and prevention, emergency medical services, fire suppression, and hazardous materials, it has yet to expand the multicultural inclusion process that would be the

result of an effective recruitment process. The result is identified in Table 2 that shows the department is unable to recruit minority populations that are present within the community.

Table 2: Diversity and Gender of the Chickasha Fire Department

Ethnicity	Percentage of Workforce
White	92.2%
Black or African American	00%
American Indian	00%
Asian	00%
Two or More Races	7.8%
Hispanic or Latino	00%
Female	00%

Source: Departmental Survey

The current recruitment issues are the result of years of hiring for candidates that are at the same level and experience as the personnel that they are replacing. This practice lends itself to friends of friends getting the word out that we are looking to hire experienced paramedic that can go onto shift in a relatively fast manner. In much the same manner, the ability of the department to have a consistent recruitment process has allowed gaps in minimum requirements that resulted in a firefighter candidate being hired that was claustrophobic. In the end, the probationary firefighter had to be released but adding the fact that she was a female set the department up for the resulting legal situation that ensued.

This issue is an adaptive issue in that it will require the changing of hearts and minds at both the city administration and fire administration levels. The Executive Development Program at the National Fire Academy identifies adaptive challenges as those that require change in the

belief systems and behaviors ((Executive Fire Officer Program, 2004). This current challenge faced by the Chickasha Fire Department clearly falls under this definition due to the needed behavior change. To get the need buy in from community members, it will be necessary to show that their fire department actually wants inclusion from the different demographic areas within the city and county as well.

The United States Fire Administration has outlined five goals that move to increase the effectiveness of the fire service as a whole (United States Fire Administration: Strategic Plan, n.d., p. 20). The current challenge facing the Chickasha Fire Department aligns with goal three in that there is a need to improve the fire and emergency services capability for response to and recovery from all hazards. Locally, there is a need to have a partnership with the community that allows for trust and inclusions to the point that they feel their needs are important to the fire department. Being able to respond into a community with responders that share the same beliefs, values, and cultural views adds credibility to the fire service. The future of the Chickasha Fire Department, now more than ever, needs to show that we are a community partner and that we have the ability to share the same beliefs and values and can solve problems by developing inclusive relationships.

Literature Review

The literature review obtained by the researcher focused on the findings of previous research done in the fields of diversity and recruitment. The literature review was conducted to examine: a) governmental recruitment programs established to promote diversity b) formal and informal recruiting practices as they relate to recruiting and hiring of minorities and women into the workforce, c) organizations that have successfully increased diversity, and d) where fire department recruiters are finding minorities and women. Review of published surveys, articles,

books, and journals were the primary source of information. Previous Executive Fire Officer Program (EFOP) research was also paramount in gathering facts as they relate to the changing needs of the fire service.

Being inclusive and having an inclusive workplace is an environment that welcomes and utilizes diversity at all levels and refers to relationships among individuals and groups, employees and customers, and organizations as well as communities Barak (as cited in Bucher, 2015). Inclusion also refers to the process of promoting a sense of belonging and empowerment while involving everyone and valuing their unique talents and contributions (Bucher, 2015).

The researcher identified methods of recruitment at the highest levels of government. The Department of Veteran Affairs has established a “Targeted Outreach” program that is used to broaden the standard outreach and recruitment efforts to attract qualified applicants from identified groups with low participation (Coffee, 2010, p. 10). The Office of Diversity and Inclusion identified several strategies to target minorities such as: publications, media outlets, at job fairs or other events that serve minorities, women, and people with disabilities (Coffee, 2010). The Office of Diversity and Inclusion developed a “recruitment best practice” guide that identifies recruiting practices such as: announce vacancies to a broad and diverse recruitment source; employee targeted outreach strategies to reach groups that have historically had a less than expected participation rate; utilize special hiring authorities or internship programs (Coffee, 2010).

Continuing with diversity and inclusion efforts at the government level, the Department of Defense has rolled out their 2012-2017 Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan (*DoD Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan*, 2012). The strategic plan provides an overarching direction, encourages direct leadership involvement and commitment, and creates alignment allowing the

Department of Defense to approach diversity and inclusion efforts in a coordinated, collaborative, and integrated manner supported by measurable outcomes (*DoD Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan*, 2012, p. 4). From the DoD plan comes three goals that establish the framework of the plan. The goals include: ensure leadership commitment, employ an aligned strategic outreach effort, and to develop, mentor, and retain top talent (*DoD Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan*, 2012, p. 4). The Department of Defense premises this entire strategic plan as a battle for talent in an emerging diverse market to attract, recruit, and retain a highly-skilled workforce.

The researcher identified a diversity and inclusion program within the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) which highlights the department's strategic plan to create a more diverse workforce. Within the department's strategic plan are three goals to guide the recruitment process which are: 1) secure a high-performing workforce drawn from all segments of American society; 2) cultivate a culture that encourages collaboration, flexibility, and fairness; and 3) institutionalize diversity and inclusion as a key strategic priority (*Commitment to a diverse workforce*, 2015).

In order to evaluate diversity programs, it is necessary to establish the methods in which firefighter candidates are first approached to enter the fire service. Two prevalent forms of recruiting are formal and informal approaches aimed at reaching diverse populations as well as the general citizenry. While most departments have some formal part of the hiring process, usually required by law, it is the informal approach that can have the greatest effect. There are side effects that come with informal recruiting that are worth mentioning. Much of what gets employers into a hiring rut is the persistent use of informal recruitment. A research paper implemented by the International Association of Firefighters found that informal recruitment is

often described as word-of-mouth hiring and usually done by some means of social networking (Fox, Hornick, & Hardin, 2006). The report described some pitfalls of informal recruitment as being exclusionary in that there is a likelihood of missing a diverse group of candidates that may not hear about the opening. Additionally, the report identifies that informal, word of mouth, recruiting is ineffective at recruiting minorities and women unless it is targeted and part of an innovative plan (Fox et al., 2006, p. 4)

According to work session notes of the Poudre Fire Authority, Board of Directors, all members are expected to actively be part of the recruitment process by handing out contact cards with firefighting and testing information to people they encounter (DeMint, 2013). The work session notes continue to add that this informal process is successful and continues to work (DeMint, 2013). To take the process from informal to formal, the department takes the information provided by firefighter candidates and measures the success of the diversity efforts in relation to the efforts by firefighters and the contact cards (DeMint, 2013). In another example of informal and formal recruiting, DeMint explains that relationships are formed with the community's multicultural formal and informal leaders in an informal, personal manner (2013).

When discussing the formal and informal approaches to fire department recruiting, the efforts made by the members of the department seem to come to the forefront. Information gathered from a Lawrence-Douglas County Fire Medical, human resources document, describes the current practice of utilizing Lawrence-Douglas County Fire Medical and its members, formally and informally, in the recruitment process as an effective way to lend real-life firefighting experience to prospective candidates (Lawrence Douglas County Fire Medical

[LDCFM], n.d.). LDCFM identified the explorer post as a vital tool in the recruitment process for younger candidates.

In a grant document released by the Minnesota Department of Public Safety, officials found that, just as it is in the fire department sector, there was a shortage of minorities and women that were enrolled in law enforcement public safety related courses (Minnesota Department of Public Safety, 2013). As a result, the Minnesota DPS took steps to start an informal recruitment process whereas they would attend local community events to promote public safety awareness. On the formal recruitment aspect, the Minnesota DPS issued plans to develop web-based information and establish a formal targeted recruitment plan (Minnesota Department of Public Safety, 2013). Another informal recruitment step taken by the Minnesota DPS was to develop a relationship with the Minnesota Youth Leadership Academy for which they can provide mentoring to young black or African American male youth (Minnesota Department of Public Safety, 2013).

A news release issued by the former fire chief of Anne Arundel County Fire Department sited issues that can arise from improper use of formal and informal recruiting practices after an almost all white recruit academy. Fire Chief Michael Cox identified two methods of recruitment that were both formal, using the website, and informal, word of mouth, that had failed in an attempt to garner a diverse workforce (Cox, 2013). Chief Cox stated that their recent recruit class suggests that they cannot expect recruits to come to us just because they post a job and that they must engage in active outreach in all communities telling recruits why they should become Anne Arundel County firefighters (2013). The department spelled out how they would formalize their recruitment practices in a diversity initiative led by prominent black leaders from within the community. The newly developed roadmap for diversity recruitment identified, what were

called at the time, non-traditional methods to recruit minorities and women. Today the non-traditional methods such as social media, public schools, and fire service organizations are all considered traditional and routine resources for emergency service recruiters.

Building upon the success of a formal and informal recruiting process is by far the ultimate goal of any hiring process. This is true whether the hiring process is in a private industry or within the prevue of fire and emergency services. Success can be measured in many forms. An online recruitment webpage of the Madison Fire Department in Wisconsin boast to be the number one fire department when it comes to achieving diversity in the absence any type of formal decree or legal mandate (Davis, n.d.). The website references a 2006 study into diversity that was completed by the International Association of Firefighters.

Information obtained from the online version of Emergency Management identified the successful inclusion of women into the field of emergency management. The article describes the success as being the way women have changed the day to day operations in emergency management as a function of emergency services (Holdeman, 2011). The article notes that value of the different perspective women bring to emergency management as well as the spirit of collaboration that typically forms between individuals and agencies as each attempts to procure funding (Holdeman, 2011, para. 2). Holdeman adds that while emergency management has done well to include women, they should focus on minorities in the future.

Female candidates are faced with other deterrents other than just lack of recruitment. Due to the differences in size and strength, female candidates can be at a significant disadvantage when it comes to passing minimum physical fitness requirements even when they are physically fit. One accepted approach to recruiting women into the fire service is to attract women who have prior military experience or who are adventurous (California Fire Fighter Joint

Apprenticeship Committee website, n.d.). Another accepted recruiting practice is the use of the Candidate Physical Ability Test (CPAT) to test the cardio and strength abilities of firefighter candidates. The CPAT is based off of job analysis and job task surveys (International Association of Firefighters website, n.d.). The goal of the CPAT is to test candidates that are physically qualified to firefighters. The International Association of Firefighters/International Association of Fire Chiefs Joint Labor Management Wellness/Fitness Initiative Taskforce stand on the message that departments should increase the diversity of their workforce by actively recruiting candidates from the community rather than lowering their candidate physical ability standards (International Association of Firefighters website, n.d.).

In the course of trying to implement change, it may become necessary to take control of the playing field as was the case in Berkeley California. The fire department found that even though they had previously had success in recruiting a diverse workforce, recruiting practices had allowed for a decline in minority participation (Pryor, 2010). The department was able to identify factors that directly related to a decline in turnout by members of the African American community as well as women. The department identified that the African American community was being directly affected, more than any other group, due to the fact that African Americans were not prominently found in the paramedic field (Pryor, 2010). Equally affected, the number of women being represented in the recruitment process was declining due to the physical requirement to be hired as a firefighter. The Berkeley Fire Department turned these barriers in recruitment into successes by taking direct control over the outcomes of each minority group. The department started an emergency medical technician program in partnership with the Berkeley Unified School District and the San Francisco Paramedic Association which helped to enhance the diversity of the applicant pool (Pryor, 2010). In addition, the department recruiters

have made it common practice to visit all the credentialed paramedic schools in the region to encourage minorities to apply for fire department positions.

A research article identified that the best recruitment is done by line personnel when making contact with the public (Maize, 2009). The article identifies short public relations assignments as being short in duration with the potential to have large recruiting dividends. The author also identified the negative affect of not having this public relation effort as missing an investment in the community by missing the recruitment effort and limiting the organizations effort to achieve public education (Maize, 2009).

A work session document from the Poudre Fire Department identified the importance of line firefighting personnel when it comes to interacting with the public. As with most departments, the interaction with the public is an important recruiting tool. The Poudre Fire Department elevates the interaction with the public by engaging the firefighters to do informal recruiting by handing out recruitment cards (DeMint, 2013).

Several research studies, (Samuels, 2014; Williams, 2012; and Byers III, 2008), identified common education, colleges and universities, and other educational outlets as an avenue for recruitment, specifically junior high and high school. Samuels (2014) even suggests that recruitment begin at the youth level identifying middle school age youths as a worthy demographic to begin the recruiting process. This age group would be ideal for a fire department explorer post, youth fire academies, and even female only programs.

The researcher identified a previous study that highlighted several outlets for recruiters to reach minorities and women through outlets such as television, newspapers, magazines, internet posting, and radio advertisements (Pinson, 2013, p. 31). Samuels (2014) echoed the findings and

added that the media ads needed to demonstrate women and minorities leading the discussions as a representative of the fire department.

In 2013, FIRE20/20 developed a video series that helped to do targeted recruitment for departments that did not or could not do their own recruitment video (FIRE2020.org website, n.d.). The video series was developed to increase the reach and effectiveness of diversity recruitment and retention to fire departments for little or no cost. As with most video based recruitment, the targeted demographic is those in the generation Y age group of 15 to 25 years old (FIRE2020.org website, n.d.).

In summary, the extensive literature review identified several best practices that the Chickasha Fire Department could expand upon to create a successful recruitment program that is inclusive and diverse. This author was most motivated by the information gained from the Poudre Fire Authority (PFA). The PFA has established unique approaches to reaching their diverse populations that could easily be done by any department with minimal instruction. The department engages every member of the department to help with recruitment by handing out contact cards. While this is a seemingly simple act, the contact card could be one of the most efficient uses of fire department personnel for the purpose of informal recruiting. Partnering with FIRE20/20 was identified as a recruitment strategy for the future of the department. Developing partnerships with nonprofits for the purpose of diversity and inclusion recruitment will likely establish strong ties with community members.

One of the most forward thinking departments identified in the literature review was the Berkeley Fire Department. The department moved from being reactive in their recruitment efforts to being proactive. The department elevated their standard of recruitment by taking to the schools to take an active part in the education of the demographic they were trying to reach. The

department personnel established a high school level fire science program for high school student that were contemplating the fire service as a career. Following up the fire schools, the department established an emergency medical technician program within the entire Berkeley Unified School District. To the date of the document, the program had graduated 62 EMT students (Pryor, 2010).

The literature review broadened the researchers understanding of what it takes to establish and run a successful an inclusive recruitment program. The Chickasha Fire Department is not in a vacuum when it comes to having diversity issues, however, the information obtained in the literature review will allow the department to establish new community partnerships that are beneficial for everyone.

Procedures

The purpose of this research study was to identify methods to recruit a diverse group of firefighter candidates that would be representative of the community. The research was done using the descriptive research method. Four research questions were utilized to guide the literature review. The four questions examined a) what government programs were established to promote diversity, b) formal and informal recruiting practices as they relate to recruiting and hiring of minorities and women into the workforce, c) organizations that have successfully increased diversity, and d) where fire department recruiters are finding minorities and women. These questions helped guide the overall research questions which were a) What are the formal and informal methods of recruitment currently being utilized by the Chickasha Fire Department? b) What are other organizations doing to increase diversity within their organizations? c) Are there programs that could be developed that would promote the Chickasha Fire Department as a career choice?

Research started while on campus at the National Fire Academy in Emmitsburg Maryland during the Executive Development course in November of 2014. The Learning Resource Center provided access to Applied Research Projects, books, journal articles, and periodicals with information related to minority recruitment. Additionally, the researcher used books from the Oklahoma State University Library on interlibrary loan. The purpose of the library research was to find books, journal articles, and periodicals that had information relating to recruitment of minorities and women into the fire service. More specifically, the researcher was trying to identify resources that had “best practices” that could easily be replicated and used in other department. The researcher was also trying to find cultural barriers that would hinder any interest in the fire service even when using the best recruitment strategies.

A ten question survey was created using Survey Monkey, a web based survey tool, to create survey questions that gathered information about the respondents department and recruiting activities. The survey used a combination of forced choice, closed-ended, and open-ended questions to establish uniformity. The purpose of this research is to survey a random sample of fire officers and identify a) what resources other departments had available to do recruiting b) how other departments do recruiting to create an inclusive and diverse workforce, and c) find out what barriers departments face when attempting to recruit a diverse candidate pool.

On December 30th 2015, the survey was beta tested with the R0123 Executive Development class identified as 11-2014 EFOP for content accuracy and format. On January 18th 2015, the survey was finalized and sent back out to members of the 11-2014 Executive Development class to complete. On February 25th 2015, the survey was sent to the Oklahoma City Metro Chiefs Association and the International Association of Fire Chief’s Executive Fire

Officer site for applied research projects. The survey was disseminated to hundreds of fire departments and emergency response agencies of which 33 fire departments from 17 states responded to the survey. The total number of survey responses was 113 from the 33 departments. A confirmed population size was unobtainable as the survey was disseminated on websites with unknown follower demographics.

The researcher utilized a personal interview to elicit feedback from a police detective that was in charge of doing recruiting and hiring who was also a minority. A questionnaire consisting of five questions was used to guide the interview. The focus of the interview was to obtain insight from a minority who was also a public servant on issues such as community recruitment in the past, perceptions of the Chickasha Fire Department by minorities, potential recruiting strengths, and suggestion for moving forward. The interview was done in the police detective's office on January 15th at 10:30 in the morning. The questions for the interview were: *What perception does the community have in regards to recruitment of personnel within the Chickasha Fire Department; Why do you think CFD struggles to attract minorities and women to apply for fire department positions; What can CFD do to attract minorities and women to become firefighters and paramedics; Where should CFD personnel focus their attention to find minorities and women who would be interested in the fire service as a career; Do you have any suggestion or comments to add to this questionnaire.*

The researcher has identified limitations in the research process that will most certainly affect the accuracy of the report. The researcher first identified limitations when attempting to find current books, magazines, periodicals, and journal articles that dealt primarily with research on the topic versus opinion matters. Several documents were eliminated due to the heavy bias towards factors that affected their personal department or organization. The research topic deals

with highly sensitive issues that are currently affecting many cities and departments. The survey has potential for racial bias on questions four and six through nine as some respondents will truly not believe there are any problems with the diversity and inclusiveness of their own recruiting process. Additionally, as the survey is of a sensitive nature, it is possible that some of the potential respondents may have chosen not to fill out the survey, thus, the population and sample size may lead to decreased representation of real recruiting factors. Other limitations for the research exist in the demographic that were surveyed. There is a need to get survey information from citizens within the community but not within the fire department before any actions are taken regarding recruitment.

Results

This applied research project utilized the descriptive research methodology to answer research questions guided towards minority recruitment within the Chickasha Fire Department. The procedures used resulted in sufficient data that was retrieved from a personal interview, a national survey, and analysis of documents from literature review.

The researcher used a questionnaire to guide the personal interview with Detective Master Sargent, Traye Alexander. The results of the first question, *What perception does the community have in regards to recruitment of personnel within the Chickasha Fire Department?*, established a disconnect between CFD recruiting and the perception that a minority has a chance to be recruited by the fire department. The second question, *Why do you think CFD struggles to attract minorities and women to apply for fire department positions?*, provided personal experiences from Detective Alexander as to his own struggles in trying to get on with the fire department (T. Alexander, personal communication, January 15, 2015). The information obtained from question three was typical of the department recruiting practices. Question three,

What can CFD do to attract minorities and women to become firefighters and paramedics?, established common recruiting practices that were previously not utilized by the fire department yet were common practices in departments that had successful minority recruiting. Question four, *Where should CFD personnel focus their attention to find minorities and women who would be interested in the fire service as a career?*, provided information as to where minority recruitment would be most successful such as predominantly black colleges, neighborhood community centers, and local chapters and clubs. The final question in the questionnaire, *Do you have any suggestions or comments to add to this questionnaire?*, created discussion on team recruiting efforts for public safety efforts as a whole. Detective Alexander offered his assistance in the future and the interview was completed.

The first research question, *What are the formal and informal methods of recruitment currently being utilized by the Chickasha Fire Department?*, was primarily driven by literature review of other department's recruitment practices. Data from the literature identified what other departments consider formal and informal recruitment. In doing so, the researcher was able to identify recruitment practices that were similar to those of other departments. Informal methods identified were "word of mouth" and social networking (Cox, 2013). The Chickasha Fire Department utilizes a roster of candidates from a metro technology center and newspaper ads as the formal method of recruitment. The physical ability assessment is not in line with national standards which utilize the Candidate Physical Ability Test (CPAT). The CPAT is designed to represent job tasks that are standard across the fire service. Currently the Chickasha Fire Department uses a candidate minimum physical performance test/agility that is required by the Oklahoma Firefighters Pension and Retirement System. The design used consist of a mile and a

half run in 13 minutes, 35 bent-knee sit-ups, 25 push-ups, 20 foot beam walk, 125 pound weight carry, and a flexibility assessment ("Physical performance test," n.d.)

The second research question, *What are other organizations doing to increase diversity within their organization?*, was answered with data from literature reviews and a national survey. The resulting data identified targeted recruitment as a key method to increase diversity within their organization (Coffee, 2010). The data identified that informal methods of recruitment would be ineffective at recruiting minorities and women unless it was targeted and part of a plan (Fox et al., 2006). Data from the Community Recruitment Efforts survey identified 66.37% of respondents used word of mouth to increase diversity recruitment efforts (See Appendix B). Ads or flyers and social media were 51.33% and 45.13% respectively which established the top three recruitment efforts. Survey data identified word of mouth at 40.91% as what they thought was the most effective method to recruit a diverse candidate pool (See Appendix B). Data from a literature review and survey found 23 of the 110 or 20.91% of respondents found success with volunteer or explorer programs as a means to recruit a diverse candidate pool (See Appendix B).

The final research question, *Are there programs that could be developed that would promote the Chickasha Fire Department as a career choice?*, provided literature review data on video recruitment that was formatted as a general recruitment video or tailor made for individual departments. The organization responsible for the diversity recruitment video identified the target demographic as generation Y which is an age group of 15-25 year olds (FIRE2020.org website, n.d.). Additional data from a literature review yielded program development information at the high school, college and technical school level in that organization can operate their own emergency medical technician, paramedic courses, and high school training classes in schools that represent the demographic they were looking for (Pryor, 2010).

The Community Recruitment Efforts Survey was completed by 113 respondents from 33 different departments representing 17 different states (See Table 3).

Table 3: Question 1. Type of Departments Responding

Answer Choices–	Responses–
	61.95% 70
Paid	
	32.74% 37
Combination	
	5.31% 6
Volunteer	
Total	113

The size of the departments ranged from under 30 to over 200 firefighters. The size of communities served ranged from under 7 respondents being in communities under 5000 to the largest response of 28 respondents being from cities larger than 200,000. The respondents to the survey identified as a majority that they had difficulty achieving a diverse workforce (See Table 4).

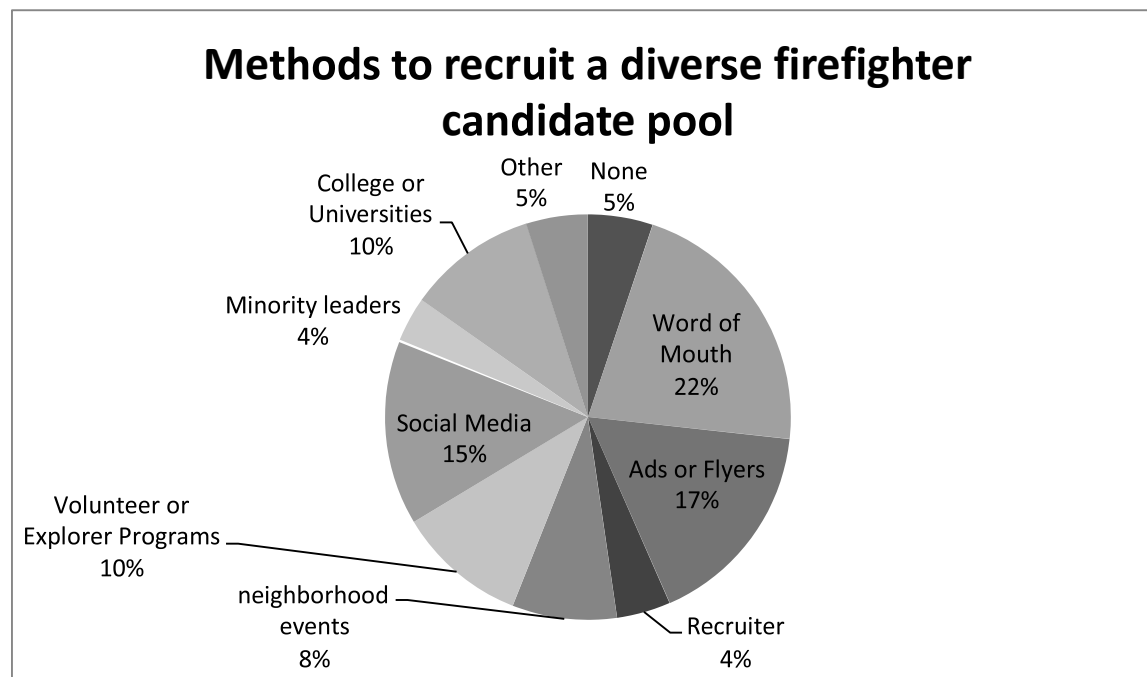
Table 4: Question 4. Achieving a diverse workforce

Answer Choices–	Responses–
	61.95% 70
Yes	
	38.05% 43
No	
Total	113

Survey question five acquired as to whether or not the organization had a person identified as a recruiter. The result identified that 28.44% of respondents had someone they considered a recruiter. In contrast 29.36% identified the fire chief as the primary recruiter and 42.20% did not have a person that did recruiting duties for their organization.

The researcher identified ten common recruiting methods for which respondents could choose all that applied to them. The comparison was what methods respondents use to recruit a diverse firefighter candidate pool compared to what methods were successful (See Figure 1).

Figure 1



The final question that had mandatory inputs was looking for barriers to recruiting a diverse candidate pool (See Table 5). The data shows a majority of respondents believe that there is a lack of qualified candidates or a lack of interest in general by the minority demographic.

Table 5: Question 8. Barriers to recruiting a diverse firefighter candidate pool

Barriers	Response
None	14.41%
Lack of interest in general	44.14%
Lack of qualified candidates from the underrepresented community	22.52%
Lack of qualified candidates in general	47.75%
Personnel involved in the hiring process	21.62%
Other (please specify)	3.60%
	9.91%

Discussion

The research attempted to provide a relationship between the recruiting practices of other organizations in contrast to those of the Chickasha Fire Department. 113 respondents completed the 10 question survey providing data for this applied research project on recruitment practices dealing primarily with minorities and women. The research highlighted the fact that the Chickasha Fire Department was not alone in their struggles to recruit a diverse workforce. The Community Recruitment Efforts survey revealed that 70 of the 113 respondents or 61.95% of departments surveyed identify a disconnect between their current department demographics compared to their community demographics (See Appendix B).

Much of the literature review results had a constant theme of targeted recruiting or targeted outreach (Coffee, 2010). The targeted recruiting practices identified in the literature review were used to broaden the current scope of recruitment and not be the sole manner in which the organization did recruiting. Targeted recruitment practices were found at the highest levels of government which included the Department of Defense. In data received from a DoD strategic planning document, their recruiters are encouraged to use targeted recruitment and the justification for doing so is fitting for the Chickasha Fire Department as well which is “the premise for the strategic plan is a battle for talent in an emerging diverse market to attract, recruit, and retain a highly skilled workforce” (*DoD Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan*, 2012, p. 4). The researcher identifies the positive impact a targeted recruitment campaign would have in this community. The results of the personal interview established the need to go into the communities where minorities and women live and work to do targeted recruitment (T. Alexander, personal communication, January 15, 2015). The Chickasha Fire Department has

opportunities in the community to do a targeted outreach which would reach those potential candidates that typically do not participate in the fire department hiring process.

Engaging fire department personnel to take an active role in recruiting provides opportunities for the department to get face time with the community and at the same time; personnel can be handing out recruitment cards (DeMint, 2013). While the researcher understands the drawback to overdoing informal recruiting, having a plan and making informal recruiting part of the formal recruiting plan allows the department to receive feedback in the form of usable data. DeMint (2013) adds that relationships are formed with the community's multicultural formal and informal leader in an informal, personal manner. Maize (2009) adds value to engaging firefighters to take an active role in recruiting in that short public relations assignments have the potential to have large recruiting dividends. Maize adds the negative effect of not having this public relations effort as missing an investment in the community and limiting the organizations effort to achieve public education (2013). This information is consistent with the Community Recruitment Efforts survey in which 37.16% of respondents replied on the importance of being in the neighborhoods of those that are underrepresented and making contact with minority leaders (See Appendix B).

The researcher identified another recruitment tool in both the literature review and the national survey that would offer the Chickasha Fire Department and new and unexplored avenue for recruitment. 31.86% of respondents identified an explorer post as a vital tool in their community recruitment efforts (See Appendix B). As well, literature review established the importance of explorer posts as a means in which firefighters could lend real-life firefighting experience to prospective candidates (LDCFM, n.d.). Samuels (2014) even suggests that recruitment begin at the youth level, identifying middle school age youths as a worthy

demographic to begin recruiting. Samuels (2014) also adds that this age group would be ideal for a fire department explorer post, youth fire academy, and even female only programs. The implications to the Chickasha Fire Department are that they will have to establish standards from which to pull candidates and what age groups will be identified as being ideal candidates.

Additionally, being a small department, formal and informal leaders will need to be identified so that one single person is not tasked with operation of the entire explorer program or youth fire academy.

Media of any kind can be a strong tool to reach potential firefighter candidates, as long as it's not bad media which might detour some. 96.46% of respondents to the national survey used some form of media whether it was social media, media ads, or some other form of media (See Appendix B). In contrast, only 40.91% of respondents believe that the efforts help in their media and those that think it help their recruiting efforts, the researcher identifies the possible use of media as either being some legal mandate of the hiring process or an attempt to cast a large net over an unidentified population of potential candidates. Pinson (2013) highlighted the importance of media outlets as a community recruitment tool listing television, newspapers, magazines, internet postings, and radio advertisements. Samuels (2014) agreed with the use of media but added the department needs to demonstrate women and minorities leading the discussions as representatives of the fire department. The researcher's department has not realized an impact from media due to poor recruiting efforts but identifies the large candidate pool that could be reached when properly organized and disseminated. One such example is using a prerecorded or premade video that send a clear message of the departments' intent to include diversity as a goal in the recruiting process. FIRE20/20 (2013) is one such possibility for

the researcher's organization to utilize and supports the data that media can be an effective recruiting tool.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are a product of data retrieved from the literature review and results in the Applied Research Project. The researcher identified a problem within his department that was the Chickasha Fire Department had not identified methods to recruit a diverse group of firefighter candidates that are representative of the community. During the research process, it became apparent that the Chickasha Fire Department would be able to benefit from the data obtained. The researcher has identified five recommendations that will serve to advance one of the department's new missions which is to have a diverse workforce that is representative of the community in which they serve.

The first recommendation is to develop a recruitment plan that is inclusive of the entire community. The plan needs to have common characteristics of diversity and inclusion efforts that have proven to be successful such as targeted recruitment. The new plan will be driven by the department's new mission and values statement. The department will need to gain buy-in from all stakeholders for the effort to be successful. Internal stakeholders will need to understand why the recruitment process is changing and how they team members will benefit from the process. External stakeholders will need to place trust in an organization that has represented them in the past and is in the process of putting community inclusion as a priority. The department will need to budget for informal recruiting materials such as contact cards with testing dates and information on best practices to become a Chickasha Firefighter.

The second recommendation is to eliminate recruiting that is informal, word of mouth, alone style of hiring. Hiring is not recruiting and the recruiting process needs to have multiple

vantage points for recruiters to make contact with the community. Changes need to be made to the physical assessment test to include a task oriented style of program such as the Candidate Physical Ability Test (CPAT). The ability to formalize the physical ability test will allow minorities and women to compete on the same level for fire department careers. The department needs to stand firm on minimum standards or the process will lose internal stakeholder buy-in. The department leaders will need to develop relationships with community minority leaders. Minority leaders help to deliver the message that the recruiting process is a community process that is eager to develop and expand upon the relationships of the past. The changes, or in better terms, the upstart of the recruiting process will need to develop rather swiftly. The department is in a prime position, due to retirements and personnel grant opportunities, to have a large amount of openings for firefighters. The opportunities for recruitment are sparse at best and this opportunity to recruit will be a welcome challenge.

The third recommendation is to travel to minority colleges and associations to do job fairs and targeted recruiting in areas underrepresented in the candidate pool. Recruiters need to spend time recruiting military personnel that are soon to retire or separate from military service. For much the same reason, local gyms and fitness centers as well as college sports teams need to be a focal point to recruit women who would be interested in the fire service. The fire department needs to show a true interest in women and minorities to identify what they can do for the fire service and in return, what the fire department can do for them.

The fourth recommendation is obtain as much statistical information about the recruitment process so that future leaders will be able to make advancements in the process rather than continuously recreating the wheel. Minority leaders need to understand that the recruiting process, while limited in its opportunities, will always be community oriented. The

department needs to use the building block approach and continually make advancements in recruiting and making new relationships with all members of the community.

The fifth recommendation is to be pioneers in the recruitment process and try something that has not been done before. Being a small department does not limit the ability of our leaders to think outside the box. There are ways of being an inclusive department that have not even been thought up yet and constant collaboration with the community and listening to what they have to say will need to be the driver for future recruitment success.

In conclusion, the researcher recommends that future research into diversity and inclusion recruitment be established within the community you are trying to reach. Due to time limitations, relationships were not able to be developed that would have provided further insight as to how and why the community interacts with the fire department and opportunities that arise. In much the same way, develop two way communications with departments that are successful in achieving a diverse workforce whether they are in the public safety sector or not. As much time as you spend wanting to know about successful fire department recruiting; their needs to be an equal amount of time spent interviewing community members to understand how they feel and how they want to be included in the process.

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Chickasha Public Safety Recruitment Practices

Question guide for personal interview

The purpose of this questionnaire is to get opinions from personnel in public safety as to best practices when it comes to recruiting minorities and women. The focus is recruitment into the fire service, however, being in public safety, our departments often work hand in hand and your input could offer valuable information and ideas regarding recruitment.

1. What perception does the community have in regards to recruitment of personnel within the Chickasha Fire Department?

2. Why do you think CFD struggles to attract minorities and women to apply for fire department positions?

3. What can CFD do to attract minorities and women to become firefighters and paramedics?

4. Where should CFD personnel focus their attention to find minorities and women who would be interested in the fire service as a career?

5. Do you have any suggestions or comments to add to this questionnaire?

Community Recruitment Efforts

Analyzing Community Recruitment Efforts

The purpose of this survey is to identify community recruitment efforts used by other fire and emergency services departments. The specific purpose is to identify how fire departments recruit those members of their community that typically do not participate in the hiring process for whatever reason, regardless of race, gender, religion, or age.

The information gained from this survey may be published as part of the Applied Research Project through the National Fire Academy, Executive Development course. All respondents can choose to remain anonymous and are welcome to receive a copy of the results if you so choose. Thank you for your participation.

Brian Zalewski, Deputy Chief
Chickasha Fire Department
1700 Harly Day Drive
Chickasha, Ok 73018
405-222-6035
405-222-6034 fax
deputychief@chickasha.org

1. Is your department a paid, combination, or volunteer department?

- Paid
- Combination
- Volunteer

2. What is the size of your department?

- 0-10
- 11-30
- 31-50
- 51-100
- 101-200
- greater than 200

3. What is the size of the county, city, town, or community your department represents?

- 1-5000
- 5001-10,000
- 10,001-25,000
- 25,001-50,000
- 50,001-100,000
- greater than 100,000

4. Does your department have difficulty in achieving a diverse workforce that is representative of the community?

- Yes
- No

5. Does your organization have a recruiter?

- Yes, full time position
- Yes, from our human resources department
- No, the chief does it
- No, our organization does not recruit

6. What methods does your organization use to recruit a diverse firefighter candidate pool? (Check all that apply)

- None
- Word of mouth
- Ads or flyers
- Recruiter
- Neighborhood events in areas that are less represented on the fire department
- Volunteer or explorer programs
- Social media
- Minority leaders
- College or Universities
- Other (please specify)

7. Which methods have been successful in recruiting a diverse firefighter candidate pool? (Check all that apply)

- None
- Word of mouth
- Ads or flyers
- Recruiter
- Neighborhood events in areas that are less represented on the fire department.
- Volunteer or explorer program
- Social media
- Minority leaders
- College or Universities
- Other (please specify)

8. What barriers does your department face when recruiting a diverse firefighter candidate pool? (Check all that apply)

- No barriers identified
- Lack of a interest from those that are identified as under represented on the department
- Lack of interest in general
- Lack of qualified candidates from the under represented community
- Lack of qualified candidates in general
- Personnel involved in the hiring process
- Other (please specify)

9. In regards to a diverse pool of firefighter candidates, what recruitment methods has your department had success with that may not have been mentioned?

10. (optional for those that would like a copy of the results)

Company

City/Town

State/Province

Email Address



Oklahoma Firefighters Pension and Retirement System

4545 N. Lincoln Blvd., Suite 265
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73105-3407
1-800-525-7461 · (405) 522-4600 · Fax (405) 522-4643
www.okfirepen.state.ok.us



MINIMUM PHYSICAL PERFORMANCE TEST/AGILITY

Date _____

Candidate Name _____ SS# _____

The candidate, shall be required to complete and pass a minimum physical performance or agility test. The requirements for the test may be incorporated into actual essential job functions test, if equivalent to the requirements listed below and with prior approval by the State Pension Board of the performance test.

The candidate must sign Form 10, a Waiver and Release of any and all liability from injuries incurred as a result of the physical performance test.

There shall be a minimum of six functions that shall be verified when the candidate is tested. The pass-fail test shall be part of the candidate's pension records. (Form 9)

The Candidate shall complete one of the following:

. Check One:

- 1. (a) Run 1 1/2 miles within 13 minutes.
(b) Walk 3 miles within 38 minutes.
(c) _____ Bicycle 4 miles within 12 Minutes
(d) _____ Swim 500 yards within 8 minutes and 20 seconds.
(e) _____ Run in place 75 steps per minute for 15 minutes.
(f) _____ Run on motorized horizontal treadmill at 10 miles per hour for 6 minutes.
(g) _____ Climb stairs consisting of 10 steps at 9 round trips per minute for 9 minutes.

Time: _____ Pass/Fail _____

Comments: _____

2. The Candidate shall perform 35 bent-knee sit-ups within 2 minutes.

Time: _____ Pass/Fail _____

3. The Candidate shall complete one of the following:

- (a) _____ Flexed arm hang-minimum time: 8 seconds (palms away)
(b) _____ Pull-ups minimum: 7 (palms away)
(c) _____ Push-ups (standard) - minimum: 25

Time: _____ Pass/Fail _____

Comments: _____

4. The candidate, given a beam secured to a level floor and measuring 20 ft. (6m) long by 3 to 4 in. (76 to 102mm) wide and given a length of fire hose weighing at least 20 lb. (9 kg.), shall walk the length of the beam, carrying the length of hose, without falling off, or stepping off the beam.

Pass/Fail _____

Comments: _____

5. The candidate, given a weight of 125 lb. (57 kg.) shall lift the weight from the floor and carry the weight 100ft. (305m) without stopping.

Pass/Fail _____

Comments: _____

6. The candidate, starting from an erect position with feet apart, the distance approximately shoulder width, shall move a 15 lb (?kg.) weight in the following manner: bend over, grasp the weight with both hands while it is at a point on the floor between the feet, and lift weight to waist level, then place the weight on the floor approximately 12 in. (305 mm) outside the right foot. The weight shall then be moved alternately in the fashion from left foot to waist level, to right; right to waist level to left until it has been moved 7 times in each direction with the total horizontal distance of travel being at least 21 in. (610 mm) more than the space between the feet for each of the 14 moves. This shall be done in less than 35 seconds.

Pass/Fail _____

Comments: _____

Individual Giving Test _____

Employed By: _____

Position: _____

We the undersigned have read the Physical/Agility Test requirements for fire service candidates. We have witnessed the foregoing agility test of _____, and hereby certify the candidate has Passed/Failed the agility test. _____

Witness: _____ Witness: _____

Employed By: _____ Employed By: _____

Position _____ Position _____

State of Oklahoma)
County of _____) ss.

Fire Chief

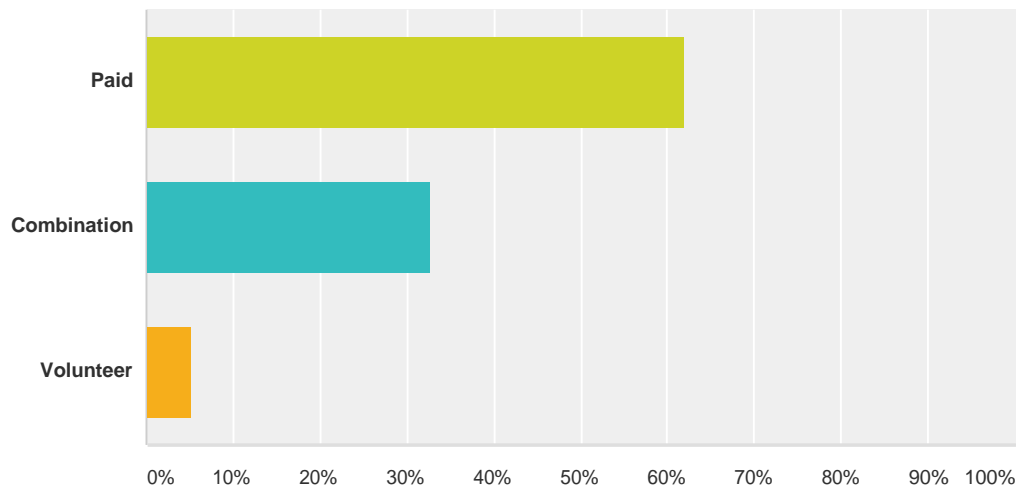
The foregoing instrument was acknowledged before me this _____ day of _____
by _____

My commission expires _____

Notary Public

Q1 Is your department a paid, combination, or volunteer department?

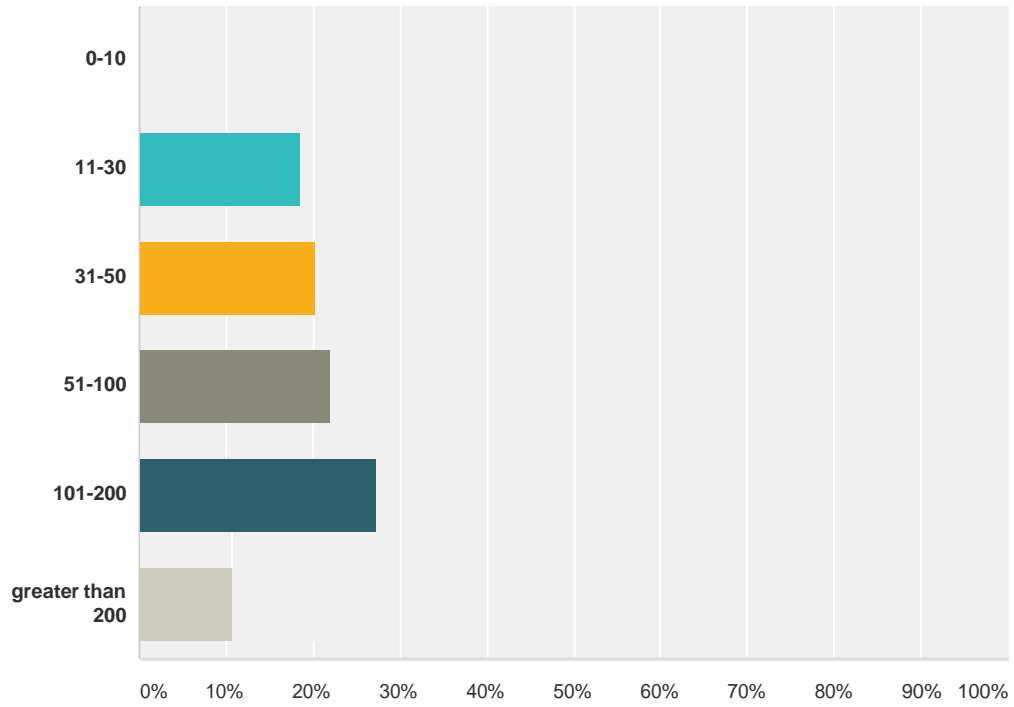
Answered: 113 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses
Paid	61.95% 70
Combination	32.74% 37
Volunteer	5.31% 6
Total	113

Q2 What is the size of your department?

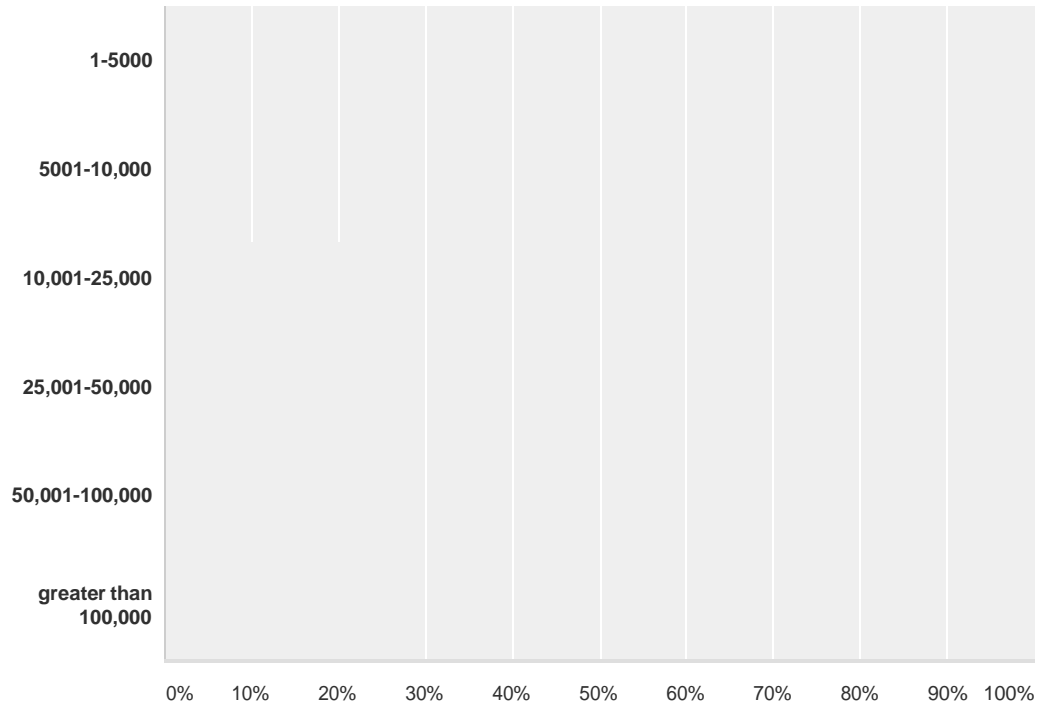
Answered: 113 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses
0-10	0.00% 0
11-30	18.58% 21
31-50	20.35% 23
51-100	22.12% 25
101-200	27.43% 31
greater than 200	11.50% 13
Total	113

Q3 What is the size of the county, city, town, or community your department represents?

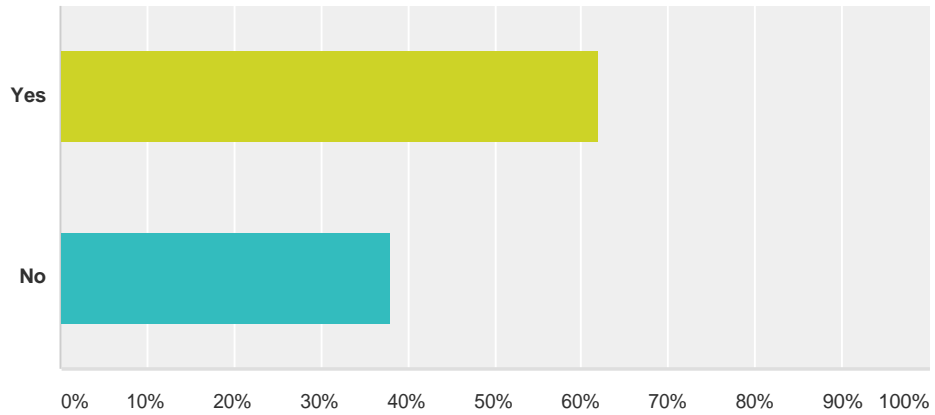
Answered: 113 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses
1-5000	6.19% 7
5001-10,000	4.42% 5
10,001-25,000	23.01% 26
25,001-50,000	23.89% 27
50,001-100,000	17.70% 20
greater than 100,000	24.78% 28
Total	113

Q4 Does your department have difficulty in achieving a diverse workforce that is representative of the community?

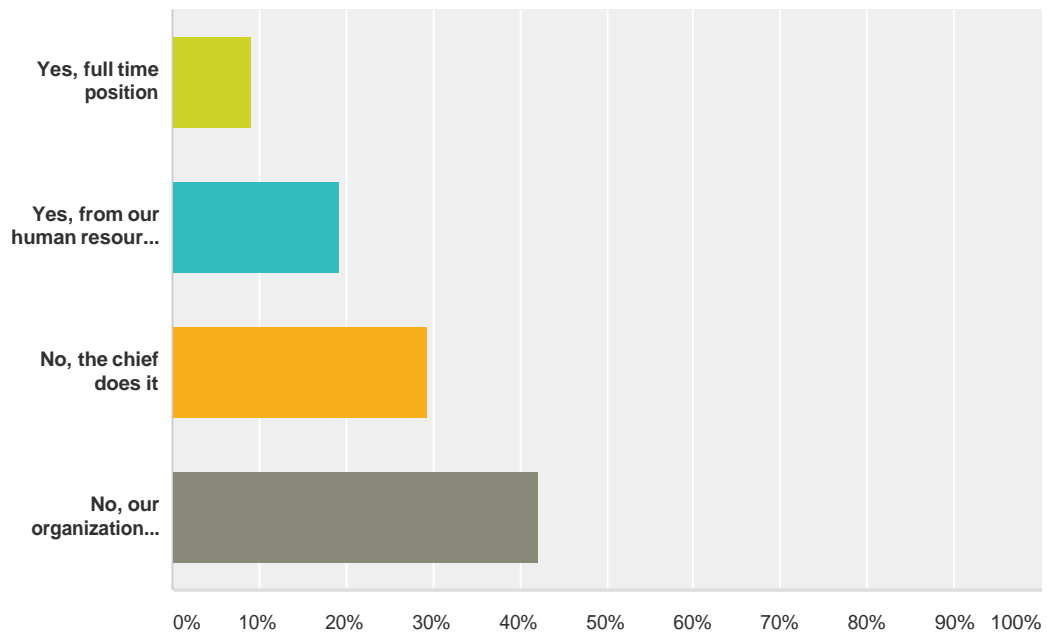
Answered: 113 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses
Yes	61.95% 70
No	38.05% 43
Total	113

Q5 Does your organization have a recruiter?

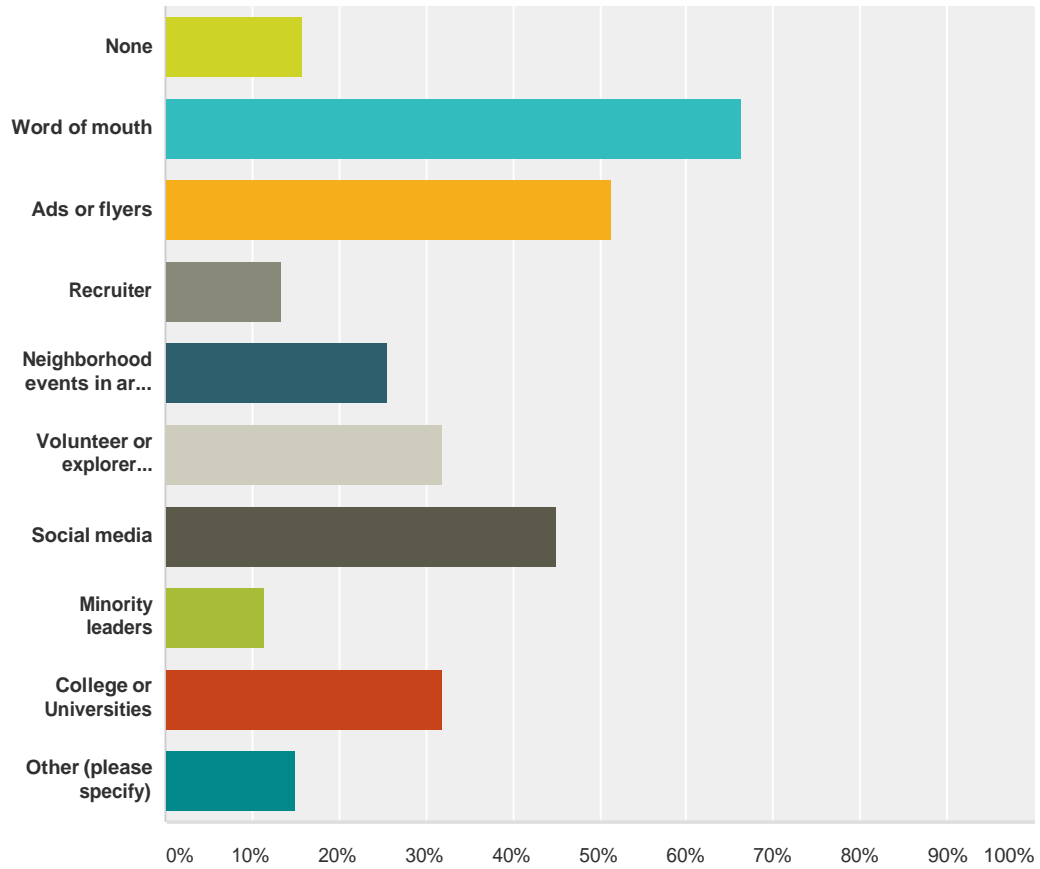
Answered: 109 Skipped: 4



Answer Choices	Responses
Yes, full time position	9.17% 10
Yes, from our human resources department	19.27% 21
No, the chief does it	29.36% 32
No, our organization does not recruit	42.20% 46
Total	109

Q6 What methods does your organization use to recruit a diverse firefighter candidate pool? (Check all that apply)

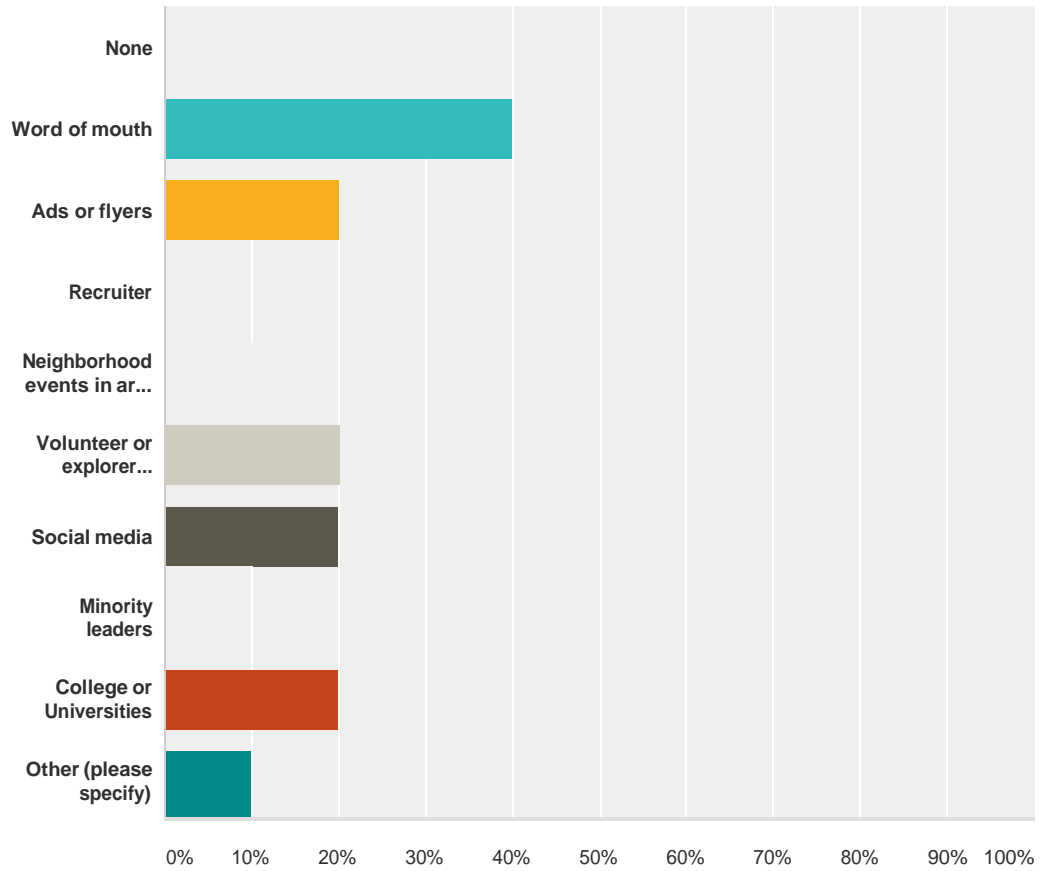
Answered: 113 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses
None	15.93% 18
Word of mouth	66.37% 75
Ads or flyers	51.33% 58
Recruiter	13.27% 15
Neighborhood events in areas that are less represented on the fire department	25.66% 29
Volunteer or explorer programs	31.86% 36
Social media	45.13% 51
Minority leaders	11.50% 13
College or Universities	31.86% 36
Other (please specify)	15.04% 17
Total Respondents: 113	

Q7 Which methods have been successful in recruiting a diverse firefighter candidate pool? (Check all that apply)

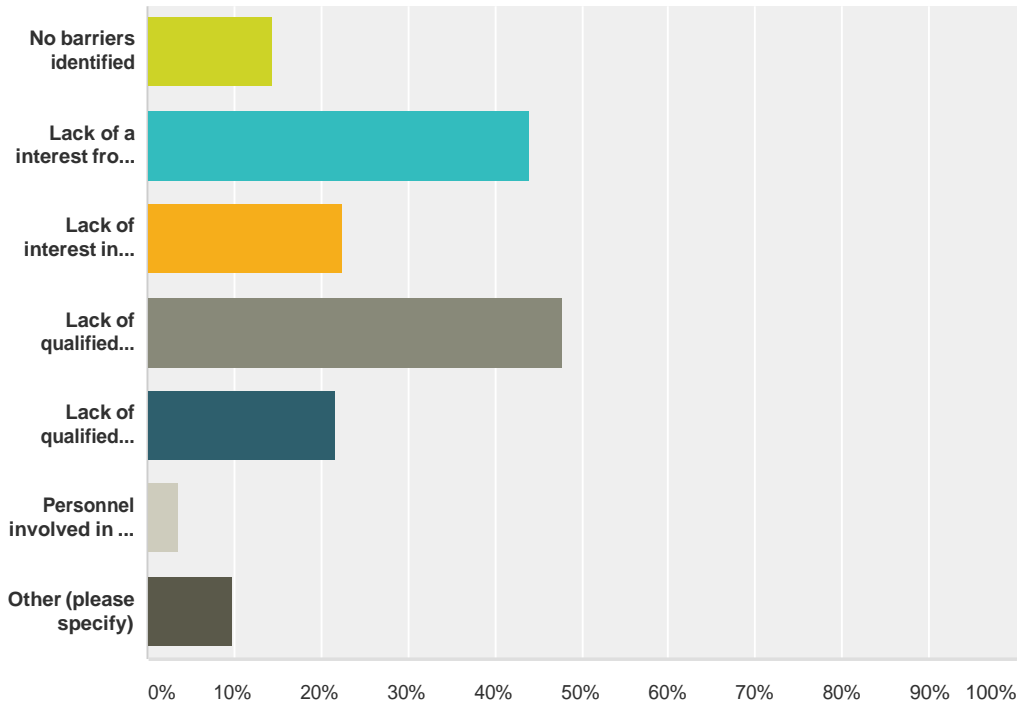
Answered: 110 Skipped: 3



Answer Choices	Responses
None	36.36% 40
Word of mouth	40.91% 45
Ads or flyers	20.91% 23
Recruiter	9.09% 10
Neighborhood events in areas that are less represented on the fire department.	12.73% 14
Volunteer or explorer program	20.91% 23
Social media	20.00% 22
Minority leaders	7.27% 8
College or Universities	20.00% 22
Other (please specify)	10.00% 11
Total Respondents: 110	

Q8 What barriers does your department face when recruiting a diverse firefighter candidate pool? (Check all that apply)

Answered: 111 Skipped: 2



Answer Choices	Responses
No barriers identified	14.41% 16
Lack of a interest from those that are identified as under represented on the department	44.14% 49
Lack of interest in general	22.52% 25
Lack of qualified candidates from the under represented community	47.75% 53
Lack of qualified candidates in general	21.62% 24
Personnel involved in the hiringprocess	3.60% 4
Other (please specify)	9.91% 11
Total Respondents: 111	

Q9 In regards to a diverse pool of firefighter candidates, what recruitment methods has your department had success with that may not have been mentioned?

Answered: 38 Skipped: 75

Q10 (optional for those that would like a copy of the results)

Answered: 39 Skipped: 74

Answer Choices	Responses	
Name	0.00%	0
Company	89.74%	35
Address	0.00%	0
Address 2	0.00%	0
City/Town	87.18%	34
State/Province	97.44%	38
ZIP/Postal Code	0.00%	0
Country	0.00%	0
Email Address	76.92%	30
Phone Number	0.00%	0