KING COUNTY FIRE CHIEFS ASSOCIATION

TOOLKIT FOR ADVANCING DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION IN KING COUNTY FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES

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TOOLKIT BACKGROUND

Why it was created: This toolkit was created for the King County Fire Chiefs Association (KCFCA) to support the King County fire and EMS departments in creating a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive workplace.

How it was created: The research that went into developing this toolkit included:

- A review of the literature on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in fire and emergency services, related fields and more generally.
- A survey of King County departments to assess current demographics, what progress has been made, and where there are gaps and support needs. This survey was completed by 27 of 28 departments.
- A survey of national fire departments that are making progress in this area or using innovative methods based on our research and discussions. Twenty-two departments were sent the survey and six completed it.
- Interviews with representatives from Women in Fire, the National Association of Black Professional Firefighters, the National Association of Hispanic Firefighters, the International Association of Fire Firefighters 7th District, Texas A&M Engineering Extension Service, and UCLA Anderson School of Management.

This research is summarized in a companion document, *Strategies for increasing diversity, equity, and inclusion in fire and emergency services.* Please reference that document for additional information on the underlying research that was used to create the toolkit.

Definitions used in this document:

- **Belonging** - the experience of being treated and feeling like a full member of a larger community where you can thrive[i]
- **Diversity** - There are many kinds of diversity, based on race, gender, sexual orientation, class, age, country of origin, education, religion, geography, physical, or cognitive abilities. Valuing diversity means recognizing differences between people, acknowledging that these differences are a valued asset, and striving for diverse representation as a critical step towards equity[ii]
- **Equity** – Equity means fairness and justice and focuses on outcomes that are most appropriate for a given group, recognizing different challenges, needs, and histories. It is different than equality, or "same treatment," which doesn't take differing needs or disparate outcomes into account[iii]
- **Inclusion** – A set of behaviors (culture) that encourages employees to feel valued for their unique qualities and experience a sense of belonging[iv]
- **Leadership** – For this report, we consider leadership to be those with a title of chief
- **Progressive recruitment** - Recruiting that specifically targets and directly engages candidates from underrepresented groups[v]
- **Underrepresented group -** A group that is less represented in one subset than in the general population

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The toolkit provides a holistic approach to diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace, spanning the employee experience from recruitment to retention and the planning and systems required to support them. The main sections of the toolkit are:

| Leadership & Planning | Outreach & Recruitment | Hiring | Retention, Inclusion, & Belonging |

The toolkit is designed for departments of varying size by identifying where outside resources may be leveraged for departments with limited internal capacity. It also provides resources for departments who are just starting to work towards equity and those who are farther in their process.

The checklists contain statements that will help guide your department in centering equity in your planning, processes, and programs. They are not meant to be an exhaustive to-do list but rather a tool for discussion and planning. Each department is unique and will need to find the process that works best for their workplace.

Resources

The resources provide links to templates, examples, tools, lists, and further reading. The resources are provided for reference. Having discussions to identify your department's unique needs is crucial to gaining a greater understanding of your department and implementing systems that will be sustainable. The lists of local organizations, schools, and consultants throughout the toolkit are not endorsements but rather a starting place for your research. All of the resources shared throughout the report can also be found in this online compendium.

Throughout the toolkit, you will find highlighted examples from other fire departments. This provides some insight into other departments' practices and an opportunity to reach out and learn more from them.

LEADERSHIP & PLANNING

Leadership Commitment

The literature clearly points to commitment from top leadership as one of the most critical components in changing the culture of an organization and attracting and supporting individuals from underrepresented groups. Having diverse representation at the leadership level and allowing leaders to be their authentic selves within the workplace, promotes equity as decisions will more likely consider the needs of all groups.

> *"Diversity goal messaging from the fire chief, consistent training, engagement of key department stakeholder groups, and the use of ongoing measurements of progress are critical."*
>
> -LAFD Chief Terrazas[vi]

Leaders can demonstrate their commitment by identifying and addressing their own internal biases, communicating their values through both internal and external messaging, and dedicating the resources needed to make these changes. For smaller departments, this may include leveraging partnerships or outside resources to meet their goals. Leaders will need to hold themselves and their employees accountable to the department's equity values and goals. Finally, department leadership should be upfront with their staff that this change will be difficult and uncomfortable, but if they can confront the challenges and remain steadfast, their efforts will lead to a more equitable workplace.

The following checklist can help leaders reflect on and strengthen their commitment to advancing equity:

☐	I am examining and addressing my internal bias through self-education, reflection, and accepting and responding to feedback
☐	Our department is committed to advancing and supporting diversity in leadership
☐	We are dedicating the resources necessary to make true, sustained change in our department
☐	I communicate my commitment to equity in my department clearly and consistently
☐	I hold myself and other leaders and managers accountable to our goals around equity
☐	We are prepared to sustain this work long-term by developing the resilience to confront challenges and keep moving forward

🖥 Resources	
Educational resources for leaders	▪ The Management Center choice points ▪ 11 books to read if you want to be a more inclusive leader ▪ Diversity Equity Inclusiveness Consulting: Leading during traumatic and triggering events ▪ City of Seattle Racial Equity Toolkit

Strategic Planning

The strategic planning process includes developing or updating a department's mission, vision, and values statements as well as a strategic plan. Departments that already have mission, vision, and values statements may want to take the time to review them to ensure they are reflective of their commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. The process should involve internal and external stakeholders, including community members. Including individuals from the community in planning work will provide an opportunity for the department to learn from their perspectives, gain knowledge of their needs, and be held accountable to their goals.

A vision statement defines the department's aspirations or future goals, the mission articulates the department's purpose, and values define the core priorities that guide their work. The strategic plan helps departments implement their mission and vision, manage change, and stay focused on their long-term goals. Departments should ensure their goals around diversity, equity, and inclusion are clearly stated in their strategic plans with measurable metrics to evaluate their progress in this area. The strategic plan should be available to the public and well communicated within the department to ensure department personnel understand how tasks align with the overarching goals and how progress will be measured.

The following checklist can help departments think through the implementation of their strategic planning process:

☐	We include representatives from all levels of the department in the planning process
☐	We include stakeholders from the community in planning and provide multiple avenues for them to provide input
☐	We define terms in our mission, vision, values, and strategic plan to ensure common understanding
☐	We have clearly stated goals and a path for reaching those goals
☐	We use data to inform our goals and to measure our progress
☐	Our strategic plan is available to the public
☐	Our mission, vision, values, and strategic goals are well communicated within department

⌨ Resources	
Strategic planning worksheets	▪ IAFC vision, mission, and values statement worksheet
Goals worksheets	▪ The Management Center: SMARTIE goals worksheet ▪ IAFC SMART goal-setting worksheet

Communication

The case for diversity should be well-defined and used by leadership to build support. Leadership commitment should be communicated clearly, consistently, and at all levels of the department. Departments may want to create a committee to oversee internal and external communications to ensure messaging is factual, inclusive, and supportive of underrepresented groups. Equity goals and statements should be posted in every station and reinforced in internal and external documents. For most departments, this will be a cultural shift that will take constant reinforcing, through internal communication, to have a lasting impact.

> *"The strongest and most statistically significant correlations in the data are with having a strong diversity and inclusion message and internal commitment."*
>
> *- Fox et al.[vii]*

The following checklist provides some guidance on communicating your commitment and goals:

☐	We have established a committee to develop a communications plan and oversee messaging
☐	Our department is visible and vocal in our support of DEI goals
☐	We have made a clear case to members on why DEI work is important and how it relates to the department's overall values/goals
☐	We encourage respectful conversation on equity in the fire department
☐	We incorporate DEI goals in every station and internal/external documents
☐	We reinforce DEI messaging in every aspect of the department: internal and external documents, website, social media, training, etc.

Resources	
Communication planning templates	▪ Mindtools communication planning template
Communications resources	▪ IAFC: Be inclusive initiative posters ▪ Messaging for advancing diversity, equity and inclusion within your fire department

Equity planning

Leaders, especially those who have never experienced bias or discrimination in the workplace, may be ill equipped to undergo planning in creating a more diverse, equitable and supportive workplace. Department leaders should include a diverse group of individuals in planning efforts, including employees of different ranks in the department who have a deep understanding of how these dynamics play out in recruitment, hiring, and retention and an interest in making changes within the department. Creating a committee to undergo this work can be effective as it makes a group accountable for change within the organization and can increase buy-in. While this process will take longer, it will result in a better plan and more support.

> The City of Madison Fire Department has both an Equity Committee and a Women's Equity Committee that formed out of listening sessions the department held with employees. The committees are ongoing and help to drive changes in the department.

The IAFF can provide a range of technical assistance to the local union through the creation of a Human Relations Committee, comprised of local stakeholders, to ensure the department has the resources they need to prevent discrimination and implement inclusive strategies.

The following checklist provides some guidance on equity planning:

	☐ We involve people from all levels of the department in planning
	☐ We have defined DEI terms for our department so there is common understanding
	☐ We have created a business case for advancing DEI in the department
	☐ We have established DEI priorities and goals that align with our strategic plan
	☐ We have a workplan to accomplish our equity goals
	☐ We use data to both inform our priorities and measure the progress we are making
	☐ Our DEI goals are well communicated within the department

Resources	
Committee examples	▪ IAFF: Human Relations Committee (you will need login credentials) ▪ Fairfax County (Virginia) Fire and Rescue Department Fire Chief's Equity and Inclusion Council
Definitions	▪ Racial Equity Tools Glossary
Fire-specific training on DEI planning	▪ IAFC: Overcoming cultural barriers for a more inclusive volunteer workforce ▪ IAFC: A practical approach to diversity and inclusion in the volunteer fire service ▪ IAFC: Diversity in the volunteer fire service ▪ IAFC: Virtual leadership class: Diversity, inclusion, and engagement

Measurement

Department leadership should be informed of their demographic data throughout the ranks of the fire department and how it compares to their community overall. As changes are made within the organization, data should be tracked at each step, which will help the department know what is working and make improvements as needed. As part of the strategic planning process, measurable goals should be set for improvement and tracked regularly. In addition, this data should be available throughout the department and to the public for transparency and accountability.

The following checklist provides some guidance on using data for department planning:

📋	☐ We collect demographic data on our employees (e.g., race, ethnicity, gender, etc.)
	☐ We have safeguards in place to protect employee data
	☐ We report this data by rank (i.e., firefighter, paramedic, lieutenant, captain, chief)
	☐ We compare our department's demographic data to that of our service area
	☐ We make our department's demographic data available internally and publicly
	☐ We are using this data to set goals and measure our progress

🖥 Resources	
Measurement tools	▪ [Example demographic data measures](#)

The diagram below shows how equity needs to be integrated into all aspects of the organization to create sustainable change and how neglecting certain areas can negatively impact the overall process.

The Recipe for Change
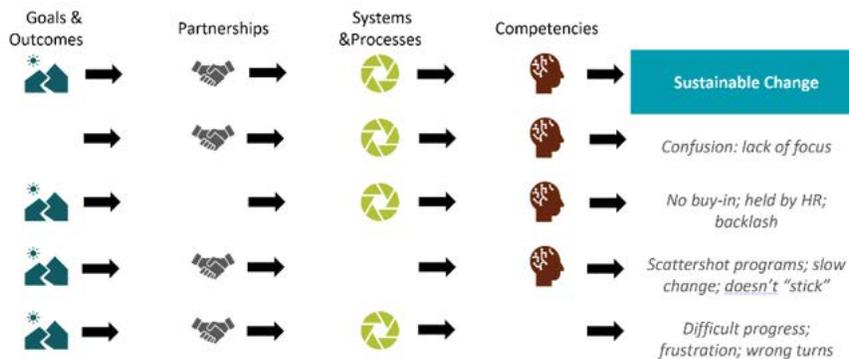
Adapted from ORC Worldwide[viii]

OUTREACH & RECRUITMENT

<div style="background-color:gray">Recruitment Plan</div>

Fire departments should design a comprehensive recruitment plan, developed by a team of individuals with a strong interest in diversifying the department. The team should set recruitment goals based on the department's needs and then develop a workplan to achieve those goals. The literature suggests the most effective recruiting efforts use a variety of methods including progressive recruiting that targets and engages individuals from underrepresented groups.

The following checklist provides some guidance around developing a recruitment plan:

	☐ We have identified a team of individuals to develop the recruiting plan
	☐ We use demographic data from our department to identify and better target our efforts to underrepresented groups
	☐ We have created measurable, time-specific recruitment goals
	☐ We have a workplan that will allow us to meet our recruitment goals
	☐ We utilize recruitment data to inform and refine our plans

🖥 Resources	
Recruitment plan example	▪ LAFD Recruitment Plan 2017-2018

Job Posting

Job descriptions should not only have Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) language but a message about the value of inclusion within the department and should have clear salary and benefit information as well as job requirements. Job requirements should include the minimum educational and professional experience necessary to be a successful firefighter. By incorporating all aspects of the job and traits needed into the job description, more individuals from underrepresented groups could see themselves in the role and departments could take steps toward a more holistic definition of what a firefighter is. This means descriptions should paint a realistic picture of the amount of time that would be dedicated to different parts of the job, such as medical calls and fire suppression, and give equal weight to the different skills and traits needed, such as leadership skills, physical strength, and knowledge of the community. Offering a language incentive could attract more individuals to the position and help the department better serve the community.

The following checklist provides some guidance on creating and refining job postings:

☐	Salary and benefits are clearly stated in our job postings
☐	We only require the minimum qualifications to perform the job
☐	All requirements are job-related
☐	Our job descriptions encompass all aspects of the job
☐	We have EEOC and other language describing our department's values of equity, inclusion, and diversity in our job postings

Resources	
Job description resources	▪ The Management Center role defining

> "The Seattle Fire Department is looking to create a diverse team of hardworking, committed individuals with a passion for public service and who are deeply aligned with our City's values of Race and Social Justice. The City of Seattle is an Equal Opportunity Employer. Applicants are considered for positions without regard to race, color, religion, creed, sex, sexual orientation, national origin, ancestry, age, disability, marital status, veteran status, gender identity, political ideology, or any other basis prohibited by federal, state, and local laws."

Advertising

Advertising should specifically target individuals from underrepresented groups both in message and in placement. Departments should seek out media sources used by women and people of color as well as immigrant and LGBTQ+ communities. Word of mouth should be used as one of many sources of recruitment as a planned approach that focuses on bringing in people from underrepresented groups. The ubiquity of social media, especially for younger generations, makes it an effective tool for reaching multiple communities and communicating the department's values. A communications person who is fluent in the different social media platforms can create a targeted social media campaign.

The following checklist provides some guidance on increasing your advertising reach:

	☐ We use our social media accounts to communicate our goals around equity and information about hiring
	☐ We have identified media outlets that specifically serve underrepresented communities in our area
	☐ We are advertising job postings and information about hiring in those media outlets
	☐ We are advertising job postings with fire associations that serve underrepresented groups
	☐ We reach out to local media outlets to do stories on our equity and hiring goals

Resources

Fire associations for job posting	▪ Women in Fire ▪ National Association of Black Professional Fire Fighters ▪ National Association of Hispanic Firefighters
Media sources for job posting	▪ City of Seattle Ethnic Media Directory ▪ Other media outlets not covered in the directory: ColorsNW, Seattle Gay News, South Seattle Emerald
Marketing templates	▪ IAFC: Fillable Marketing Materials for Volunteer Recruitment
Example marketing videos	▪ Minneapolis Fire Department 2017 Cadet Recruiting
Social media resources	▪ IAFC: Using Facebook for Recruitment and Retention ▪ Pagefreezer: How Fire Departments Should Use Social Media ▪ IAFC: Social Media Handbook

Career exploration program

Programs such as fire cadets, camps, explorer programs, and internships in the fire department can provide young people a chance to explore a career in the fire service. The programs give youth and young adults a chance to work alongside firefighters, learn basic firefighting competencies, and develop their leadership skills. For participants from underrepresented groups, it can be an opportunity for them to meet a firefighter who looks like them and really envision themselves pursuing the career. There are several exploration and instructional programs in the King County area listed below.

The following checklist provides some guidance on utilizing and supporting career exploration programs:

	☐ We refer interested community members to our local career exploration programs
	☐ We help advertise our local career exploration programs
	☐ We recruit from our local career exploration programs
	☐ We partner with our local career exploration programs to help with programming

Resources	
King County career exploration and instructional programs	▪ Cadet Program ▪ Camp Blaze ▪ Eastside Fire Explorer Program ▪ Future Women in EMS/Fire ▪ King County Strategic Training & Recruitment (S.T.A.R.) Program ▪ Puget Sound Skills Center Fire & Emergency Services Program ▪ Vashon Island Fire and Rescue Explorer Program ▪ Zone 3 Fire Cadets

LAFD Photo | Jorge Arellano, a member of the LAFD Volunteer Photographer Program

Community outreach and engagement

Outreach and engagement are crucial, not only for recruiting, but to better understand and serve your community. Attending community events such as festivals, parades, meetings, and youth programs will make the department more visible and help to forge new partnerships. While it is critical to be seen in the community events, it is important for the department to also develop long-term relationships with organizations. Reaching out to community organizations, religious groups, and schools could be the first step in developing a lasting partnership. Departments will need to invest time in listening and responding to the needs of their community partners. Partnerships with elementary schools, high schools, and colleges serving students from underrepresented groups can help to educate children and young adults about careers in the fire service and develop an early interest in the field.

Many departments enlist current firefighters to help with outreach and recruiting. Some departments employ a designated recruitment team of current firefighters or employ community liaisons, who are hired or given additional job duties to recruit within their community. If current firefighters are doing recruitment for the department, they should be compensated for their time. For example, Tacoma Fire Department has a diverse team of around 50 employees who get paid overtime to do recruitment.

The following checklist provides some guidance on engaging your community:

	☐ We have identified the groups that have been excluded from our outreach
	☐ We attend community events including parades, festivals, meetings, and youth programs
	☐ We host events and invite the community to learn more about our department
	☐ We meet with community groups to identify how they want to partner with the fire department
	☐ We listen to what their specific needs and concerns are
	☐ We build reciprocal, trusted relationships over time
	☐ We ask them how they would like to be involved with recruiting efforts
	☐ We visit diverse elementary, junior high, and high schools in our community through story time, fire safety education, and/or career events
	☐ We have partnerships with community colleges in our area
	☐ We compensate firefighters who do recruiting for the department

Resources	
King County community organizations and schools	▪ King County community organizations ▪ Seattle Times: Why aren't Seattle schools more racially diverse? (shows racial diversity data by school throughout King County)
IAFC outreach resources	▪ IAFC: How to increase community outreach ▪ IAFC: How to host a successful open house ▪ IAFC: Can one day make a firefighter? Recruiting women into the fire service

HIRING

As part of their equity planning, departments should review their hiring process to assure a fair, unbiased, and objective process. Departments may want to work with an outside consultant or association who can help in completing an assessment of their process. This should include looking at the required qualifications and certifications and only including those that are necessary to perform the job. For instance, departments can choose to train firefighters in EMT rather than making it a requirement upon hire. Collecting and analyzing data, disaggregated by race and gender, at each step of the hiring process can help to identify disparate impact and inequities. Departments should also make sure the steps of the hiring process are clear and easily accessible to the public. The way in which candidates are placed on the hiring list and the process the department uses to pull from that list can have major impacts on the equity and should also be a focus of the hiring process review.

The following checklist provides some guidance on advancing equity in the hiring process:

	☐ We have assessed the equity of each step in our hiring process
	☐ We have clarified the hiring process for the public
	☐ We collect and analyze data at each step in the hiring process to assess for bias
	☐ We have removed certifications and requirements that are not necessary to perform the job
	☐ We bring as many candidates into the hiring process as possible

🖥 Resources	
Department hiring process descriptions	▪ City of Madison Fire Department hiring process ▪ Dallas Fire-Rescue hiring process
Hiring data examples	▪ FDNY Admissions and graduation statistics
Hiring tools	▪ The Management Center: Mitigating bias in hiring with a simple rubric ▪ City of Tacoma: Handbook for Recruiting, Hiring & Retention – Applying an Equity Lens
Consultants to help with assessing the process	▪ Morpho Leadership Development ▪ Women in Fire (provide tailored trainings upon request)

🔍 Seattle Fire Department instituted the rule of 25, which means they can select candidates from the top 25% of their hiring list. The Port of Seattle brings "50% diverse candidates to the initial interviews". Several other departments have increased the initial interview pool by introducing a rapid round step or changing civil service rules to allow more candidates in the oral board process.

Physical and written tests

Departments should review the physical tests required to ensure they only include job-related skills and look at how the test is administered and weighted. If possible, departments could eliminate financial barriers by paying for the physical tests rather than placing that burden on the applicant. Written tests are known to have an adverse impact on equity in departments and fire leaders should weigh the value of the written test to the hiring process. If a written test is required, it should be written at the educational level necessary and should focus on the basic skills required for the job, as well as personal characteristics and values to determine who the applicant is as a person.

Tacoma Fire Department removed the CPAT requirement from their hiring process and has made it a part of their academy. Since making this change several years ago they have had around a 98% CPAT pass rate.

The following checklist provides some guidance on advancing equity in the hiring process:

☐	We have assessed the value and weighting of our written test
☐	We have assessed our physical test for job-relatedness
☐	We have assessed the administration and weighting of our physical test
☐	We pay for candidate testing to eliminate barriers in our hiring process

Oral boards

Departments should have a diverse group of interviewers on the hiring panel who have been trained in mitigating implicit bias. Many departments invite community members to serve on the interview panel, which helps to provide another perspective and gives voice to the community. Interview questions that ask more about the candidate's character and values, rather than knowing the ins and outs of the job, can be beneficial in advancing more women and people of color.

Eastside Fire & Rescue provides follow-up to any candidate who requests it who does not advance past the initial or final interview round

The following checklist provides some guidance on advancing equity in the hiring process:

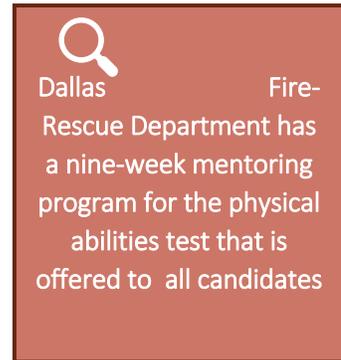|	
	☐ We recruit diverse hiring panels (including community members)
	☐ We train our hiring panels in Implicit bias and strategies for mitigation
	☐ We have a formal assessment and scoring process for interviews
	☐ We ask candidates about their character and values rather than prior knowledge or experience of firefighting

Resources	
Resources on mitigating bias	▪ The Management Center: Mitigating bias in hiring with a simple rubric ▪ HBR: Don't give up on unconscious bias training – make it better ▪ Project Implicit

Candidate mentoring/preparation

Departments should consider providing in-house training for women to prepare for the physical test, as this has been proven to increase pass rates. While individual departments may not have the capacity to implement a training program, they could consider leveraging partnerships with other departments to build a joint program. Departments should also consider providing tutoring or coaching to assist candidates with preparation for written exams and/or interviews. Creating a program to match candidates with current firefighters is a good way to provide support as they navigate the process. If departments are not able to develop a candidate preparation or mentoring program, they could still reach out to candidates through phone calls or contact cards during the process.

> Dallas Fire-Rescue Department has a nine-week mentoring program for the physical abilities test that is offered to all candidates

The following checklist provides some guidance on candidate mentoring/preparation:

☐	We have talked with other departments in our area about what they provide to candidates and the potential for partnering
☐	We have assessed our need and capacity for implementing a physical test candidate preparation program
☐	We have assessed our need and capacity for implementing a written test candidate preparation program
☐	We have assessed our need and capacity for implementing an oral board candidate preparation program
☐	We have assessed our need and capacity for implementing a candidate mentoring program

Resources	
Candidate mentoring program examples	▪ FDNY Firefighter candidate mentorship program ▪ Dallas Fire-Rescue CPAT mentorship program ▪ LACofFD Women's Fire Prep Academy
Mentoring program tools	▪ The Balance Careers: How to use the STAR interview response method

Academy

Once a candidate makes it through the hiring process, they typically go through several mentally and physically challenging weeks of fire academy. New recruits are put through intensive training and are expected to show their ability to perform the job during this period. It can be an extremely stressful time if a recruit enters each day of academy with the fear of being fired before even getting on shift. Ensuring each recruit is held to the same clear and consistent standards, which are necessary to perform the job, can help to reduce stress. Leaders will need to adapt their training practices as they recruit a more diverse workforce who may be coming in with different skillsets. Departments should take an equitable approach to academy, ensuring each person is getting the specific help they need to meet the standards and be successful. If an individual is not able to meet the standards set by the department, it should not come as a surprise when they fail as they received the support needed to pass, just like their peers.

The following checklist provides some guidance on candidate mentoring/preparation:

	☐ All our recruits are held to the same clear, consistent, and job-related standards
	☐ We acknowledge and respect different learning styles and use a range of teaching methods
	☐ We respect and acknowledge different body types and strength levels and use a range of training techniques (e.g., raising ladders, hose handling, etc.)
	☐ We have a diverse group of trainers, including women, who can provide tips for performing physical tasks
	☐ We recognize and value the different skillsets our recruits bring to the department
	☐ When recruits are struggling in different areas, we provide opportunities for them to get extra practice and instruction
	☐ We ask for feedback post-academy from all participants to identify strengths and areas for improvement
	☐ We review our training practices regularly to ensure we are effectively meeting the needs of our recruits
	☐ We collect and evaluate race/ethnicity, gender and age data to look for trends, disparate impact, and areas for improvement

RETENTION, INCLUSION, & BELONGING

Employee engagement

Implementing a workplace culture or employee engagement survey can help leadership to know and address issues with their organization's culture. Results should be tracked by demographic group to identify and address differences in perception and treatment while maintaining respondents' confidentiality. Departments should include specific questions around diversity, equity, and inclusion in their workplace culture or employee engagement survey or create a specific DEI survey.

The following checklist provides some guidance on implementing an employee engagement survey:

☐	We are clear on our goals for the survey and developed it with those goals in mind
☐	We get input on the survey content and deployment from individuals from different ranks and individuals from underrepresented groups
☐	We are transparent in communication about the purpose of the survey, how long the survey will take to complete, and how the data will be used
☐	We use existing meetings and communications as opportunities to remind employees to complete the survey
☐	We disaggregate data to identify differences between groups while maintaining employee confidentiality
☐	We share survey data with the department
☐	We use survey results to implement changes

⊞ Resources	
Example survey questions	▪ [Culture Amp 20 simple engagement survey questions](#)
Climate survey toolkit	▪ [IAFC: Climate survey toolkit](#)

Anti-harassment and anti-discrimination training

While anti-harassment and anti-discrimination training is often viewed as a check-the-box activity, when done well it is an important tool to inform individuals of their rights and promote civility in the workplace. Departments should hold regular trainings that are tailored to the specific workplace and use realistic examples. The EEOC also stresses using training as a prevention tool. Anti-harassment training often focuses solely on legal liability and less on creating a respectful workplace culture. To that end, they recommend including "civility training" that focuses on cultivating a respectful culture and "bystander intervention training" that encourages employees to step in when they observe harassing behavior in the workplace.

Officers should receive separate training to ensure they understand their responsibility in reporting violations and preventing retaliation. Officer trainings should also use real life examples to help officers develop strategies to identify and address harassing behavior before it escalates and know how to use their position of authority responsibly. Like the general training, officer training should be interactive and focus on ways to create a respectful work environment that can prevent harassment.

See resources for a checklist on compliance training from the EEOC

🖥 Resources	
Anti-harassment & anti-discrimination training resources	▪ EEOC checklist for compliance training ▪ Women in Fire sexual harassment video ▪ EEOC respect in the workplace training ▪ Washington EEOC outreach coordinator Zachary Florent contact information

Anti-harassment and anti-discrimination policies

To create a safe environment within the fire station, anti-discrimination and anti-harassment policies must be implemented and enforced. The policy should define what constitutes not only harassment but also inappropriate or harassing behavior. This lets employees know what acceptable behavior is and gives the department recourse to discipline individuals who act inappropriately before it escalates into harassment. The policy should be clear that these behaviors will not be tolerated, and that violation of the policy will result in discipline that is proportionate to the severity of the offense.

Departments should provide a confidential process for reporting complaints that is clear to all employees. This process should include multiple avenues for employees to report unwelcome conduct based on a protected characteristic. Managers should be trained to receive complaints and departments may want to consider using an independent third party as one of their avenues for reporting. When incidents are reported, they should be taken seriously and proactively addressed across the board. Reports should be investigated and followed up on promptly and the department must ensure that the person reporting does not face retaliation.

See resources for checklists on anti-harassment policies from the EEOC

Resources	
Other EEOC resources	▪ EEOC checklist for an anti-harassment policy ▪ EEOC checklist for leadership on accountability ▪ EEOC checklist for a harassment reporting system and investigations ▪ EEOC chart of risk factors for harassment and responsive strategies ▪ Washington EEOC outreach coordinator Zachary Florent contact information ▪ EEOC Select Task Force on the study of harassment in the workplace (full report)
Fire and EMS-specific resources	▪ Women in Fire anti-discrimination statement ▪ IAFC Bullying and workplace violence prevention toolkit (includes example policies)

Mentoring

The literature points to mentoring programs as a way to develop a more inclusive workplace, increase job retention, and improve advancement opportunities for individuals from underrepresented groups. Women and people of color have less access to networks and relationships that can help foster their career and formal mentorship programs can support the creation of these networks. Leaders often choose people who look like them or share similar characteristics when choosing a mentee, which perpetuates homogeneity in leadership roles. Therefore, departments may want to allocate the necessary resources to implement a mentoring program that is universally available and assess its impact over time. Smaller departments that do not have capacity to implement a mentoring program may want to partner with other departments or utilize existing programs, such as the Women in Fire mentoring program.

The following checklist provides some guidance on establishing a mentoring program:

	☐ Our mentoring program is supported by leadership
	☐ We have created and articulated the business case for our mentoring program
	☐ We have universal goals and outcomes associated with the mentoring program
	☐ We have identified individuals who want to be mentors and have the skills and commitment to be successful
	☐ We have a training program for our mentors
	☐ Mentors are assigned to all new firefighters (or other target group)
	☐ We match mentors and mentees intentionally based on the development needs of the mentee
	☐ Mentor and mentee roles and time commitments are clearly defined
	☐ The mentorship program is integrated into our larger employee development program
	☐ We use data to assess the efficacy of our mentoring program and disaggregate demographic data to identify differences by group

🖥 Resources	
Mentoring Training	▪ IAFC Mentoring I: Re-energizing your department culture through positive influence ▪ IAFC Mentoring II: Developing and retaining firefighters through relationships
Mentoring Programs	▪ Women in Fire mentoring program ▪ IAFC Company Officer Section Coaching Program
Mentoring Articles	▪ Firehouse: How to build a culture of mentoring in the fire department ▪ Firehouse: Mentoring for the fire service ▪ Station-pride: Five steps for mentoring success ▪ Fire Engineering: Stepping up: Mentoring ▪ Catalyst: Making mentoring work

Employee performance review & individual development plan

According to the IAFC, individual development plans (IDPs) provide a roadmap for firefighters to achieve their long-term goals that is aligned with the department's mission, vision, and goals. Employee performance reviews provide the opportunity for individuals to discuss these goals, make plans for professional development, and receive valuable feedback on their performance. When all employees are receiving regular formal and informal feedback on their job performance and planning for their professional development, decisions around training, development, and advancement opportunities can be perceived as fairer.

Atlanta Fire-Rescue Department conducts both annual performance reviews and quarterly progress sessions between mangers and employees

See resources for checklists on employee performance reviews and individual development plans from the IAFC Guide for creating a diverse and inclusive department

🖥 Resources	
IAFC IDP and employee performance review checklists	▪ IAFC Individual development plans and performance reviews checklists
Resources for mitigating bias in evaluation	▪ The Management Center: Four ways to mitigate bias in performance evaluations
Examples from fire departments	▪ Duvall Fire Performance review of supervisors ▪ Duvall Fire Personnel evaluation and development 2020

Advancement process

It is important for departments to mitigate bias in who is selected for opportunities that could help advance a person's career, such as training, station assignments, and specialty teams. Like entry-level hiring practices, the promotional process should be carefully reviewed to eliminate bias. Job openings should be posted, and each step of the process should be assessed to ensure fairness and validated for job-relatedness. Departments should consider the value and weighting of written exams considering assessment centers and other types of evaluation have been found to be more equitable. Panels should include a diverse group of individuals from the department, and potentially the community, who are trained in mitigating implicit bias. Having a structured process and using job-related criteria to assess candidates can reduce the amount of bias.

The following checklist provides some guidance on increasing equity in advancement opportunities:

	☐ We ensure there are equal opportunities around training and development, station assignments, and specialty teams
	☐ We post all opportunities for advancement
	☐ We have assessed the weighting and value of written tests in the advancement process
	☐ We have diverse interview panels (including community members)
	☐ We have a formal assessment and scoring process for interviews
	☐ We train our hiring panels in Implicit bias and strategies for mitigation

🖥 Resources	
Resources on mitigating bias	▪ The Management Center: Mitigating bias in hiring with a simple rubric ▪ HBR: Don't give up on unconscious bias training – make it better ▪ Project Implicit

Workplace culture

While training, education, and enforcement of anti-discrimination and harassment policies can help to prevent and address formal complaints, fire departments should also acknowledge the parts of their culture that may contribute to an unsupportive or even hostile workplace. Departments should look at the language they use in their policies and messaging to ensure it is inclusive, opting for gender neutral terms such as family, rather than brothers and sisters or brotherhood and terms such as community members or residents rather than citizens, which excludes individuals without legal status. Departments should have a clear code of ethics and conduct that is modeled by leadership, reinforced through workplace norms, and does not allow for disrespectful treatment of other employees, such as hazing of newer members or racist, homophobic, or sexist jokes or remarks.

The following checklist provides some guidance on promoting a supportive and inclusive workplace culture:

	☐ We use inclusive language (e.g., gender neutral) in all internal and external communications, including policies
	☐ Our department is aware of the different languages spoken in our community
	☐ We provide information to the community in those languages
	☐ Our website is ADA compliant and all department events are ADA accessible
	☐ We have equipment specifically designed for women and smaller bodies
	☐ Our department stations allow for privacy in sleeping quarters and bathroom facilities
	☐ Our department has a code of conduct/ethics signed by all employees

🖥 Resources	
Inclusive language and policy resources	▪ IAFC Inclusive language guidance ▪ HRC Transgender inclusion in the workplace: A toolkit for employees ▪ University of Wisconsin Milwaukee Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer Plus (LGBTQ+) Resource Center – Gender Pronouns ▪ City of Madison Admin Procedure: Inclusive workplace – transgender, gender non-conforming, and non-binary employees ▪ City of Madison Resource Guide for Transgender, Gender Non-Conforming, and Non-Binary Employees ▪ City of Madison Gender-Inclusive Language Style Guide
Code of ethics resources	▪ USFA Firefighter code of ethics

Diversity, equity, and inclusion training

Diversity, equity, and inclusion training should not be considered a one-time endeavor but rather an ongoing development program and each training should include an evaluation at the end to help inform future trainings. DEI training for leadership is imperative, especially for newly promoted individuals. Training should ensure leaders understand the departments' DEI goals and code of conduct, so they are comfortable having discussions and reinforcing these values in their daily work.

Departments should provide training for all employees as each person contributes to the culture of the organization. In bringing employees together to discuss and learn, it is crucial to have a skilled trainer who is aware of how power dynamics and past trauma can impact the efficacy of the training and can mitigate these risks. Trainings should incorporate a variety of teaching methods, such as lecture, group activity, and exercises and should bring in real life examples and practical tools.

In addition to DEI trainings, educational trainings that increase knowledge and understanding of other cultures as well as mental health, disability, and LGBTQ+ healthcare could improve relationships within the firehouse as well as interactions with the community.

The following checklist provides some guidance on creating a DEI training program in your department:

	☐ We have assessed the training needs in our department
	☐ We have a comprehensive program around DEI training based on the needs of our department
	☐ We have identified skilled trainers to deliver the training
	☐ Our trainings include a mix of teaching methods and provide practical tools
	☐ We have post-training evaluations to assess their efficacy
	☐ DEI training is incorporated into our new recruit orientation and training
	☐ Newly promoted leaders receive DEI training on promoting the department's goals and perpetuating a safe and respectful workplace

🖥 Resources	
Fire-specific DEI trainers & consultants	▪ Morpho Leadership Development ▪ Dr. Manuel Fonseca ▪ Women in Fire (provide tailored trainings upon request) ▪ Cultural Bridges to Justice
Local DEI trainers & consultants	▪ Cultures Connecting: Facilitator & Consultant Directory

Mental and physical health

Promoting physical and mental health for all employees within the department can help reduce the stress and trauma of a career in fire and emergency services. Leadership should stress the importance of physical activity, healthy eating, and rest. Departments should also have inclusive healthcare practices, including pregnancy and maternity/paternity leave, lactation policies, and policies that support transgender, gender non-conforming, and non-binary employees.

Behavioral health should be as high of a priority as physical health. Department leadership should ensure they have a program that provides education and resources at all levels of the department and reduces the stigma around asking for help. Departments should also be aware that underrepresented firefighters may be facing compounding stress both from the job itself and from feelings of isolation or mistreatment that they may be experiencing.

The following checklist provides some guidance on supporting employee's mental and physical health:

	☐ We have written policies that address pregnancy, lactation, and maternity/paternity leave
	☐ We have written policies for employees transitioning in the workplace
	☐ Employees know where they can access a continuum of mental/behavioral health resources
	☐ We encourage employees to ask for help if they are struggling with mental/behavioral health
	☐ Mental/behavioral health is discussed in an open and non-judgmental way by leadership
	☐ We educate employees on mental/behavioral health

🖥 Resources	
Mental & behavioral health resources for fire and EMS	▪ NVFC Share the Load program ▪ Everyone Goes Home: Fire service behavioral health management guide ▪ IAFF Behavioral health program ▪ IAFC Surviving the job: Emotional self care for first responders webinar ▪ Firefighter Behavioral Health Alliance ▪ Firehouse: Implementing a behavioral health program ▪ Firestrong ▪ Code 4 Northwest
Example health policies	▪ IAFC pregnancy, maternity/paternity leave, and lactation policy example ▪ IAFC City of Richmond pregnancy policy example ▪ City of Madison Fire Department Non-hazardous duty and lactation after return to active duty ▪ City of Madison lactation policy for breastfeeding employees/visitors ▪ City of Madison Admin Procedure: Inclusive workplace – transgender, gender non-conforming, and non-binary employees

Affinity groups

An affinity group is defined as "a group with no departmental or government oversight in which employees may voluntarily join to build relationships with other employees having similar interests or experiences such as race, gender, gender identity, etc.".[ix] Affinity groups, also known as employee resource groups, provide a space to share experiences, advice, and mentorship and can reduce feelings of isolation. Many departments also find affinity groups to be a great source for recruiting members of their community to the fire service.

> The San Francisco Fire Department has eight different affinity groups including groups for women, Asian, Black, Hispanic, LGBTQ and military veteran firefighters.

The following checklist provides some guidance on supporting affinity groups:

	☐ Our department is open and encouraging of employees who want to start an affinity group
	☐ We see the value of affinity groups for participating employees and for the department
	☐ We will work with affinity groups to listen and respond to their needs and to better understand their community's needs

Resources	
Affinity group policies	▪ King County equity and social justice ERG/affinity policy
Affinity group examples in fire departments	▪ City of Phoenix Fire Department affinity groups

Conflict resolution

Conflicts are a normal part of any workplace and the close working and living quarters of fire and emergency services personnel can lead to more opportunities for disputes to occur. Some departments employ mediation services to help deal with conflicts that arise in the fire station and other departments have developed peer dispute resolution teams. Having different options for handling disputes in the workplace could help to resolve conflicts before they become unmanageable.

The following checklist provides some guidance on supporting employee's mental and physical health:

	☐ We provide conflict resolution training to leaders
	☐ We have multiple avenues for employees to resolve conflicts
	☐ We educate our employees in conflict resolution
	☐ Our leaders model healthy conflict resolution

Resources	
Local mediators	▪ Dispute Resolution Center of King County
	▪ Washington Mediation
	▪ Center for Dialog and Resolution
	▪ City of Bellevue Conflict Resolution Center
	▪ Sound Employment Solutions, LLC
Conflict resolution training	▪ Seattle Conflict Resolution
	▪ Nash Consulting
	▪ Center for Dialog and Resolution
Fire-specific conflict resolution articles	▪ FireRescue1: How fire departments can use dispute resolution teams
	▪ AAU: LA Fire Department asked Gould Mediation Clinic for help with personal disputes

ENDNOTES

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