

Running head: MFPD BATTALION CHIEF LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Battalion Chief Leadership Development Plan

for the Mokena Fire Protection District

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Appendices Not Included. Please visit the Learning Resource Center on the Web at <http://www.lrc.dhs.gov/> to learn how to obtain this report in its entirety through Interlibrary Loan.

Certification Statement

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

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Howard B. Stephens

Abstract

The problem was that the Mokena Fire Protection District (MFPD) has never had a rank of Battalion Chief (BC); thus it has never had a leadership development plan specifically designed to aid employees in the transformation to the promotion of BC. The purpose of this applied research project was to develop and implement a sustainable MFPD BC leadership development plan which ensures the BC will acquire the necessary knowledge, skills and abilities (KSA's) in order to be an effective leader. A descriptive research methodology was utilized in order to evaluate the information which was collected and analyzed from other organizations. Questionnaires were conducted to answer the following questions for research:

1. How do other types of service industries select their "Chief Officers"?
2. How is optimal performance (success) of BC's measured?
3. What KSA's and characteristics does a newly promoted MFPD BC need in order to be a successful Chief Officer?
4. What are the obstacles to developing successful Chief Officers?

The author's recommendations derived of this research project are:

- Continue to promote education within the MFPD throughout the ranks.
- Continue to utilize the assessment center as the testing process of all MFPD BC's.
- Establish requirements that the BC is to obtain the necessary educational and experience criteria which will allow the BC to apply to the EFO program at the NFA.
- Establish requirements that the BC is to apply for Illinois Office of the State Fire Marshal (IOSFM) fire officer three certification.
- Establish requirements that the BC is to apply for CFO designation from the CPSE.

- Establish requirements that the BC is continue their education beyond the list above.

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Introduction

The Mokena Fire Protection District (MFPD) is regionally known for the training program that it has developed and maintained over the years. The MFPD has had successful Illinois Office of the State Fire Marshal (IOSFM) recognized training academy programs; as well as numerous successful in-house training programs. The MFPD has recently re-focused the IOSFM training academy into a condensed new employee training orientation program. With that being said, it is recognized that there is no current training program / leadership development plan in place for the up-and-coming Battalion Chief's (BC), which are scheduled to be promoted in three years.

The problem identified for research is that the MFPD has never had a rank of BC; thus it has never had a leadership development plan specifically designed to aid employees in the transformation to the promotion of BC. This lack of a BC leadership development plan, if left unchanged, will directly affect the organization's ability to effectively shape and develop the newly promoted BC in their expected knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSA's); thus setting up the newly promoted BC for failure and exposing the MFPD and the stakeholders of the community to a greater amount of risk exposure.

The purpose of this applied research project is to develop and implement a sustainable MFPD BC leadership development plan which ensures the BC will acquire the necessary KSA's in order to be an effective leader. This will allow the BC to enhance the MFPD's overall performance, success in its mission, and help ensure the safety and well-being of the MFPD employees and the stakeholders of the community they are trusted to protect. A descriptive research methodology will be utilized in order to evaluate

the information which will be collected and analyzed from other organizations.

Questionnaires will be conducted and analyzed to produce an acceptable amount of original research for this project to answer the following questions:

1. How do other types of service industries select their "Chief Officers"?
2. How is optimal performance (success) of BC's measured?
3. What KSA's and characteristics does a newly promoted MFPD BC need in order to be a successful Chief Officer?
4. What are the obstacles to developing successful Chief Officers?

Background and Significance

The MFPD is situated approximately 30 miles southwest of Chicago, IL and is primarily a bedroom community which protects twelve and a half square miles, including approximately 17,500 taxpayers in four different communities. The MFPD currently employs 37 active firefighters consisting of a combination of full-time career, and paid-on-call members, which all participate in protecting the stakeholders of the MFPD's jurisdiction. The MFPD presently enjoys a Class Three fire rating as determined by the Insurance Service Office (ISO) and has become recognized as an Internationally Accredited Fire Agency by the Center for Public Safety Excellence (CPSE).

The MFPD provides emergency medical care and transport, fire suppression, fire prevention, public education, technical rescue, and hazardous materials services. The MFPD started formal auto-aid and mutual-aid agreements in 1985 to assist with the total on-scene staffing of emergency response personnel at emergency incidents. At that time, the MFPD did not have any senior living centers, the population was dramatically less than today, much fewer number of schools and children, and Hazardous Materials (Haz-

Mat), Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD), and terrorism were things that only big cities had to worry about.

The population of the MFPD has increased dramatically over the past two decades, and continues to grow at an extraordinary rate. Much like other fire agencies, the MFPD has a long history of tradition, service, prevention, public education, and stakeholder expectations. As the population of the MFPD continues to increase, the demands upon the MFPD, along with the stakeholder expectations, will also continue to increase. As a result of the Chicago-land area becoming a much higher threat risk, the MFPD has increased Haz-Mat responses, Technical Rescue (TRT) responses, code enforcement and public education work load. The MFPD also continues to expand the formal auto-aid and mutual-aid agreements with neighboring communities.

MFPD's jurisdiction includes a major interstate highway, Interstate 80. According to the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT), the daily traffic which passes through the MFPD jurisdiction on Interstate 80 is 100,000 vehicles. Of these 100,000 vehicles, 16,000 are commercial vehicles (Illinois Department of Transportation [IDOT], 2008). Next to Interstate 80 is a large crude oil storage tank farm which receives crude oil from the Gulf of Mexico and Canada, serving as the main distribution point for two major Chicago area refineries. A railroad divides the MFPD nearly in half, and is the primary method of commuting to nearby Chicago. Approximately 51 Metropolitan Rail Authority (METRA) commuter trains with passengers and approximately 15 diversified commodity commercial trains travel by railway through the MFPD jurisdiction daily (Metropolitan Rail Authority [METRA], 2008).

The MFPD's current chain of command consists of: Fire Chief, Assistant Fire Chief, Lieutenant, Engineer, and Firefighter (Mokena Fire Protection District [MFPD], 1992). In approximately three years the MFPD plans on promoting three lieutenants to a newly negotiated rank of BC. The current labor agreement spells the point schedule and the necessary qualifications for a lieutenant to obtain in order to be eligible for the promotional exam to BC (see Appendix A). There is currently nothing in place to inform any MFPD employee of what leadership development plan will be expected of the newly promoted BC.

The manual for the National Fire Academy's (NFA) Executive Leadership (EL) course supplies several separate units of study geared in such a way to assist the Executive Fire Officer (EFO) in recognizing a deficient situation exists within the MFPD. This deficient situation is specifically pertaining to the preparedness of the lieutenants to the rank of BC and beyond. The specific units of study offered in the EL course which directly affect the correction of this situation are developing self as a leader, managing multiple roles, being in transition, and succession/replacement planning (Federal Emergency Management Agency, United States Fire Administration, National Fire Academy [FEMA, USFA, NFA], 2005).

There are two specific United States Fire Administration (USFA) mission objectives in which this applied research relates. The USFA mission objectives are to reduce loss of life from firefighters and to respond appropriately in a timely manner to emerging issues (Federal Emergency Management Agency, United States Fire Administration, National Fire Academy [FEMA, USFA, NFA], 2008). The two listed USFA mission objectives will be addressed through this research process of analyzing

collected data and developing an appropriate leadership plan for the rank of BC. This will aid in ensuring that the full-time career employees have a full understanding of what leadership development plan will be expected of the newly promoted BC's.

A descriptive research methodology will be utilized in order to evaluate the information which will be collected and analyzed. Approaches of other agencies will be reviewed through questionnaires which will be conducted to produce an acceptable amount of original research for this project. It is through this research that the recommendations will be derived in an attempt to answer the four questions posed for research. This will allow the BC to enhance the MFPD's overall performance, success in its mission, and help ensure the safety and well-being of the MFPD employees and the stakeholders of the community they are trusted to protect.

Literature Review

Appropriate and timely promotions within a fire department or business are a very important function of any administrative body. Promotions increase a fire department's overall morale and move the fire department progressively forward. If this promotional process is conducted improperly, a reverse effect will be the final outcome (Johnson, 1995). An overriding problem to the promotional process is the simple fact of not having a specific development plan. With a specific development plan in place, the employees and the administration both fully understand what is to be expected of the position (Hawley, 2003).

A good leader is one who can get his subordinates to do something. If this is the only indicator of a good leader, then everyone should be able to achieve this leadership status. A good leader should be honed from the raw materials of KSA's and the

investment of time (Levinson, 1980). Just because someone is deemed a good leader does not mean that they will be a successful leader. That is the reason why appropriate testing processes and development plans are created and revised (Dieckhoff, 1980).

Chief Officers exist in every service organization big and small. There is also a plethora of programs which can be utilized when developing employees for a position such as a Chief Officer. As an example, LaSalle hotel properties utilizes an on the job training and experience program to develop their Chief Officers. This development program spans several years and requires dedication from the employee. As the employee learns more about the company and management practices; the employee progresses through the ranks (Calabaugh, 2008).

Another example of a leadership development program is mentoring. Mentoring is a valuable resource utilized in business organizations to assist in the promotion of the employee to the next level. Mentoring exists at all levels of management as well as for potential employees and new employees. The entire mentoring process not only helps the employee with potential promotion; it helps the employee who is actually conducting the mentoring process as well. Mentoring is a time consuming, but effective, process for the employees as well as the organization (Dean, 2007).

It is common practice for service industries to utilize assessment centers when choosing their future chief officers. An assessment center consists of a standardized evaluation of behavior and decision making skills based on multiple evaluations including job-related simulations, interviews, and/or psychological tests. Job simulations are used to evaluate candidates on behaviors relevant to the most critical aspects (or competencies) of the job (H-R Guide.com, 2008). Regardless of the job in question, or

the desired personnel decision, the goal of an assessment center is to accurately simulate essential job skills under standardized conditions for a multitude of people (Strossen, 1980).

The Illinois Fire Chiefs Association (IFCA) offers an assessment center process to aid fire department's in choosing the best qualified candidate for a specific position. The assessment center is based on an analysis of actual candidate job behavior demonstrated through simulated job-related scenarios which are analyzed and graded by assessors. This assessment center process includes assessment areas such as (but not limited to) the in-basket exercise, structured oral interview, writing exercise, tactical exercise, presentation exercise, problem solving experience, leaderless group exercise, employee interview simulation exercise, fact-finding and decision making (Illinois Fire Chiefs Association [IFCA], 2006).

The MFPD is faced with a unique situation in that the three lieutenants that will be promoted to BC's in approximately three years have their point schedule and necessary testing requirements laid out before them (see Appendix A). With this being said, the overall professional development of chief officers, as previously briefly discussed, is presently lacking. The KSA's and necessary characteristics for a promoted BC, in order to be a successful chief officer, are presently missing. The development process of the BC's will now have to shift to post promotion leadership development program.

One process which relates to the overall development of the chief officer is the Chief Fire Officer (CFO) designation, which is a peer review conducted by the CPSE. The CFO designation is a self-assessment document which includes performance

indicators which help in the overall leadership and management of the fire department.

The CFO process includes performance areas such as code of professional conduct (responsibilities to individuals, responsibilities to profession, responsibility to the community and society, and conflict of interest), eligibility requirements, education, experience, professional development (education, certifications, training/courses), development goals, professional contributions, professional memberships, community involvement and affiliations, and 20 technical competencies (each include education, experience, and an attestation statement), and finally professional references (Center for Public Safety Excellence [CPSE], 2008).

Another process which relates to the overall development of the chief officer is the IOSFM fire officer three certification. This certification also involves a peer review process conducted by chosen fire chiefs from the IFCA. The IOSFM fire officer three certification is also a self-assessment document which includes performance indicators which help in the overall leadership and management of the fire department. The IOSFM fire officer three certification process includes performance areas such as organizational culture, communications, government structures and the political arena, fire department operations and administration, human resource administration, resources planning and administration, public fiscal planning and administration (Illinois Office of the State Fire Marshal [IOSFM], 1997).

BC's must focus equally on administrative and operational issues. Some of the many challenges that face the BC are lack of support from either the subordinate personnel or administration, micromanagement from administration, maintaining subordinate competencies, communication of needs, and lack of information. Some of the

many obstacles to overcome in developing a successful chief officer are the willingness to accept responsibility, willingness to separate one self from the group, and willingness to straddle the fence (Cochran, 2006).

Technical training is something much different than education (Burkell, 1984). Appropriate leadership education and professional development is provided at the NFA through the EFO program. This program is designed to provide executive-level KSA's necessary to lead transformations in the nations fire and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) organizations. These transformations are a necessary movement away from being reactive, and a much needed movement toward being proactive. All participants in the EFO program learn the value of continual professional education and lifelong learning (FEMA, USFA, NFA, 2008).

Procedures

This research project has attempted to provide an in-depth review of current leadership development plans for the position of BC. It is through this review process that data collection from fire and non-fire related organizations are of utmost importance. Additionally, it is through this extensive data collection that recommendations will be made in order to develop an effective BC leadership development plan for the MFPD. In order to collect a suitable and substantial amount of supportive data for the final analysis, an in-depth literature review was conducted, and questionnaires were distributed and reviewed.

The literature review was conducted through several literary resources. First, the learning resource center located at the NFA in Emmitsburg, MD was utilized to collect fire organization related supportive material. This material was in the form of books,

journal articles, and previous executive fire officer program research papers. Next, the public library system located in Mokena, IL was helpful in producing books and magazine articles which related directly to supportive information from non-fire related organizations. Lastly, the resource center located at the Joliet Junior College supplied information in the form of on-line resources and educational material lending expertise in the area of non-fire related organizations.

With the aid of other literary professionals and questionnaires, a thorough analysis was conducted by the author. The literature review and questionnaires were very helpful in gathering information which related directly to the author's research questions.

Surveys and questionnaires are the most popular and economical ways of collecting data (Nader, 1977). Pertinent data was solicited from several sources through an on-line questionnaire format. Area Mutual Aid Box Alarm System (MABAS) fire chiefs, fellow NFA students, area local government administrators, and several Village of Mokena department heads were sent questionnaires to aid in the answering of the four questions which the author posed for research.

The author utilized SurveyMonkey (2007), an on-line questionnaire service, to send questionnaires to five Village of Mokena department heads (see Appendix B); of these five questionnaires, three responses were received and reviewed, which creates a 60% return rate from the Village of Mokena department heads. The author utilized the same questionnaire and on-line service to send questionnaires to five area local government administrators (see Appendix B); of these, three responses were received and reviewed, which creates a 60% return rate from the area local government administrators.

Information was garnered from the above listed examples of non fire service sources regarding specific questions dealing with leadership development of a chief officer. This questionnaire was also concerned with obtaining information on how a chief officer might be chosen from a pool of candidates. Some responses to the questionnaire required a simple yes or no response, or multiple choice response to questions, and other questions required descriptive responses or a combination of all options listed. The questions asked through the on-line questionnaire (SurveyMonkey, 2007) were as follows:

1. In your organization, what is the selection criteria used in choosing a new "Chief Officer"?
2. In your organization, how is or what is the process for a "Chief Officer" to be selected?
3. Does your organization have a leadership development plan specifically designed to aid employees in the transformation to the promotion of a "Chief Officer"?
4. What educational requirements are in place in order to be considered for the promotion to "Chief Officer" in your organization?
5. In your organization, what educational requirements are in place after a promotion to "Chief Officer"?
6. In your organization, what knowledge, skills, abilities, and characteristics does a newly promoted "Chief Officer" need in order to be successful?
7. Please describe, how optimal performance (success) of a "Chief Officer" in your organization is measured.

8. Please describe, what are the obstacles to developing a successful "Chief Officer" in your organization. One obstacle that could be considered would be the entry level recruitment and selection processes that do not take into account Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities (KSA) that will be needed for subsequent advancement and promotion, or an assumption that KSA deficits can be overcome by some organizational development regimen (i.e., dyslexia or other reading disabilities might not prevent being hired as an entry-level employee; but they might certainly interfere with the kind of skills development needed to succeed as a "Chief Officer" in your organization.)

The author utilized the same questionnaire and on-line service SurveyMonkey (2007) to send questionnaires to 70 fellow NFA students (see Appendix C); of these, 35 responses were received and reviewed, which creates a 50% return rate from the NFA students. The author utilized the same questionnaire and on-line service to send questionnaires to 16 area MABAS fire chiefs (see Appendix C); of these, 14 responses were received and reviewed, which creates a 88% return rate from the MABAS fire chiefs.

Information was garnered from the above listed examples of fire service sources regarding specific questions dealing with leadership development of the BC. This questionnaire was also concerned with obtaining information on how a BC might be chosen from a pool of candidates. Some responses to the questionnaire required a simple yes or no response, or multiple choice response to questions, and other questions required descriptive responses or a combination of all options listed. The questions asked through the on-line questionnaire (SurveyMonkey, 2007) were as follows:

1. In your organization, what is the selection criteria used in choosing a new "Battalion Chief"?
2. In your organization, how is or what is the process for a "Battalion Chief" to be selected?
3. Does your organization have a leadership development plan specifically designed to aid employees in the transformation to the promotion of a "Battalion Chief"?
4. What educational requirements are in place in order to be considered for the promotion to "Battalion Chief" in your organization?
5. In your organization, what educational requirements are in place after a promotion to "Battalion Chief"?
6. In your organization, what knowledge, skills, abilities, and characteristics does a newly promoted "Battalion Chief" need in order to be successful?
7. Please describe, how optimal performance (success) of a "Battalion Chief" in your organization is measured.
8. Please describe, what are the obstacles to developing a successful "Battalion Chief" in your organization. One obstacle that could be considered would be the entry level recruitment and selection processes that do not take into account Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities (KSA) that will be needed for subsequent advancement and promotion, or an assumption that KSA deficits can be overcome by some organizational development regimen (i.e., dyslexia or other reading disabilities might not prevent being hired as an entry-level employee; but they might certainly interfere with the kind of skills development needed to succeed as a "Chief Officer" in your organization.)

Limitations

A limitation of this research was the below-expectation response rate of the questionnaires. There were a total of 96 questionnaires distributed to aid in the gathering of informational data. Of the 96 questionnaires distributed (population size), there were 55 questionnaires which were returned (sample size). This lends to a 57% response rate for the overall questionnaire population. The questionnaire response rate will be discussed in the results section of this paper; however, it did not meet the author's 80% response rate expectations (95% confidence level) as described by Krejcie & Morgan (1970). With time as a critical issue, the below-expectation response rate was accepted and utilized.

The main limitation of this research was the recognition (or non-recognition) by administrators and/or agencies that their specific leadership development plan can possibly be improved. Many agencies spend an adequate amount of time in preparation and planning for administrative succession; but it is tricky to actually take a hard look at one's own organization and realize that a deficit exists. An administrator and/or an agency are not quick to admit that deficits exist in their leadership development plan. These are major obstacles to overcome for any administrator and/or agency and for the author of this research.

Results

Throughout this research project, the author gathered information utilizing an in-depth literature review, and questionnaires which were targeted at different populations. A descriptive research methodology was utilized in order to evaluate the information which was collected and analyzed. Approaches of other fire service agencies, as well as

non-fire service agencies, were reviewed through questionnaires which were conducted to produce an acceptable amount of original research for this project to answer the questions posed for research by the author.

There were a total of 96 questionnaires distributed to aid in the gathering of informational data. Of the 96 questionnaires distributed (population size), there were 55 questionnaires which were returned (sample size). This lends to a 57% response rate for the overall questionnaire population. The questionnaire response rate will be discussed in the results section of this paper; however, it did not meet the author's 80% response rate expectations (95% confidence level) as described by Krejcie & Morgan (1970). With time as a critical issue, the below-expectation response rate was accepted and utilized. Of the 55 returned questionnaires, separate groupings can be formed for return analysis.

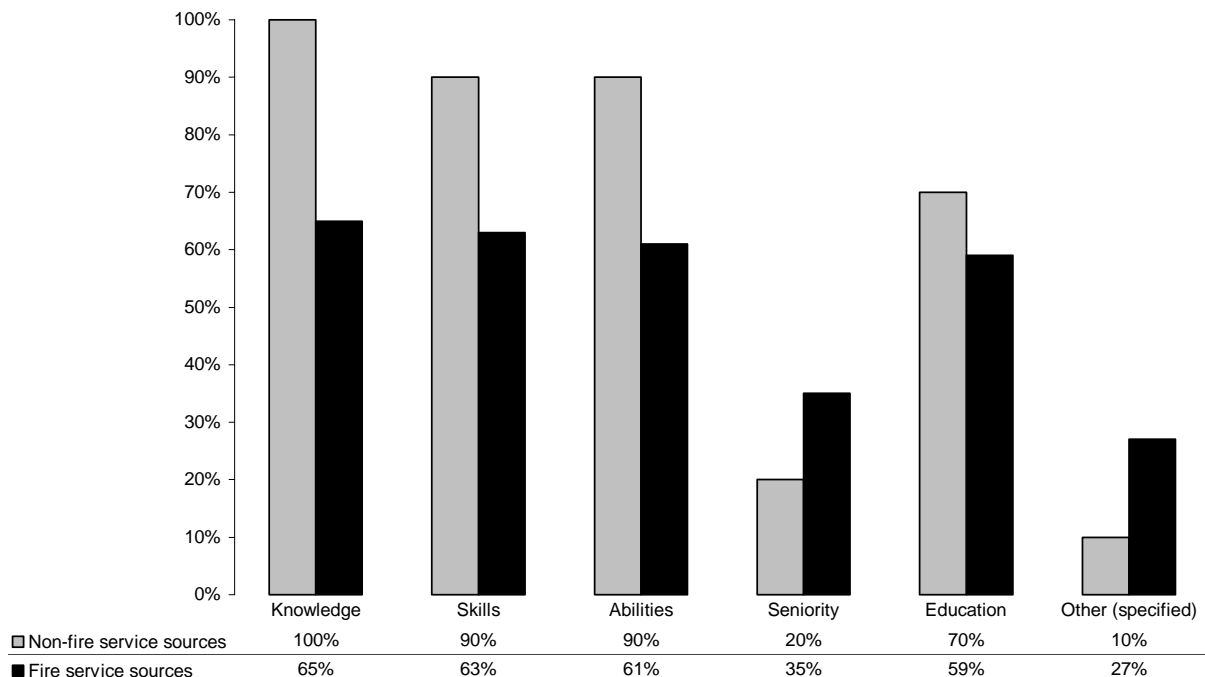
The author utilized SurveyMonkey (2007), an on-line questionnaire service, to send questionnaires to five Village of Mokena department heads (see Appendix B); of these five questionnaires, three responses were received and reviewed (see Appendix D), which creates a 60% return rate from the Village of Mokena department heads. The author utilized the same questionnaire and on-line service to send questionnaires to five area local government administrators (see Appendix B); of these, three responses were received and reviewed (see Appendix D), which creates a 60% return rate from area local government administrators.

The author utilized the same questionnaire and on-line service SurveyMonkey (2007) to send questionnaires to 70 fellow NFA students (see Appendix C); of these, 35 responses were received and reviewed (see Appendix E), which creates a 50% return rate from the NFA students. The author utilized the same questionnaire and on-line service to

send questionnaires to 16 area MABAS fire chiefs (see Appendix C); of these, 14 responses were received and reviewed (see Appendix E), which creates an 88% return rate from the MABAS fire chiefs.

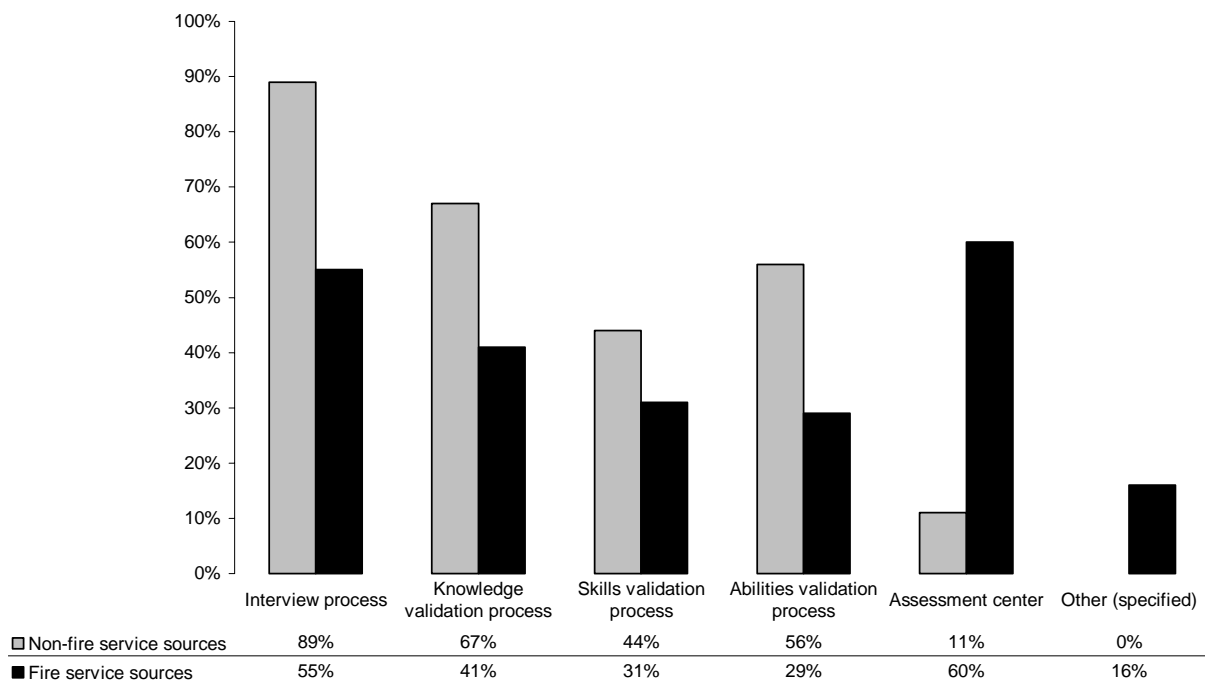
The differences between the responses of non-fire service sources (see Appendix D) and fire service sources (see Appendix E) to the question posed can easily be seen. The major difference is that the non-fire service sources (see Appendix D) state that knowledge, skills and abilities are more of a factor when establishing the selection criteria of a chief officer (see Figure 1). Conversely, the fire service sources give greater consideration to seniority and other unique factors such as organizational contributions; and testing and evaluation requirements when establishing the selection criteria (see Appendix E).

Figure 1
Question one response comparison
Selection criteria



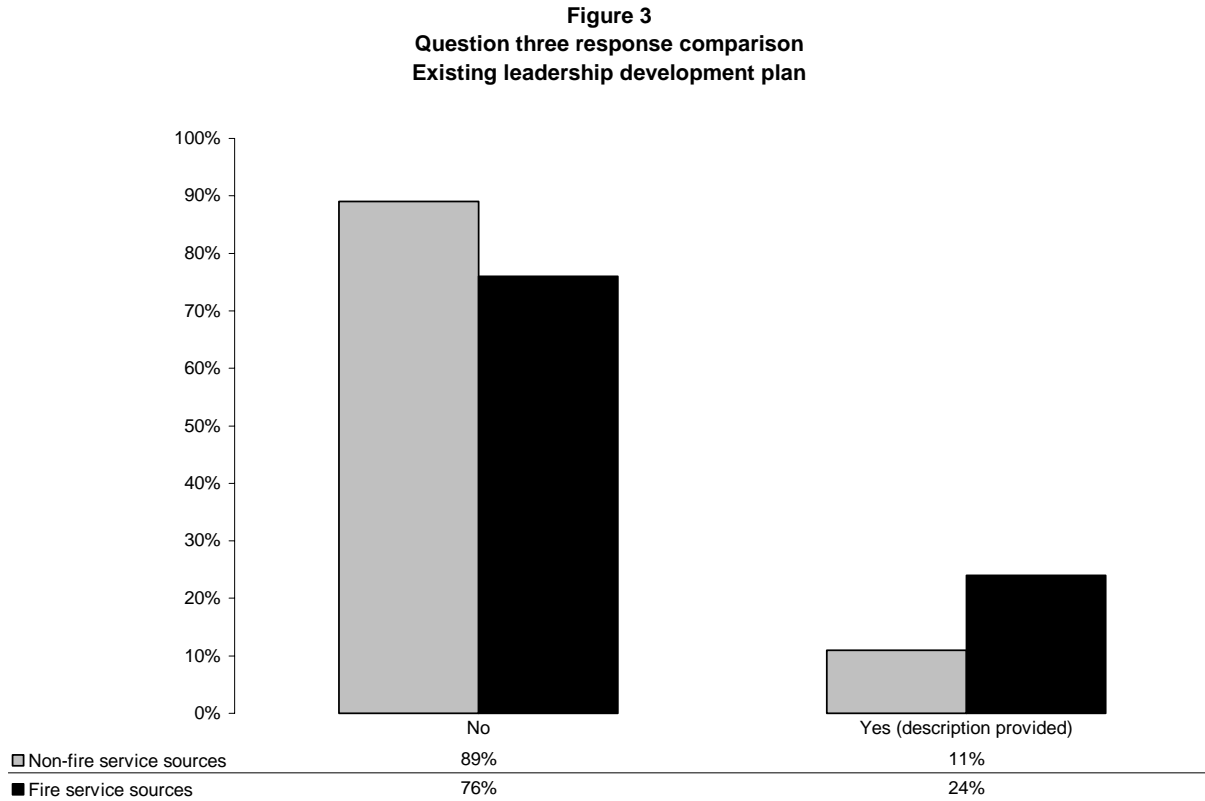
A great difference is shown as it relates to the actual selection process. The major differences can be seen in the use of the assessment center and the interview process. The non-fire service sources place a great value upon the interview process and everything that can be associated with that process (see Appendix D). The fire service sources place a great value upon the assessment center and everything associated with that process (see Figure 2). The fire service sources also include other criteria such as written tests, and a review of personnel and training files (see Appendix E).

Figure 2
Question two response comparison
Selection process



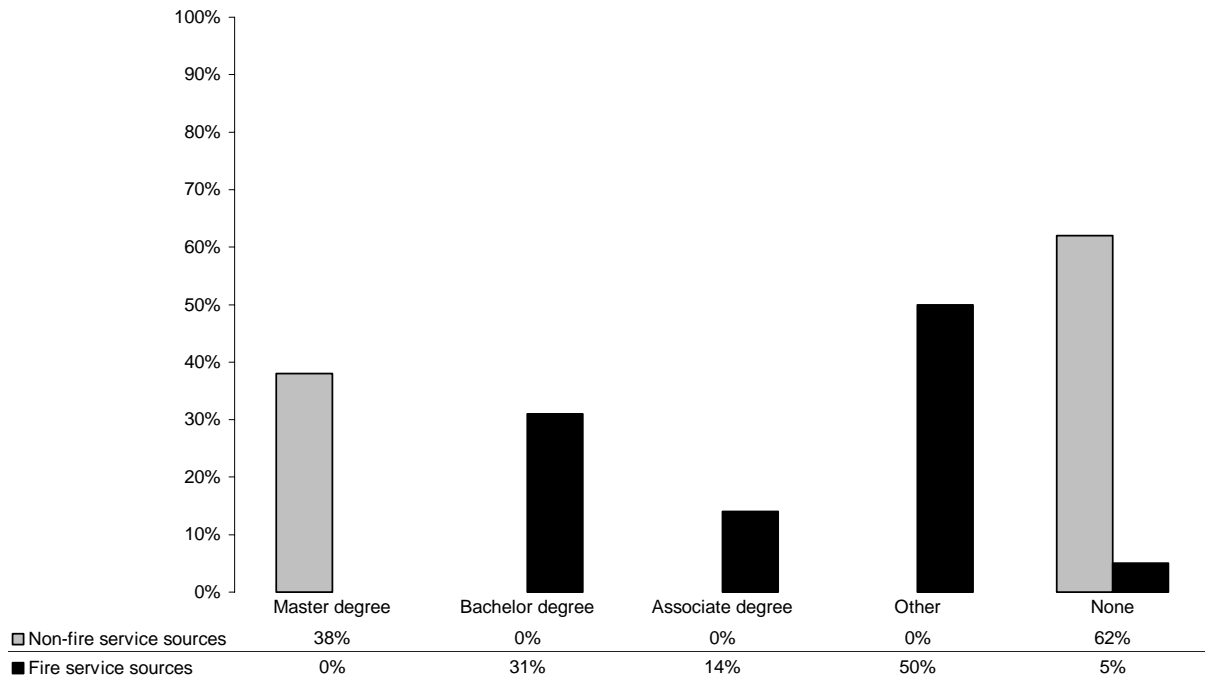
The non-fire service sources (see Appendix D) and the fire service sources (see Appendix E) share development similarities in that neither is proficient in possessing existing documents for a leadership development plan. Responses to question three show that the fire service sources are a bit more prepared on the documentation of a leadership

development plan (see Figure 3); but the data does not indicate a great difference between the two.



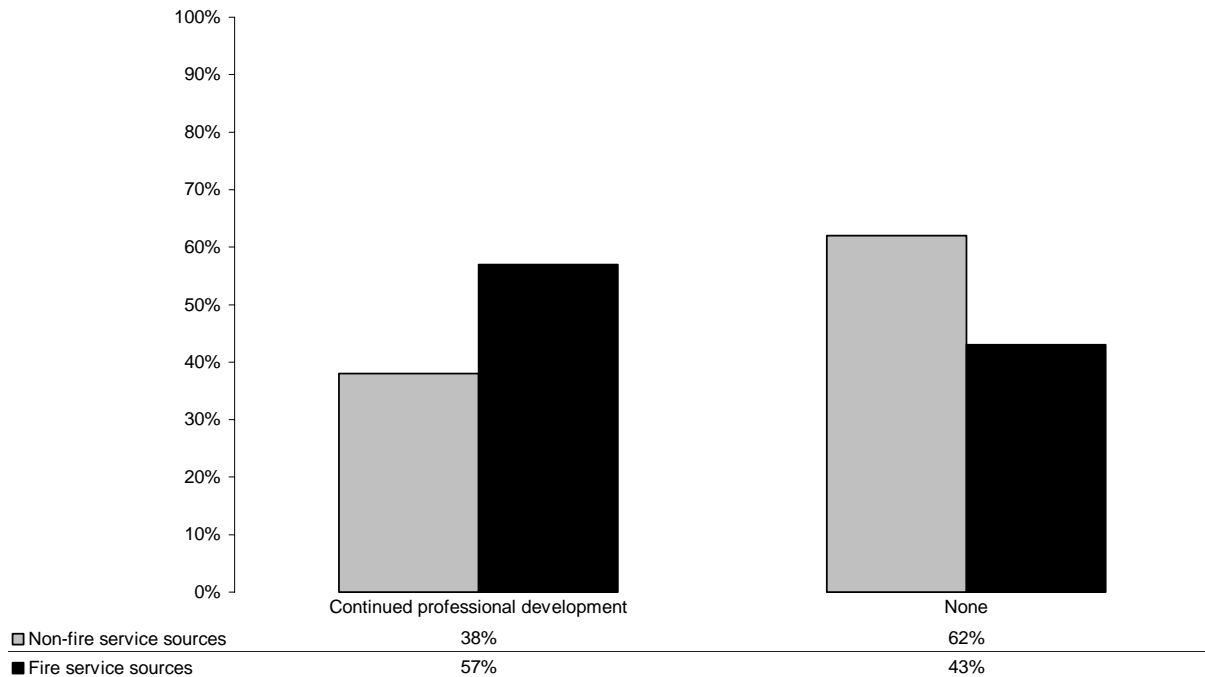
The non-fire service sources clearly depend on a master degree as an existing educational requirement for promotion (see Appendix D). In contrast, the fire service sources responses in Figure 4 indicate that in some instances an associate degree or a bachelor degree is the minimum existing educational requirements for promotion (see Figure 4). In some cases the fire service sources indicate that other educational requirements exist; such as state specific fire officer certifications as the existing minimum requirement for promotion (see Appendix E).

Figure 4
Question four response comparison
Existing educational requirements for promotion



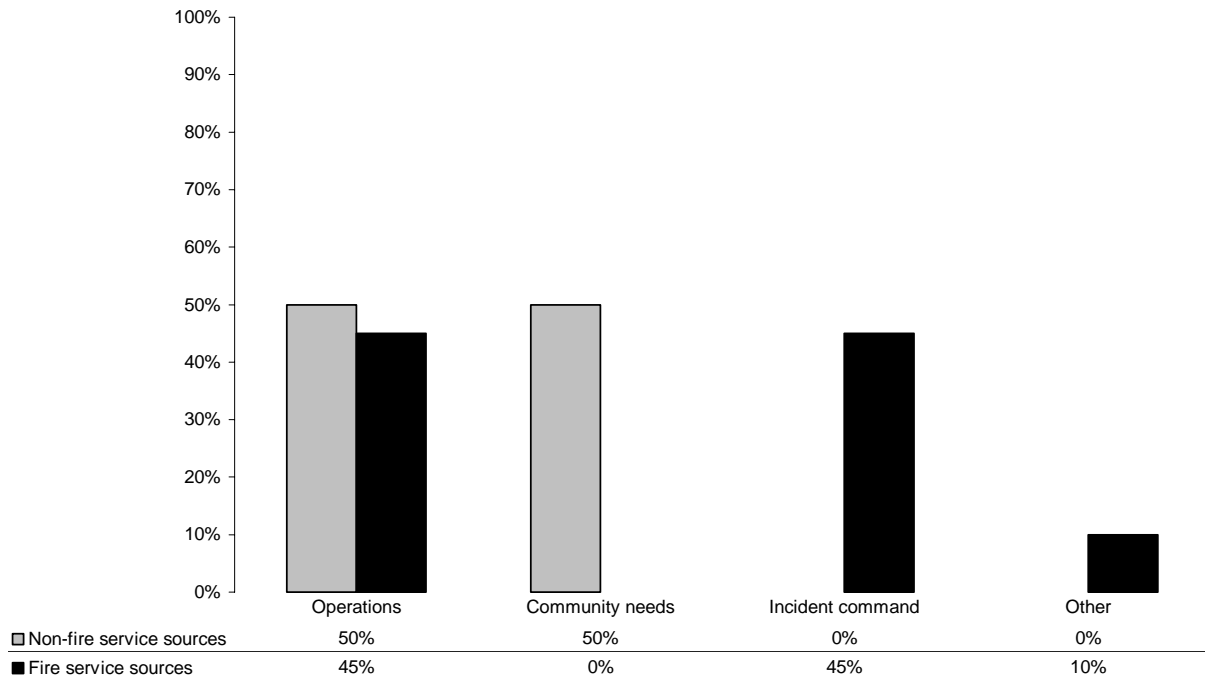
The fire service sources require a greater amount of continuing professional education from the chief officer after the promotion. Some of the continuing professional education required by the fire service sources includes obtaining an associate degree and/or obtaining a bachelor degree (see Figure 5). The fire service sources also listed other continuing professional education which includes application to the EFO program at the NFA, and application to the CFO designation peer review process conducted by the CPSE (see Appendix E).

Figure 5
Question five response comparison
Existing educational requirements after promotion



The non-fire service sources (see Appendix D) and the fire service sources (see Appendix E) answered question six which is broken up into four different segments for analysis (see Figure 6, Figure 7, Figure 8, & Figure 9). Overall, the knowledge, skills, abilities, and characteristics listed show differences between the non-fire service sources and the fire service sources. The differences can be attributed to fire service specific objectives needed by the BC; thus presented by the responses. These differences are topics such as incident command, interpersonal skills, communication abilities, decision making abilities, and open mindedness (see Figure 6, Figure 7, Figure 8, & Figure 9).

Figure 6
Question six (part one) response comparison
What knowledge is needed to be successful



Interestingly, some topics such as communication skills/abilities, and interpersonal skills/abilities transcend the skills, abilities, and characteristics categories (see Figure 7, Figure 8, & Figure 9). These listed topics remain important to both the non-fire service sources (see Appendix D) and the fire service sources (see Appendix E); just in different ways. Strong business skills are obviously very important to the non-fire service sources as demonstrated by their response. With that being said, interpersonal skills are very important to the fire service sources as demonstrated by their response (see Figure 7).

Figure 7
Question six (part two) response comparison
What skills are needed to be successful

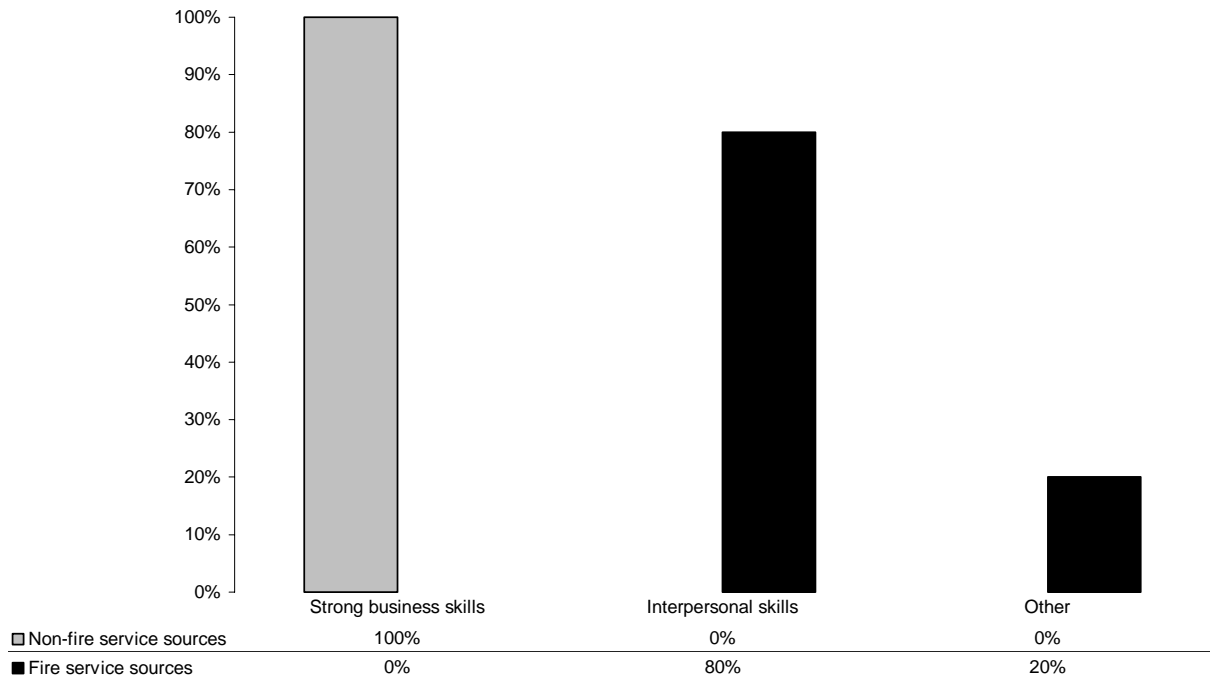
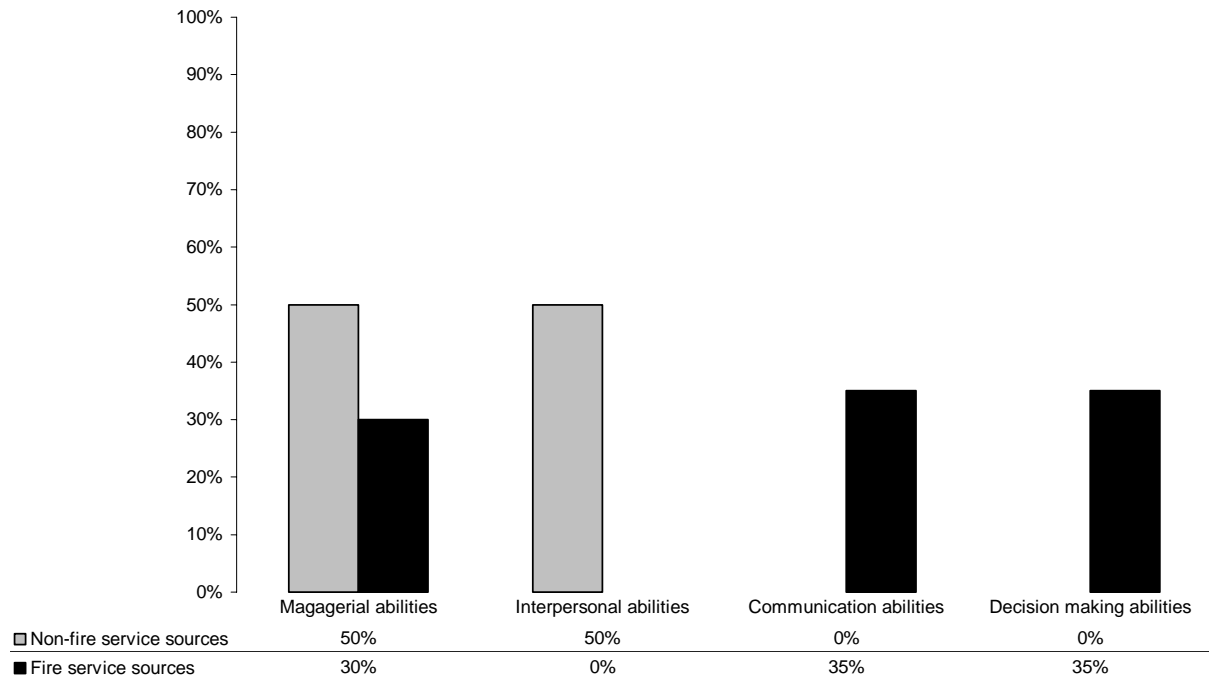
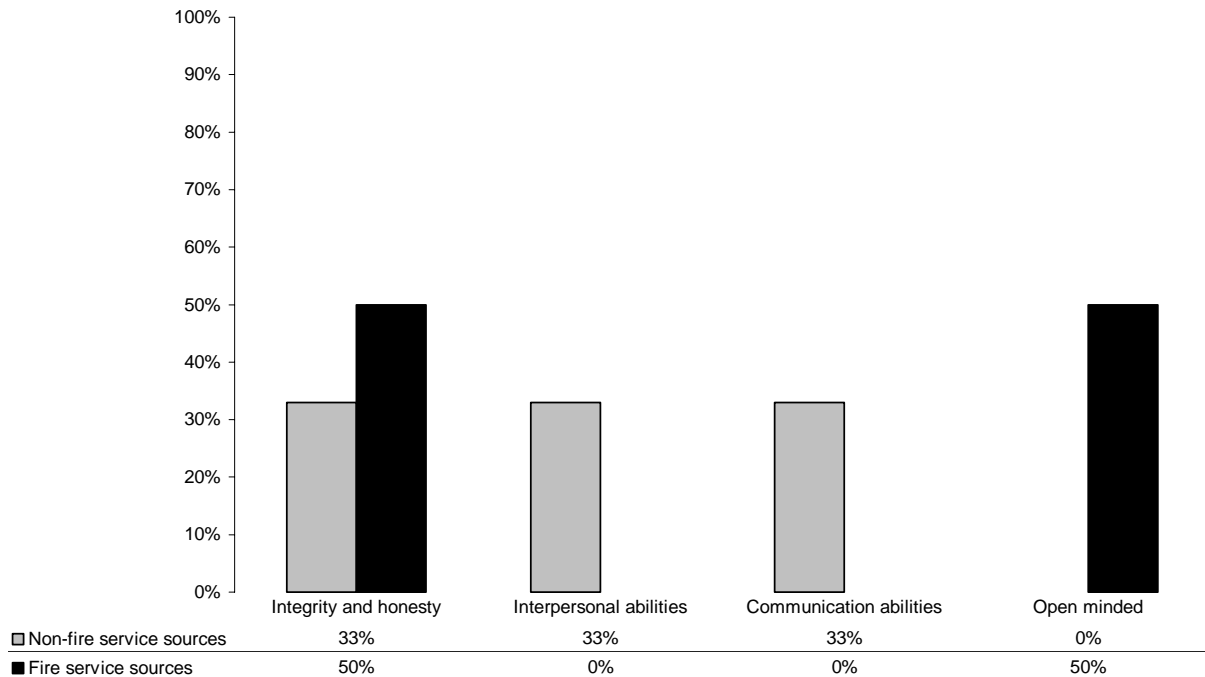


Figure 8
Question six (part three) response comparison
What abilities are needed to be successful



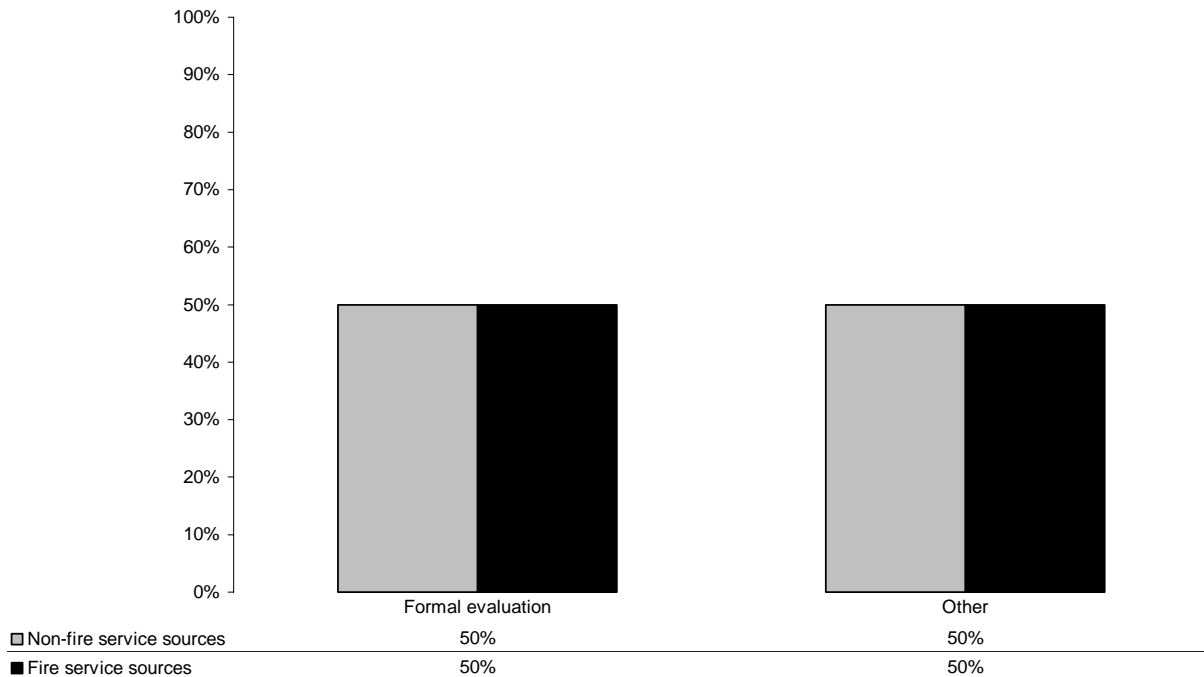
Integrity and honesty are both valued very highly by the non-fire service sources (see Appendix D) and the fire service sources (see Appendix E). Open mindedness is also a very high value for the fire service sources (see Figure 9).

Figure 9
Question six (part four) response comparison
What characteristics are needed to be successful



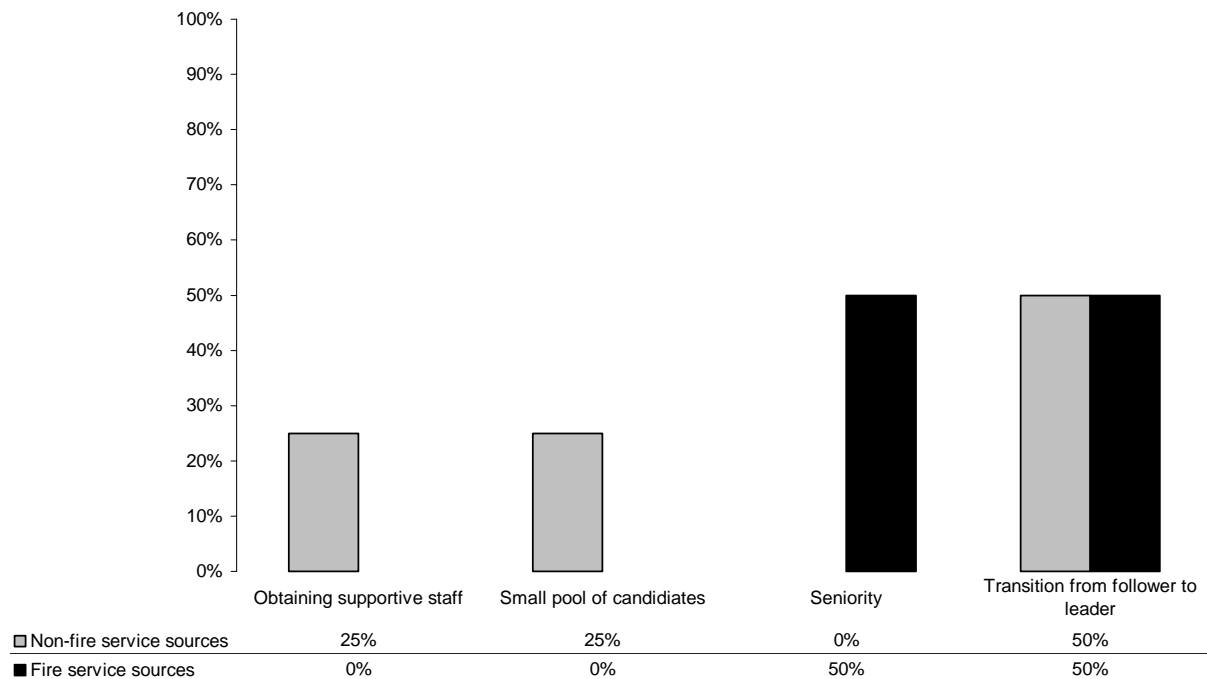
Measurement of optimal performance is very similar between the non-fire service sources and the fire service sources. Both indicate that the measurement of choice is a formal evaluation (see Figure 10). There are other measurements being utilized such as budget adherence and external relationships (see Appendix D); and overall performance of subordinate employees (see Appendix E). Of all the areas studied, the data shown in Figure 10 represents the greatest similarities between the non-fire service sources and the fire service sources.

Figure 10
Question seven response comparison
Measurement of optimal performance



Once again seniority shows itself as an important factor when related to the fire service sources. This time it is listed as an obstacle to overcome in the development of a chief officer. A common thread between the non-fire service sources (see Appendix D) and the fire service sources (see Appendix E) as an obstacle to overcome in the development of a chief officer is the transition of the employee from follower to manager. The non-fire service sources also list other factors to overcome which does not seem to be much of a factor for the fire service sources (see Figure 11).

Figure 11
Question eight response comparison
Obstacles to overcome in development



Discussion

Through the documented literature review, and many questionnaires conducted and analyzed in this research project, the author is able to present the relationship between and importance of all four research questions. It is with this comparison, analysis, and synthesis of the factual findings that opinions can be developed and recommendations can be formed. With this discussion, the author will also be delivering personal conclusions as to the issues at hand.

The author of this research project agrees with Calabaugh (2008), when that author explains that on the job training is an effective method to utilize when developing a chief officer. The way that the fire service hierarchy is established, lends itself to this type of experience and promotional preparation. The author believes that the MFPD is

similar to the rest of the fire service in that it also lends itself to development of chief officers in this fashion.

The author also agrees with Dean (2007), when mentoring is discussed. Mentoring is a powerful tool which can be, and should be, utilized by managers to empower their subordinates to learn and expand their capabilities. The author believes that when conducted correctly, mentoring can have a very powerful influence over an organization which will aid in the overall promotional process. The promotional process referred to is not singled out to one specific rank or level of management.

In an effort to answer the first question posed for research by the author, the responses of the non-fire service sources (see Appendix D) were analyzed in the results section of this research project. The results do not directly show that non-fire service sources utilize assessment centers (see Figure 2). Although, the author believes that the culmination of the interview process, knowledge validation process, skills validation process, and the abilities validation process do equate to an assessment center. The author agrees that an assessment center is utilized also by non-fire service sources to choose their chief officer (H-R Guide.com, 2008).

It is the belief of the author that an assessment center should be the standard for the fire service when they are faced with choosing their BC in a promotional process. The MFPD presently lists the assessment center as the tool of choice in the labor agreement (see Appendix A). The IFCA presently has an effective assessment center process in place which can be utilized by the fire service if this avenue is chosen. The author believes that a successful candidate in this process should be able to hone all the necessary KSA's to succeed (IFCA, 2006).

The results to question two posed for research by the author indicates that there is a variety of different methods utilized to measure optimal performance. Half of the respondents indicate that a formal evaluation is the method chosen by both non-fire service sources (see Appendix D) and fire service sources (see Appendix E). Although, there are other means of performance measurement which were indicated, that the author agrees with. In specific, the ability of the BC to lead and improve performance of their subordinates is a very important aspect of the BC.

Other measurement tools not indicated through the fire service sources questionnaires are the CFO designation and the IOSFM fire officer three certification. The author believes that these two standardized tools are a very effective means for the BC to see first hand how they are progressing through their leadership career. As the BC fills out the self assessment evaluation, they can honestly see where they may be excelling and/or need more attention and education. The author believes that these two self assessment tools can be utilized effectively as a means to measure optimal performance of the BC.

Question three posed by the author is the most difficult question to answer. As the results to the questionnaires indicate (see Figure 6, Figure7, & Figure 8) there are a variety of different but effective answers to this question. Based on the knowledge gained by the author through this research project, the author believes that most KSA's needed by the BC to be successful are outlined in the answers to the questionnaires (see Appendix D and Appendix E). The author agrees with FEMA, USFA, NFA (2008) in that the KSA's necessary to lead fire and EMS organizations can be gained and honed through the EFO program at the NFA.

The last question posed for research by the author leads to yet another complex answer. Figure 11 indicates that the transition from follower to leader is the biggest single obstacle to overcome in developing a successful BC. The author agrees with Cochran (2006) in that the many challenges that face the BC are lack of support from personnel and lack of information. Also the main obstacle to overcome is the willingness to make a decision, to make a commitment, to make a difference in your professional career and the organization.

The author agrees with Johnson (1995) in that promotions can either increase or decrease overall productivity. This perception is all in the way the employees view and understand the process or plan. The author also agrees with Hawley (2003) who points out that a development plan must be in place for everyone to review and understand. The author believes that the entire testing process is in place because no one can look at someone and deem them a good leader without some sort of assessment in place. This is why development plans and testing processes are in place (Dieckhoff, 1980). The author agrees with Burkell (1984) when he states that education surpasses technical training when we are in the development process of personnel.

This research project will solve the stated MFPD development plan problem identified by the author. After the author's recommendations are implemented, the MFPD will possess an adequate leadership development plan to assist in the development of the personnel who are promoted to the rank of BC. With the appropriate BC development plan in place, the MFPD will be able to expand from this single plan and create other development plans to assist in the overall development of the MFPD personnel in many different ranks.

Recommendations

The implementation of the recommendations of the author will achieve the stated purpose for the MFPD; which will in turn solve the problem identified by the author. The following are recommendations from the author to assist in the leadership development plan for the rank of BC within the MFPD. The recommendations do require an extreme amount of support on the part of the MFPD in order to create an atmosphere of commitment for the BC during this time of leadership development.

- The MFPD will continue to promote education within the MFPD, and in turn provide attainable educational and experience requirements for all promotional levels within the MFPD.
- The MFPD will continue to utilize the assessment center as the testing process of all MFPD BC's.
- The MFPD will establish requirements that the BC is to obtain the necessary educational and experience criteria in order to apply to the EFO program at the NFA within a time frame which will be agreed upon by the BC and the MFPD.
- After the necessary educational and experience criteria for application to the NFA are met, the MFPD will establish requirements that the BC is to apply to the EFO program at the NFA every year until acceptance into the program is accomplished.
- The MFPD will establish requirements that the BC is to gain the necessary educational and experience criteria to apply for IOSFM fire officer three certification within a time frame which will be agreed upon by the BC and the MFPD.

- The MFPD will establish requirements that the BC is to gain the necessary educational and experience criteria to apply for CFO designation from the CPSE within a time frame which will be agreed upon by the BC and the MFPD.
- The MFPD will establish requirements that the BC is to continue their education, above and beyond listed above, which will be agreed upon by the BC and the MFPD.

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