



County of Fairfax, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: July 5, 2017

TO: Board of Supervisors

FROM: Edward L. Long Jr.
County Executive

SUBJECT: Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department Organizational Climate Review Action Plan, July 5, 2017

On February 14, 2017, the Titan Group, a division of Gallagher Benefit Services, Inc., released their "Organizational Climate Review Report," focusing on the workplace environment and culture in the Fire and Rescue Department along with perceptions related to discrimination, bullying, harassment, and retaliation. To ensure accountability and appropriate follow-up on the recommendations of the report an Executive Review Committee was established to include the County Executive, Deputy County Executive for Public Safety, County Attorney, Director of Human Resources (DHR), the Director of the Office of Human Rights and Equity Programs (OHREP), and the Director of the Office of Public Affairs (OPA). Chief Richard R. Bowers Jr. has worked closely with the committee and was tasked with collaborating with Fire and Rescue Department and County staff to develop and present a responsive action plan.

The attached "Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department Organizational Climate Review Action Plan" is intended to provide Department members, stakeholders, the Executive Review Committee, the Board of Supervisors, and the community awareness of goals and initiatives, inform and guide the work, and a means to track progress. For consistency, the action plan was constructed around the core themes identified in the consultant's report, and goals and initiatives have been developed.

Workgroups have been formed to address different issues. These consist of diverse Department members and partners such as DHR, OHREP, the Civil Service Commission, and OPA. In this context, "diverse" includes, but is not limited to, race, gender, rank, assignment, tenure, suppression/EMS/prevention/training assignments, and uniformed, volunteer, and civilian members.

Action plan initiatives are being assigned to the relevant workgroup, which are then responsible for review, research, associated work, and development of any

recommendation(s). Most of the workgroups have already been launched and efforts on many of these initiatives has begun.

The action plan is intended to be goal and action-oriented, with a focus on reviewing, and improving and changing as needed, the organizational climate, workplace environment, and culture. This includes creating and sustaining a positive, healthy, nurturing, and safe environment and ensuring equitable, respectful and fair treatment and the well-being of all staff, to include career, volunteer, and civilian members.

Workgroup leads and co-leads are expected to foster and sustain a group environment where all members are treated with respect, feel welcome and empowered to actively participate, and feel comfortable expressing their individual perceptions, experiences, thoughts, and opinions. These issues can be complex, and, at times, sensitive, and healthy, respectful, and open dialogue is extremely important and valuable.

Workgroups are to develop and prioritize reasonable, actionable recommendations with consideration given to achieving positive outcomes, anticipated timeframe to complete, estimated cost, return on investment/value/outcome, and any required staffing or other resources. Recommendations are to be categorized as immediate, short-term, mid-term, and long-term. Training, education, prevention, and accountability are core themes to be reviewed and considered as part of any recommendations for the initiatives.

Chief Bowers and FRD senior staff are actively supporting and engaging the workgroups, and will facilitate any additional reasonable support, assistance, or resources requested. Other County agencies and partners are also already supporting this initiative and will continue to do so.

The action plan and appendices are "living documents" and will require revisions as work progresses. For example, workgroups may modify initiatives or add additional ones, members may rotate on or off of workgroups, and recommendations made. Any revisions will first be approved by Chief Bowers and his senior staff and the Executive Review Committee, and then updates dated and posted. A matrix or more standard action plan template is being developed to assign and track initiatives and recommendations for status, any revisions, and accountability, and will also be posted.

A key motivation for this action plan and the establishment of diverse workgroups is to not only work on initiatives and develop recommendations, but to foster, facilitate, and structure productive dialogue and discussion across the Fire and Rescue Department on issues, some of which are sensitive, to raise awareness and achieve positive outcomes. Workgroup leads and co-leads are expected to foster and sustain a group environment where all members are treated with respect, feel welcome and empowered to actively participate, and feel comfortable expressing their individual perceptions, experiences, thoughts, and opinions.

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Fire and Rescue Department Organizational Climate Review Action Plan

There is also an expectation that Fire and Rescue Department company officers and civilian supervisors use the action plan to facilitate and lead similar respectful and open dialogue and discussion within smaller group settings, such as in fire stations or other assignments.

A communications plan, for internal and external communications, has also been developed and included in the action plan. A cross-agency Communications Team, to include Fire and Rescue Department and OPA staff has been established, and the intent is to provide accurate, relevant, and timely information and updates to Department members and the public.

This action plan will be posted on the Fire and Rescue Department's intranet for all members to access and review. It will also be posted for the public on the County website at <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/fr/organizational-climate-review/climate-review-action-plan.pdf>.

Additional updates and information will be provided to Department members, the Board and the public as work progresses.

Attachment

cc: Elizabeth D. Teare, County Attorney
David M. Rohrer, Deputy County Executive
Richard R. Bowers Jr., Chief, Fire and Rescue Department
Catherine M. Spage, Director, Department of Human Resources
Kenneth L. Saunders, Director, Office of Human Rights and Equity Programs
Sara J. Simmons, Executive Director, Civil Service Commission

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Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department Organizational Climate Review Action Plan



Fire Chief Richard R. Bowers Jr.
and the
Fire and Rescue Department Senior Leadership Team

Foreword

I am pleased to present the “Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department Organizational Climate Review Action Plan” to the Executive Review Committee and the Fire and Rescue Department. This plan is intended to be a “living document” to be evaluated and modified as needed and as work progresses to further the goals and objectives.

Our objective is to create and sustain an environment in which all members of the Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department embrace and embody a workplace culture free of harassment, discrimination, bullying, retaliation, and unbecoming conduct, and which offers equitable opportunities for all members. This will be accomplished through engagement, dialogue, education, training, prevention and accountability.

Thank you

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Richard R. Bowers Jr.", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Fire Chief Richard R. Bowers Jr.

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Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department Organizational Climate Review Action Plan

July 5, 2017

Vision

Fairfax County and the Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department are committed to action to engage Department members and other stakeholders to embrace organizational cultural change; train and embody cultural competencies; continually review policies and practices and identify opportunities for improvement; implement appropriate measures to create and sustain a positive, healthy, nurturing and safe environment; recruit, hire, retain and promote qualified, dedicated, engaged and diverse members; promote and ensure equitable, respectful and fair treatment and the well-being of all staff, to include career, volunteer and civilian members. The Department is dedicated to remaining a recognized professional leader and model agency.

Background

The Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department (FRD) is a large, complex, combination career and volunteer Fire-Based EMS Department providing fire prevention and suppression, emergency medical services, technical rescue, hazardous materials response and water rescue. It serves and protects the community well and is held in high regard within the County, across the region, nationally, and internationally, the latter primarily through Virginia Task Force 1, the County's Urban Search and Rescue team. Comprising over 1,400 uniformed staff, approximately 185 civilian staff, and more than 300 operational volunteers, it is the largest fire and rescue Department in the Commonwealth of Virginia. The Department has multiple work sites, including headquarters, support sites such as the Fire and Rescue Academy, and 38 fire stations located strategically throughout the County that operate 24 hours per day. Most assigned uniformed personnel work together in the stations in close quarters in 24-hour shifts, supplemented by operational volunteers.

In 2016, the County Executive engaged an independent third party consultant, the Titan Group, a division of Gallagher Benefit Services, Inc., to conduct an organizational cultural assessment of the FRD. Their "Organizational Climate Review Report," released Feb. 14, 2017, focuses on the workplace environment and culture in the FRD along with issues related to discrimination, bullying, harassment, and retaliation.

To foster broad inclusion and participation, the consultant gathered input and perspectives from as many FRD members as possible, including uniformed career, volunteer, and civilian members. This was accomplished through an online confidential survey offered to all members, a limited number of one-on-one interviews and focus groups. Personnel were selected randomly for the planned one-on-one interviews and focus groups. Some additional one-on-one interviews were then conducted with personnel who requested to be interviewed. Finally, as some members expressed complaints and confusion regarding FRD and County grievance and complaint procedures, the consultant selected 16 members who had previously filed a grievance or complaint for one-on-one interviews and eight agreed to be interviewed.

A core tenet of the information-gathering process was the promise of confidentiality to participants to encourage fuller participation and mitigate concerns expressed by some members about potential retaliation. It is important to note that this effort was not an investigation, but a climate review and cultural assessment based on the perspectives of FRD members to inform any next steps. For the County and FRD, however, perception is important in informing next steps, which will include prevention, training, improved communication, and policy enhancements and development.

To ensure accountability and appropriate follow-up on the recommendations of the “Organizational Climate Review Report” an Executive Review Committee has been established to include the County Executive, Deputy County Executive for Public Safety, County Attorney, Director of Human Resources (DHR), the Director of the Office of Human Rights and Equity Programs (OHREP), and the Director of the Office of Public Affairs (OPA). At the direction of Chief Bowers, the FRD had already begun work on various related initiatives prior to the release of the consultant’s report. Following its release, Chief Bowers was tasked by the Executive Review Committee to work with FRD and County staff to develop and present a responsive action plan.

The “Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department Organizational Climate Review Action Plan” is intended to provide FRD members, stakeholders, the Executive Review Committee, and the community awareness of ongoing initiatives, inform and guide the work, and a means to track progress. Workgroups have been formed to address different issues. These consist of appropriate stakeholders, including diverse FRD members and partners such as DHR, OHREP, the Civil Service Commission, and OPA. In this context, “diverse” includes, but is not limited to, race, gender, rank, assignment, tenure, suppression/EMS/prevention/training assignments, and uniformed, volunteer, and civilian members.

The content and recommendations in the “Organizational Climate Review Report” provide the foundation for this action plan, which focuses on organizational climate and cultural change. For consistency, the action plan is built around the five core cultural themes identified by the Titan Group. These are:

1. Dedication

Noted to be high overall across the FRD. Members expressed pride in the FRD and the mission, and acknowledged the benefits of working for the County. The low attrition rate was noted in the study and a high number of survey respondents acknowledged job security, that they have not considered leaving the Department, and, most importantly, that they “leave work with a feeling of satisfaction” about their job.

2. Leadership

There were general positive comments about station level commanders and civilian supervisors, but concerns were raised about senior level leadership, particularly perceptions of lack of trust, lack of accountability, and a fear of retaliation. Concerns regarding lack of open, transparent communications were also raised. Members

want not only feel good type messaging, but also authentic, “honest” communications about incidents, critical issues, and complaints.

3. Bullying/Harassment/Discrimination/Retaliation

The consultant’s assessment, based on survey responses, one-on-one interviews and focus groups, is that some members perceive these problems exist in certain areas of the FRD and that they should be proactively addressed by the Department and the County in **changing the organizational climate and culture** [emphasis added].

4. Conflict Management

This focused primarily on perceptions of a lack of trust in and a lack of understanding of FRD and County grievance and discipline processes, and a perception that discipline is not applied consistently and is unfair. There were also perceptions that conflict exists between career staff and volunteers, between career and civilian staff, and between those with a traditional fire suppression mindset and those in the EMS/paramedic field. The need for enhanced cultural competencies training and awareness was also noted.

5. Hiring/Promotions

FRD members expressed concerns that hiring practices do not identify quality applicants with the experience, motivation, and skills to succeed, and that competitive selection practices and processes for staff positions and promotions, although noted to have improved the past few years, have been perceived as unfair and not equitable, and requiring review and revision.

In addition to themes identified above, the report also noted the lower percentages of Hispanic representation and women in senior command positions in the FRD, and internal communication challenges.

Fire and Rescue Department Initial Trainings

Following the release of the “Organizational Climate Review Report” all FRD supervisors and senior leadership (career, volunteer, and civilian) were required to attend a 5.5-hour in-service training session in April 2017, on Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Equal Employment Opportunity) information, conflict resolution techniques, and a peer-to-peer situational conflict resolution demonstration and discussion.

In addition, in May and June 2017, all company officers were required to attend a 4.5-hour modified West Point Leadership training course and all FRD senior leadership and civilian supervisors were required to attend a 20.5-hour modified West Point Leadership training course. These courses included training on leadership, embracing diversity, building and

sustaining respect and trust, mentoring and coaching, accepting and managing or leading change, and conflict resolution among other topics.

Fairfax County and the Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department are committed to action to engage Department members and other stakeholders to embrace organizational cultural change.

Goals

Chief Bowers, FRD senior staff and members, and the Executive Review Committee have identified five priority goals as the initial focus for assessment and development of recommendations by the workgroups.

Goal 1 – Enhance and sustain dedication, and create a safe, positive, and welcoming workplace environment for all members.

Goal 2 – Enhance and sustain effective leadership and professional development and training.

Goal 3 – Review and enhance policies, education, training, reporting, compliance, and investigative/accountability practices to ensure zero tolerance of bullying, harassment, discrimination, and retaliation.

Goal 4 – Develop, enhance, and provide effective human relations and conflict resolution training, policies and strategies.

Goal 5 – Review and ensure effective, fair and equitable hiring, retention, and promotion opportunities, processes and practices.

These goal statements are broad, but preliminary objectives and initiatives have been developed for each and included in the plan. These goals, objectives, and initiatives have been developed by the workgroups, Chief Bowers, FRD senior staff, and the Executive Review Committee.

Initiatives will be assigned to the relevant workgroup, which will then be responsible for its review, associated work, and development of any recommendation(s). Recognizing that some initiatives will have crossover implications, workgroups are encouraged to collaborate as necessary to ensure a cohesive, non-duplicative effort. Workgroups may identify additional initiatives, to be first approved by Chief Bowers and FRD senior staff before inclusion in a revised action plan. A matrix or a more standard action plan template is being developed to assign and track each initiative for status and accountability.

The action plan and attachments are “living documents” and will require modifications, additions, etc., as work progresses. These will be first approved by Chief Bowers, FRD senior

staff, and the Executive Review Committee, and then each revised version dated and posted.

A key motivation for this action plan and the establishment of diverse workgroups is to facilitate and structure productive dialogue and discussion across the Fire and Rescue Department on issues, some of which are sensitive, to achieve positive outcomes.

Workgroups

To date, 10 workgroups have been established:

- Behavioral Health
- Dedication and Service Delivery
- EMS
- Hiring and Retention
- Human Relations and Conflict Resolution
- Investigative Policies and Procedures
- Leadership and Professional Development Training
- Promotional Initiatives
- Volunteer
- Women's Initiatives

As the workgroups will evolve in scope and number and the membership will be dynamic as members leave and new members are added, workgroup membership is included as an appendix (Appendix I) to this action plan.

Workgroup leads/co-leads shall foster and sustain a group environment where all members are treated with respect, feel welcome and empowered to actively participate, and feel comfortable expressing their individual perceptions, experiences, thoughts, and opinions. These issues can be complex, and, at times, sensitive, and healthy, respectful, and open dialogue is extremely important and valuable.

Chief Bowers and FRD senior staff will actively support and engage the leads/co-leads and the workgroups; ensure diverse and active membership and participation; facilitate any additional reasonable support, assistance, or resources requested; and be available as necessary to provide guidance or feedback. If additional County staff, technical support, or other resources are requested or required, Chief Bowers or FRD senior staff may facilitate or request this through the Deputy County Executive for Public Safety.

Workgroups are to develop and prioritize reasonable, actionable recommendations with consideration given to achieving positive outcomes, anticipated timeframe to complete, estimated cost, return on investment/value/outcome, and any required staffing or other resources. Recommendations are to be categorized as immediate, short-term, mid-term, and long-term. More specific guidance for classification will be provided to the workgroups as recommendations are developed. Workgroups are to evaluate the goals and initiatives and

create action-oriented recommendations using the SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Timely) format for each initiative. Additional relevant initiatives related to aforementioned goals are encouraged by the workgroup members.

Training, education, prevention, and accountability are core themes to be reviewed and considered as part of any recommendations for the initiatives.

Workgroups are encouraged to reach consensus on their recommendations. In the absence of consensus, leads/co-leads shall notify Chief Bowers and all efforts, including the use of external facilitation, shall be made to reach consensus. If any workgroup members believe their perspective and concerns are not being heard or considered they are authorized and encouraged to report their concerns to Chief Bowers or other senior staff immediately.

It will be important to share plan recommendations, particularly those that recommend creating or modifying a FRD policy or involve County Personnel Regulations, policies, and procedures, with the County Attorney's Office for review and comment as they are developed. Karen Gibbons, Deputy County Attorney, and Ann Killalea, Senior Assistant County Attorney, are the primary assigned attorneys for review and consultation.

As efforts progress the workgroups will present their findings and recommendations to Chief Bowers and FRD senior leadership for discussion and initial approval. The workgroups will then present their findings and recommendations to the Executive Review Committee for discussion and adoption as approved recommendations.

Promote and ensure equitable, respectful, and fair treatment and the well-being of all staff, to include career, volunteer, and civilian members.

Objectives and Initiatives

Goal 1: Enhance and sustain dedication, and create a safe, positive, and welcoming workplace environment for all members.

Objective:

Continue to provide a safe and positive workplace environment and culture of high satisfaction, pride, trust, inclusion, and engagement for all FRD members.

As the consultant's findings bear out, FRD members have pride in the Department and their mission. All members - career, volunteer, and civilian - should be treated with respect and members' opinions and perspectives should be sought out and valued. Teamwork and trusting relationships are imperative, and open and frank engagement and dialogue are the foundation upon which to build. Recognition for superior service or dedication is important for career, volunteer, and civilian staff.

Initiatives:

- 1.1 Create a safe, positive, and supportive workplace environment for a combination Fire-Based EMS Department where all members and sections and branches of the FRD are equally valued and with which all members are proud to identify and to serve.
- 1.2 Evaluate and update as necessary the FRD mission statement and core values.
- 1.3 Train and embed the FRD mission statement, core values, and County Personnel Regulations, policies and procedures throughout the agency's policies, trainings, and practices. These should be routinely reinforced with all members throughout their career beginning at their onboarding.
- 1.4 Enhance and sustain FRD as a proactive and innovative industry and community role model and leader.
- 1.5 Continue and enhance FRD recognition/celebration for dedication, tenure, and on-the-job outstanding or meritorious service for all members, including career, volunteer, and civilian. Ensure appropriate station level recognition as well.
- 1.6 Assess core issues related to the perceptions and resource allocation of the EMS division, and identify and make recommendations to remove any perceived or existing barriers for leadership position advancement within EMS in the current Fire-Based EMS service delivery model.
- 1.7 Assess the core issues or perceptions of the relationship between career and volunteer personnel, and make any recommendations to enhance/improve the relationship.
- 1.8 Develop, implement and sustain an ongoing mentoring and retention program for all members, with an emphasis on women, beginning with onboarding and in the Academy.
- 1.9 In collaboration with the Building Design and Construction Division assess the current design template for women's facilities in the *Fire Station Design Guidelines*.
- 1.10 Continue the ongoing assessment of women's facilities within existing, and particularly older, fire stations and the replacement schedule. Collaborate with appropriate County agencies to recommend any modifications.
- 1.11 Determine a timeline and format for future periodic organizational climate and cultural assessments or surveys. To measure progress the next one should be targeted for development and completion in early 2018.

Workgroups Assigned:

Dedication and Service Delivery; Leadership and Professional Development; EMS; Volunteer; Women's Initiatives.

Be recognized as a professional leader and model agency.

Goal 2: Enhance and sustain effective leadership and professional development and training.

Objective:

Develop leaders who embrace the servant leadership role of coach/mentor and cultivate a positive and supportive workplace environment where all people are inspired to serve and to thrive and all are treated with respect, fairness, and dignity.

Initiatives:

Leadership

- 2.1 Research best practices, and identify effective assessment tools for senior leadership.
- 2.2 Establish leadership competencies for each rank.
- 2.3 Evaluate, develop, provide, and sustain a continuum of leadership training, coaching, and mentoring programs benchmarked against best practices.
 - a. Assigned mentors
 - b. Coaching
 - c. Administrative and field internships
- 2.4 Evaluate current practices for periodic rotation of command staff against public safety best practices.
- 2.5 Reinforce Senior Leadership as inclusive of Battalion Chiefs. Establish a formal mentoring/coaching program for Battalion Chiefs by Deputy Fire Chiefs, Assistant Fire Chiefs, and the Fire Chief.
- 2.6 Review, develop and enhance effective succession planning strategies.

Performance Evaluations

- 2.7 Educate and train all supervisors on how to conduct effective performance evaluations and reviews.

Communications

2.8 Evaluate current practices for formal and informal internal and external communications against best practices.

- a. Visibility of senior leadership
- b. Policies, manuals, informational items, etc.
- c. Teleconferences,
- d. In-person station discussions
- e. Consistent, timely, and honest communication
- f. Effective use of social media

Workgroups Assigned:

Dedication and Service Delivery; Leadership and Professional Development.

Train and embody cultural competencies.

Goal 3: Review and enhance policies, education, training, reporting, compliance, and investigative/accountability practices to ensure zero tolerance of bullying, harassment, discrimination, and retaliation.

Objective:

Foster and create a supportive and nurturing environment that prevents and does not tolerate any bullying, harassment, discrimination, or retaliation and where all members are treated equitably and with respect, dignity, and fairness. Train and embody cultural competencies and County and Department core values.

Initiatives:

- 3.1 Review and ensure all current FRD policies align with County Personnel Regulations, policies, and procedures on bullying, harassment, discrimination, and retaliation.
- 3.2 Develop, and institutionalize, an initial and recurring training program for all FRD members on FRD policies and County Personnel Regulations, policies, and procedures related to bullying, harassment, discrimination, and retaliation.
 - a. Multiple forms of training to ensure clear and consistent application (i.e. online, classroom, station level)
 - b. Consistent application and enforcement of all policies
 - c. Key focus on development and implementation of in-person situational training
- 3.3 Train all members on the recognition of bullying, harassment, discrimination, and retaliation.

- 3.4 Create an environment where all members feel comfortable reporting any alleged violation(s).
- 3.5 Train all members on FRD policies and County Personnel Regulations, policies, and procedures for appropriate reporting of allegations if they witness, have knowledge of, or feel subjected to bullying, harassment, discrimination, or retaliation.
- 3.6 Train all supervisors and senior leadership (career, volunteer and civilian) in appropriate immediate actions to take to mitigate, resolve, and investigate reported allegations of bullying, harassment, discrimination, and retaliation.
 - a. Reinforce and enforce zero tolerance
- 3.7 Develop and administer education and training for all FRD supervisors and senior leadership (career, volunteer and civilian) on specific investigation processes, responsibilities, and discipline determination for allegations of bullying, harassment, discrimination, or retaliation.
- 3.8 Review best practices for the establishment of a harassment response team.

Workgroups Assigned:

Human Relations and Conflict Resolution; Leadership and Professional Development.

Implement appropriate measures to create and sustain a positive, healthy, nurturing, and safe environment.

Goal 4: Develop, enhance, and provide effective human relations and conflict resolution training, policies and strategies.

Objective:

Increase FRD members' knowledge and confidence to recognize, report, and resolve workplace conflict; to report, investigate, document, and review alleged violations of Department policies or regulations, County Personnel Regulations, policies, and procedures, or federal or state law, or County ordinances; fairly and consistently administer discipline; and employ grievance procedures.

Initiatives:

Conflict Resolution

- 4.1 Develop and deliver ongoing conflict resolution training.
 - a. Develop early conflict recognition skills for FRD members.
 - b. Develop and conduct conflict resolution training for all supervisors.

- i. Alternative dispute resolution training
 - ii. Mediation
- c. Establish peer conflict resolution and prevention program.
 - i. Train the trainer program
 - ii. Station level peer-to-peer training

Internal Complaint Procedures

- 4.2 Develop and conduct ongoing training on appropriate FRD policies and County Personnel Regulations, policies and procedures related to internal complaints and the resources available.
- 4.3 Ensure all members have access to, or know how to locate online, all FRD policies and County Personnel Regulations, policies, and procedures.
- 4.4 Evaluate effectiveness and timeliness of reporting complaint status and outcomes to the complainant(s).

Investigative Procedures

- 4.5 Train all supervisors and senior leadership (career, volunteer and civilian) in appropriate FRD policies and County Personnel Regulations, policies, and procedures for the fair, timely, comprehensive, and consistent investigation and documentation of any allegation(s).
- 4.6 Investigate allegation(s) and apply discipline fairly and consistently for all FRD members, regardless of position or rank.

Disciplinary Procedures

- 4.7 Evaluate current disciplinary procedures against best practices.
 - a. Consistency
 - b. Fairness
 - c. Review process
 - d. Timeliness
- 4.8 In partnership with DHR and County Attorney's Office, review best practices for disciplinary guidelines.
- 4.9 Develop and deliver ongoing training on disciplinary procedures.

Grievance Procedures

- 4.10 Ensure FRD grievance policies and procedures align with County Personnel Regulations, policies, and procedures.
- 4.11 Develop and deliver ongoing training for all FRD members on the grievance procedures and the resources available.

Professional Standards Unit

- 4.12 Review the workload and effectiveness of the Professional Standards Unit and benchmark against best practices.

- a. Consider an inspections function to ensure compliance and accountability.
 - b. Data and trend reporting and analysis methods
 - c. Evaluate briefings and timely updates for appropriate senior staff
- 4.13 Evaluate best practices to conduct fair and comprehensive professional standards investigations.
- 4.14 Develop ongoing training for all FRD members on the role and procedures of the Professional Standards Unit.

Mental/Behavioral Health

- 4.15 Evaluate current mental/behavioral health programs against public safety best practices.
- 4.16 Develop and sustain ongoing effective mental/behavioral health training.

Workgroups Assigned:

Behavioral Health; Human Relations and Conflict Resolution; Investigative Policies and Procedures.

Recruit, hire, retain and promote qualified, dedicated, engaged, and diverse members.

Goal 5: Review and ensure effective, fair and equitable hiring, retention, and promotion opportunities, processes and practices.

Objective:

Recruit, hire, retain, and promote qualified, dedicated, engaged, and diverse members to provide equitable opportunity and to deliver the highest quality services to the public.

Initiatives:

Recruitment Process

- 5.1 Conduct a comprehensive review of current recruitment strategies against public safety best practices (i.e., advertising, recruiting events, and organizations).
- a. Diversity
 - b. Women
 - c. Paramedics
 - d. Successful completion of selection process
 - e. Longevity
 - f. Promotion

- 5.2 Conduct a comprehensive review of current recruitment strategies for volunteers, to include improved coordination with FRD staff.

Applicant Process

- 5.3 Evaluate current applicant process against public safety best practices.
 - a. Application
 - b. Written test
 - c. Personal History Statement and document review
 - d. Candidate Physical Abilities Test (CPAT)
 - e. Polygraph
 - f. Psychological assessment
 - g. Medical assessment

Selection Process

- 5.4 Evaluate current selection process for all FRD members against public safety best practices.
 - a. Selection criteria
 - b. Diversity
 - c. Inclusion of a personal (in-person) interview
 - d. Alignment of candidate review, interviews, and selection to job description, competencies, values, and culture
 - e. Consistency

Onboarding Processes

- 5.5 Evaluate and enhance current onboarding processes.
 - a. Career
 - b. Volunteer
 - c. Civilian

Retention

- 5.6 Collect and evaluate data on attrition, with a specific focus on tenure of women. Benchmark against other public safety agencies.
 - a. Review exit interview data
- 5.7 Research best practices for effective retention strategies specific to women in the fire and rescue service.

Promotions

- 5.8 Evaluate and develop a continuum of training for members seeking promotion.
- 5.9 Evaluate current promotional/selection processes and requirements against public safety best practices to ensure consistency and fairness.
 - a. Career-Field (Operations)

- b. Career-Staff (Administrative)
 - c. Volunteer
- 5.10 Evaluate and enhance the support, mentoring, preparation, and opportunities for women to advance to senior leadership ranks within the FRD. Research and review best practices and comparative national data.
- 5.11 Evaluate, with DHR, current feedback mechanisms for selection processes for uniformed officer ranks against public safety best practices.
- a. Interview skills
 - b. Resume
 - c. Written test
 - d. In basket
 - e. Oral board
 - f. Practical
 - g. Role play

Workgroups Assigned:

Hiring and Retention; Leadership and Professional Development; Promotional Initiatives; Women's Initiatives.

Data must be accurate and actionable.

Data

While the focus of this assessment has been on the Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department, some similar cultural concerns have been raised elsewhere across the country in the fire and rescue service. One of the challenges in performing this assessment and in going forward is accurate benchmarking data. The Department compared relatively well in some employee demographics benchmarked against similar fire and rescue services nationally, but slightly lower in the percentage representation of Hispanics in the Department and of women in senior command positions. However, the national comparative data for that latter category is from a smaller sample size than the other comparative data.

The relatively lower representation of women in the fire and rescue services, at all levels, is an issue not only here, but nationally. One of our focal points going forward will be identifying additional available industry benchmarking data and any best practices, as well as internal discussion with Department members, particularly women, to better understand core issues, root problems and the Department's organizational culture. This focus will allow us to assist in the formulation of any strategies to increase these representations and address other issues.

To better evaluate, problem-solve, support the workgroups, inform appropriate actions, and measure outcomes the FRD and Executive Review Committee will be seeking additional relevant Department, County, and comparative data and information to review. Data to be reviewed will be varied, but will include hiring and retention data, benchmarking of basic recruit

Academy hiring practices and graduation rates, complaints filed with OHREP, investigations and dispositions, discipline patterns and trends across the Department, staff positions selection data, promotional examination data, average career tenure of uniformed women versus uniformed men, etc.

To further the goals of this action plan and the workgroups, a cross-agency data team, at the outset including FRD and Department of Human Resources staff, is being established. Initial steps will be to:

- Identify relevant data to be collected (e.g., demographics, recruitment, retention, promotion, injury, complaints, discipline, and grievances).
- Identify reliable data sources.
- Identify who will collect, maintain, and access data.
- Identify how data will be used (e.g. benchmarking, trending, and forecasting).
- Identify methodologies to collect, compare, and benchmark FRD and County data.

Workgroup Leads:

David M. Rohrer, Deputy County Executive; Chief Richard A. Bowers, Jr.; and Cathy Spage, Director, Human Resources

Action, engagement, leadership, dialogue, and effective communication are drivers of successful outcomes.

Communications Plan

Internal communication can be challenging in any organization, and as stated previously, the FRD is a large, complex agency with multiple shifts and work sites. There are also generational differences in members who may prefer information provided in different ways. It is clear though from the assessment findings that FRD members want increased senior leadership visibility and more direct, consistent, transparent, and “honest” communications across the organization, cross-rank and cross-specialty, and between uniformed, volunteer, and civilian staff.

There is an expectation that company officers and civilian supervisors use this action plan and the communications to facilitate and lead respectful and open dialogue and discussion within smaller group settings, such as in fire stations or other assignments, for all members to be encouraged and feel comfortable expressing their individual perceptions, experiences, thoughts, and opinions.

Many Department members have commented positively as to the public release of the “Organizational Climate Review Report” and the transparency of that action. It is imperative that Chief Bowers, FRD senior leadership, the workgroups, and the Executive Review Committee continue to actively and routinely communicate accurate, relevant, and timely information and messages to FRD members to keep them informed of progress and to engage them in the process of change.

To support these efforts a cross-agency Communications Team of FRD, OPA staff, and a few other communicators has been established. They have developed internal and external communications strategies to identify goals and actions being taken to achieve positive outcomes, to emphasize that addressing the goals is a high priority and commitment for the FRD and the County, and to highlight progress.

The internal strategy will address key information and updates to career, volunteer, and civilian personnel. The external strategy will address key stakeholders including the public, the media, and elected and appointed County officials. Internally, attention will also be given to communicating with personnel who might not have regular access to email or a computer.

The team is preparing multiple internal communication methods, including in-person meetings, email, Intranet (FireNet), video, and social media, to not only push out information, but to also collect input or feedback as needed and provide two-way channels for members to share their views.

Similarly, multiple communication methods will be important to provide a reference for the public and the media to stay informed and track progress, in addition to providing updates as developments warrant.

To ensure consistency and accuracy of internal messaging, FRD’s Public Affairs Division will be included in the release of all information. Approval will be given by the Public Affairs Division’s Battalion Chief, the Fire Chief’s Aide, and the Fire Chief. Information for public dissemination will also be coordinated with the County’s Office of Public Affairs and County leadership as appropriate.

Links on FRD FireNet are under development to post and access the following: the “Organizational Climate Review Report” with the Board of Supervisors transmittal memorandum, this action plan, workgroup leads and members, and the workgroup scopes and initiatives. FRD members with questions or comments will be able to send an email through an Intranet link routed to the appropriate workgroup lead.

Department members are strongly encouraged to review the materials and to share feedback - comments, questions, and concerns - with Department leadership and the Executive Review Committee at FIRE-PA-LSE@fairfaxcounty.gov.

Any allegation(s) regarding bullying, harassment, discrimination, and retaliation within the Department can also be reported, anonymously if preferred, to the Internal Audit Department’s hotline at 703-787-3243.

The full Communications Plan is included as an appendix (Appendix II) to this action plan, and will be updated as needed.

Timeline

February 14, 2017	Release of “Organizational Climate Review Report”
March 15, 2017	Workgroup Lead initial meeting
March 27, 2017	Workgroup initial members identified and selected
April 7, 2017	Workgroups began development of potential initiatives
April 20, 2017	Workgroup Lead/Co-Lead meeting
May 4, 2017	Workgroup Lead/Co-Lead progress update discussion
May 19, 2017	Workgroup Lead/Co-Lead progress update discussion
June 1, 2017	Workgroup Lead/Co-Lead progress update discussion
June 15, 2017	Workgroup Lead/Co-Lead progress update discussion
June 28, 2017	Goals, objectives and initiatives reviewed
June 29, 2017	Full workgroup status and progress update meeting and discussion
July 5, 2017	Release of “Organizational Climate Review Action Plan”
August 18, 2017	Chief Bowers and the Deputy County Executive for Public Safety to complete one-on-one meetings/dialogues with each workgroup
TBD	Executive Review Committee status meeting(s) with Workgroup Leads and Co-Leads
September 8, 2017	Workgroup Leads begin submitting recommendations to Fire Chief’s Office
TBD	Workgroup Presentations of recommendations to Executive Review Committee
TBD	Implementation of recommendations to begin

Appendix I

Fire and Rescue Department Organizational Climate Review Action Plan Workgroups

[Listed alphabetically]

Behavioral Health Workgroup

Purpose:

The primary focus of the Behavioral Health Workgroup is to identify core issues within our organization related to the behavioral health of our membership and to explore opportunities for growth, progressive change, and improvement. The workgroup will develop appropriate initiatives and recommendations related to the identified core issues, collect relevant data, analyze research data, and develop achievable objectives that provide a measurable framework through which positive change to the culture and climate of the organization may be realized.

Lead: Captain I William Best, Behavioral Health Uniformed Officer

Co-Lead: Maia Dalton-Theodore, Behavioral Health Coordinator

Captain I Dennis Kotecki, WELL-FIT Center

Lt. Jason Buttenshaw

Lt. Richard David

Tech Theresa Ruffo-Swanson

Tech William Ward, Chairman, Fire and Rescue Support Team (FiRST)

Tech Adam Armstrong

Tech Smith Banks, Chaplain

FF Joseph Herrera

EMT Megan Bush, Volunteer

Raymond Blankenship, Fire Academy

Jamie MacDonald, Community Services Board / Mental Health First Aid Instructor

Victor Mealy, Community Services Board

Sayshan Conver-White, Prince Georges County Deputy Chief (retired)

Dedication and Service Delivery Model Workgroup

Purpose:

The Dedication and Service Delivery Model Workgroup will focus on promoting and ensuring a safe, positive, inclusive, and supportive workplace environment for a combination Fire-Based EMS Department where all members - career, volunteer, and civilian - are respected, valued, and recognized for their contributions, service, and achievements. Create a workplace environment that empowers all members to engage in open, respectful, honest dialogue about core issues without conflict to build trust and teamwork amongst all members. The workgroup will work closely with the Communications Team to ensure routine timely updates on the progress of the action plan and the workgroups. The workgroup will examine and develop evaluation tools to measure the environmental climate in the Department within the next 12 months and subsequently every 24 months prospectively.

Lead: AC Reggie Johnson

Co-Leads: AC John Caussin, AC Chuck Ryan

[Membership under development]

EMS Workgroup

Purpose:

The EMS Workgroup was established to evaluate the core issues related to the perception and resource allocation of the EMS division within the Fire and Rescue Department. The Workgroup is composed of a diverse group of individuals, ranging from career and volunteer personnel to civilian staff. The Workgroup is dedicated to creating influential initiatives and achievable solutions that spur positive change in the culture and climate of the Department.

Lead: Tech Jon Bailey

Co-Lead: Capt II Mark Kordalski

BC John Chesek

Captain II David Sellers

Captain II John Streeter

Lt. Chris Kroboth

ETech Alyssa Vance

ETech Jason Trautman

Beth Adams, Quality Manager, EMS

FF/Medic Howard Capon

FF/Medic Chris Seaman

FF/EMT Jordan Yost

Volunteer Jeff Medic Snow

Hiring and Retention Workgroup

Purpose:

The purpose of the Hiring Process Workgroup is to thoroughly examine and offer recommendations regarding all facets of the recruitment and hiring practice. By examining with a critical eye, we will be able create achievable initiatives that will bring positive change to the hiring process.

We will do this by:

- *Gathering and reviewing all policies and procedures related to the current hiring process.*
- *Ensuring that the hiring process follows all applicable Federal, State and County of Fairfax laws, policies, procedures, and directives.*
- *Ensuring the recruitment staff of the FRD has the tools, training and motivation to operate in the most efficient and effective manner.*
- *Ensuring the FRD hires the best qualified people, recognizing the value and strength of diversity in the workplace.*
- *Researching and implementing industry best practices to ensure a highly qualified and diverse applicant pool.*
- *Focus on the retention of valuable employees ensuring adequate training, development and promotional opportunities to increase value in the recruitment section.*

Lead: BC Tom Arnold

Co-Lead: Hope Hohmann, DHR

Captain II Brian Edmonston

Captain I Mike Mohler

Master Tech Linda Post

Acting Tech Daniel Donata
FF/Medic John Winstead
Kim Panzer
Shelley Cobb, Deputy Director, DHR
Shira Goodfellow, FOCUS Business Support Group (FBSG)

Human Relations/Conflict Resolution Initiatives Workgroup

Purpose:

The purpose of the Human Relations/Conflict Resolution Initiatives Workgroup is to examine and offer recommendations regarding the complaint, grievance, and conflict resolution processes in the Fire & Rescue Department. Review and consider a process for a cadre of FRD personnel to learn conflict resolution skills and be available to FRD personnel from informal settings to more formal settings, and to act as a resource/ liaison with the Countywide Alternative Dispute Resolution program. This workgroup will also initiate a process to review all policies and procedures related to the current complaint and grievance processes, with the goal of ensuring that the FRD complaint and grievance processes follow "best in class" process and all applicable County Personnel Regulations, policies, and procedures. And, finally, as appropriate with the above actions, this workgroup will recommend additional components to the different levels of training provided within the Fire & Rescue Department's training program. CSC and ADR staff will also work with FRD personnel to develop training components.

Lead: Sara Simmons, Executive Director, Civil Service Commission

Co-Lead: Captain I Thomas Johnson

Chris Eichmann, Alternative Dispute Resolution Programs
Liz Gallop
AC Chuck Ryan
Captain I Buck Best
Captain I Ron Kuley
Captain I Tracey Reed
Lt. Marc Davidson
Lt. Jeff Loach
Lt. Ben Coffman
FF Joseph Herrera
Toni Garcia
Shelley Cobb, Deputy Director, DHR
Leslie Clough, DHR

Investigative Policies and Procedures Workgroup

Purpose:

The primary focus of the Procedural-Investigative Review Workgroup is to identify current procedural and investigative processes associated with FRD policies, County Personnel Regulations, policies, and procedures to ensure consistency, fairness, timely, and comprehensive investigations of complaints. The workgroup will also will assess the Professional Standards Unit and benchmark it against industry best practices and to ensure data and trend analysis practices and procedures are in place.

Lead: DC Robert Zoldos

Co-Lead: Captain II Jared Goff

[Established June 26, 2017, membership under development]

Leadership and Professional Development Workgroup

Purpose:

The Leadership and Professional Development Workgroup's mission is to create a comprehensive, cohesive, systematic, and sustainable approach for training and education of all Fire & Rescue Department members. We will engage a diverse set of members and other County agencies to ensure an inclusive perspective that produces a clear and defined path to success for our organization. We will collectively build an effective continuum of training that affirms the personal and professional knowledge, skills, and abilities required for effective leadership and will set the standard and forge the expectations that will craft a culture and climate of long term success for our Department.

Leads: Lt Marc Davidson and Captain I Tracey Reed

Co-Leads: BC Fred Brandell and DC Dan Shaw

AC Reggie Johnson
DC Robert Zoldos
BC Mike Deli
BC Edith Eshleman
BC Bill Betz
BC Rex Strickland
BC (retired) Jim Hedrick
Captain II Kim Hood
Captain I Chris Brown
Captain I Reggie Wadley
Captain I Andy Devlin
Lt. Jessica Smith
Lt. Jay Smith
Lt. Jason Abitz
Lt. Kris Johnson
Lt. Damian Ripley
Lt. Ben Coffman
Volunteer Unit Officer Kevin Long
ETech Melanie Jenkins
FF Sean O'Neil
FF Mike Hertig
Robin Baker, DHR/Organizational Development & Training (OD&T)
Kim Panzer, FRD Fiscal Administrator
MaryAnne Zandall, FRD/Career Development
Allison Mulligan, DHR/OD&T

Promotional Initiatives Workgroup

Purpose:

The primary purpose for the Promotional Solutions Workgroup is to focus on assessing the promotional process for each rank in operations and for staff positions. This will include an opportunity to have a standardized review process for those candidates not selected for staff positions. Providing transparency with achievable initiatives for proposed solutions that can be implemented to improve on and bring positive change to the culture and climate in the Department.

Lead: Captain I Ron Kuley

Co-Lead: Captain II Merv Barrera

DC Joe Knerr

BC Fred Brandell

Captain II Richie Cunningham

Captain II Dave Barlow

Captain II Jennifer Svites

Captain I Rich Merrell

Captain I Reggie Wadley

Lt. Annette Corwin

Lt. Ivan Holmes

ETech Karen Torpey

ETech Chris Theobald

Tech Robert Young

Shelley Cobb, Deputy Director, DHR

Volunteer Workgroup

Purpose:

The primary purpose for the Volunteer Workgroup is to focus on issues that affect the combination aspects of the Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department, as well as those items that are specifically volunteer related. By improving these areas, we can increase the diversity and participation levels of the over 500 operational members and 250 administrative members as well as the overall strength of the twelve non-profit organizations that work alongside the FCFRD, thereby effecting positive change in the culture and climate of the combination system.

Lead: Volunteer Chief Jon Morrison (402)

Co-Lead: EMT-I Jaime Wolfin, President, Dunn Loring VFD (413)

FF Jaime Nguyen President, Dunn Loring VFD (422)

FF Mike Wendt (417), President, Fairfax County Volunteer Fire-Rescue Association (FCVFRA)

Tonya McCreary, President, Burke VFD (414)

EMT Koray Kotan (401)

EMT Daniel Liebman (405)

EMT Amy Karam (408)

EMT Kevin Quant (410)

EMT John Powers (414)

MAIII Jeff Katz, FRD

Women's Initiatives Workgroup

Purpose:

The primary focus of the Women's Initiatives Workgroup is to identify core issues within our organization related to the women of our Department and to explore opportunities for growth, progressive change, and improvement. The workgroup will develop appropriate goals related to the identified core issues, collect relevant data, analyze research data, and develop achievable objectives that provide a measureable framework through which positive change to the culture and climate of the organization may be realized.

Lead: BC Cheri Zosh

Co-Lead: Lt. Katja Lancing

BC Ryland Kendrick

Captain II David Sellers

Captain II Kimberly Hood

Captain II Jennifer Svites

Captain II Calvin Alexander

Captain I Thomas Johnson

Lt. Stacie Gatatis

Lt. Miranda Pelham

Master Tech Allison Jaquays

Master Tech Linda Post

Tech Alisha Reakoff

FF Julianna Tomeskecki

Beth Adams, Quality Manager, EMS

Volunteers: Joan Dempsey, Vivian Benderwald, Narr Madrid

Ina G. Fernandez, Division Director, Children, Youth, and Families, Department of Family Services

Shelley Cobb, Deputy Director, DHR

Robin Baker, DHR/OD&T

Appendix II



**Fire and Rescue Department
Organizational Climate Review Action
Plan - Communications Plan**



SUMMARY

The internal communications strategy outlines methods designed to provide accurate and timely information and messages to FRD staff for the “Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department Organizational Climate Review Action Plan.” These methods will emphasize that addressing the goals, objectives, and initiatives in the action plan is a top priority for the Department and the County, and identify recommendations being considered or developed to achieve positive outcomes.

The external communications strategy is intended to relay information to non-staff stakeholders including the public and media. Communications will similarly focus on the goals, objectives, and initiatives in the action plan, and progress being made. Stakeholders will be especially focused on meaningful progress in addressing the Department’s challenges as identified in the assessment.

COMMUNICATIONS OBJECTIVE

The internal strategy is in place to emphasize the need for cultural change within the Department and the objective of creating a safe, positive, welcoming and inclusive workplace environment for all FRD members. The plan will facilitate dissemination of timely, accurate, and relevant information regarding the assessment results and action steps being taken to drive this cultural change. The internal effort will also help to reduce misinformation and facilitate understanding about why these changes are taking place.

The external communications strategy will help to reassure the public and other stakeholders that Fairfax County Government and FRD leadership are committed and actively working to address the issues identified, in as transparent a manner as possible, and provide accountability and follow through as any recommendations are implemented.

AUDIENCE

The internal strategy will address key information and updates to all career, volunteer, and civilian members. The external strategy will address key stakeholders including the public, the

media and elected and appointed County officials. Internally, attention will be given to communicating with personnel who might not have regular access to email or a computer.

COMMUNICATIONS METHODS

In addition to utilizing the internal communication methods listed below to push out information, it will be important to use them where possible for collecting feedback and providing two-way channels for employees to share their views.

- **FireNet** – Dedicated page/blog for all releases and communications regarding the assessment and subsequent actions.
- **Video Messages** – Recorded by the Fire Chief or others to communicate information directly. Allows for immediate dissemination to the entire audience.
- **Email** – Messages from the County Executive, Fire Chief, Executive Review Committee, and others as appropriate. These emails can be collected on the FireNet page as well.
- **Questions Submission** – Feature on FireNet page where personnel can submit questions to be addressed by the Fire Chief.
- **Q&A with Fire Chief** – Video or written format answering questions submitted by personnel.
- **Face-to-Face Meetings** – Includes adjusting framework of Fire Chief's visits.
- **Talking Points** – For battalion chiefs and other Department leaders to use in meetings with all shifts, to ensure common messages.

The FireNet page should be published in conjunction with the action plan. The page will provide a clearinghouse for all information disseminated in the future about the action plan and the report as well as information about any actions that have already taken place.

Externally, it will be important to provide a reference for the public and the media to stay informed and track progress in addition to providing updates as developments warrant.

- **Public Website** – A public web page will be developed based in part on the format used by the Ad Hoc Police Practices Review Commission, to provide information on the action plan, house updates and provide progress tracking.
- **Fire Blog** – The FRD blog can be used to convey developments and progress and a permalink to the cultural assessment action plan web page on the public site can be considered.
- **Media** – The Fire Chief can utilize various media outlets to communicate as milestones or other plan implementation goals are met.

- **Social Media** – As appropriate to broaden reach of updates and milestone achievements.

APPROVAL PROCESS

Internally, FRD's Public Affairs Division will be included in the release of all information to ensure consistency with key messages. Approval will be given by the PA division's Battalion Chief, the Fire Chief's Aide, and the Fire Chief.

Information for public dissemination will be coordinated with the County's Office of Public Affairs and County leadership as appropriate.