

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **MISSION**

*The mission of Portland Fire and Rescue is to promote a safe environment for all protected areas, to respond to fire, medical and other emergencies, and to provide related services to benefit the public.*

### **BACKGROUND**

The articulation of the commitment of Portland Fire and Rescue (PF&R) and the City of Portland to equal opportunity is unmistakable – it's stated in General Order 41, and in chapter and verse of the City Code. Additionally, state statute and federal civil rights laws stand watch over employment practices and services to the public. Most pertinent to the day-to-day operation of PF&R is strategic direction number five: Demonstrate through words and actions our commitment to be responsive, respectful and sensitive to community and workforce demographics and values. The goal of this cultural assessment is to improve Portland Fire and Rescue's work environment by reviewing and assessing the work environment as it relates to working relationships among multi-cultural, sworn and non-sworn personnel, and to offer recommendations for training and other tools to establish and maintain cultural and work environment supports to improve PF&R's ability to work in an efficient and effective manner. The assessment includes a gap analysis that delineates gaps between PF&R current state and the "desired state." After a lengthy and competitive review and selection process, PF&R contracted with Metropolitan Group (MG) to conduct the assessment.

### **ASSESSMENT PROCESS**

The assessment process will generate the data needed to conduct a "gap analysis" or in other words, to determine those areas in which systematic improvement must be achieved in order to achieve the "desired state." All phases of the assessment were developed and planned in conjunction with PF&R staff in order to maximize resources, reduce costs and to develop a process that was suitable for the PF&R culture. The process was designed to provide a set of tools through which data could be generated that would allow MG to evaluate the current organizational culture and work environment as it relates to working relationships among multi-cultural staff.



## **BACKGROUND RESEARCH**

Prior to the survey development, MG conducted background research in order to become familiar with PF&R's culture, history, statistics and work environment which consisted of reviewing written information and site visits.

## **SURVEY DEVELOPMENT**

MG worked with the Executive Team to determine the categories for the survey: conflict, management, communication, career development, hiring, promotion, work climate, harassment/discrimination/differential treatment and demographic information. Following the determination of the categories MG developed a draft survey that was reviewed and approved by the Core Executive Team. The final survey consisted of 134 items. Eleven items were demographic questions, 103 were attitudinal statements and 20 were experiential questions.

## **ADMINISTRATION OF SURVEY**

Packets that included a cover letter with instructions, a return addressed (to MG) postage paid envelope and the survey were sent directly to all PF&R sworn and non-sworn employee's homes. No PF&R employee had access to surveys before they were mailed. Prior to receiving the survey all PF&R employees received a letter from Fire Chief Ed Wilson encouraging participation and explaining the study. The letter was enclosed with their paycheck or direct deposit receipt. Employees were also informed about the survey through an internal television broadcast by the Chief. Completed surveys were returned directly to MG in the addressed postage paid envelopes by the August 9, 2002 deadline.

## **RESPONDENTS**

Surveys were sent to all PF&R employees (720). MG received a total of 287 surveys for a 39.8 percent response rate. Fifty of the surveys received were not processed for the following reasons: 33 were received after the deadline, five were returned shredded and 12 were not suitable for processing. The surveys that were not accepted by the scanner were crumpled, cut or were rejected because of additional marking such as comments and questions written on the survey. Therefore, the report reflects data from 237 surveys. It is important to note that the number of responses for each question varies according to the number of individuals who responded to it.



## **INTERVIEWS**

Given the small numbers of women and ethnic minority employees at PF&R, MG included personal interviews that would yield qualitative data as a component of the assessment. Given that the survey goal was to assess departmental attitudes about diversity it was necessary to focus on women and ethnic minorities both of which are numerical minorities at PF&R. At the request of PF&R a random selection of 15 white males was added to the interview list. Information gathered through the interviews was used to establish depth and consistency between quantitative and qualitative data and to ensure that the responses and perspectives of the small voices were not lost. A total of 29 sworn and non-sworn employees were interviewed in MG's downtown office.

## **DATA ANALYSIS**

The survey was composed of items from eight categories; conflict, management, communication, career development, hiring, promotion, work climate and harassment/discrimination/differential treatment. The harassment/discrimination/differential treatment items were further sub-grouped into questions: experienced and witnessed harassment based on race, sex, disability, age, ethnic background, gender, sexual orientation, religion, language, and physical appearance for the purpose of analysis. The first step of analysis was the grouping of survey items by category, followed by tabulation of frequency of responses by percentage. Items were then subjected to analysis of the means by question within each category cross-tabulated with demographic characteristics as found in questions 124-134.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

In general responses to the survey reflect a high degree of pride and intense loyalty to PF&R and coworkers, dedication to mission, job satisfaction and high morale. These strengths are the foundation for the high quality service PF&R provides to the public. Nevertheless, as established by extensive research our greatest strengths carried to extreme become our greatest weaknesses. In the final analysis the challenge facing PF&R is to take action to ensure that these strengths do not become weaknesses. This will require decisive action and long-term determination to achieving the "desired state." The recommendations outlined below provide a blueprint for building support, clarifying expectations and goals, and continuing to strengthen the PF&R workforce.



## **CONFLICT RECOMMENDATIONS**

The following recommendations are made as a means to address the gaps as outlined above and to move the PF&R from the current to the “desired state.” They are:

1. Develop and deliver a mandatory training class (minimum of 4 hours) for all employees on conflict resolution focusing on a person to person approach that emphasizes collaborative negotiation skills and the impact of gender and cultural differences on conflict. The focus must be proactive, solution oriented and should challenge individuals to become more aware of their personal reaction to conflicts as a means to refine their own style. Because employees work and live together the training must address the development of a style that works over coffee in the morning as well as during the height of emotion such as while fighting a fire.
2. Develop a training program (minimum of 16 hours) that increases the skills, comfort level and confidence of supervisors in dealing with the handling of harassment situations. This program will also increase the level of confidence that employees have in supervisors and must include: the impact of cultural and gender differences on conflict; the effect of the dynamics of power and privilege on conflict; interpersonal communication skills; collaborative negotiation and mediation skill development and their legal responsibility as supervisors under applicable civil rights laws.

## **MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATION**

Develop a task force or committee composed of a diverse representation of sworn and non-sworn employees to assess the specific training needs of supervisors. This group will work with human resource staff and qualified experts to develop the training curriculum/model and to establish a timeline for implementation. This group must include representation across all job groups, lengths of service with PF&R, gender and ethnic groups, and must be supported by labor and management. The ensuing model must be required of all current supervisors and must be offered annually for new supervisors. The training recommended in the conflict category above should be the first priority for this group given that the data clearly indicates this as a need.



## **COMMUNICATION RECOMMENDATION**

Conduct further research that defines and specifies areas of internal communication that are not effective. Based on the results of this additional research create strategies and tools to ensure that informal and formal communication leverage each other and support a healthy work environment and positive relationships between co-workers.

## **CAREER DEVELOPMENT RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. All employees must receive annual performance reviews, which include the development of a career development activities/plan for the coming year. Employees may elect to not develop a plan but must sign a statement to that effect.
2. A system must be developed to ensure that opportunities to participate in career development activities are widely communicated and encouraged for sworn and non-sworn employees. The criteria for participation and the approval process must also be formalized and communicated through this system. Possible systems include a combination of written notifications such as a monthly or quarterly newsletter on opportunities, emails, or an internal website page that is continually updated and available.
3. Reassess the perception of women and ethnic minorities relative to their career development opportunities after recommendations one and two have been implemented.

## **HIRING RECOMMENDATIONS**

Create a joint management, labor and community task force to develop a single list model for hiring that meets the twin goals of diversifying the workforce and re-establishing the perception of PF&R hiring practices as open and fair. This must be done in the context of two significant factors:

1. The underutilization of women and ethnic minorities that appears to currently exist in PF&R, and
2. The need to be able to effectively interact with and serve an increasingly ethnically diverse public.

The new model will require a set of recruitment and retention strategies that are decisive, creative and proactive. Additionally, it must include an educational outreach component that aggressively communicates that the profession is no longer just for white men.



## **PROMOTION RECOMMENDATIONS**

In formulating these recommendations an assumption has been made that the formal criteria and process for promotion is in fact fair and objective.

1. Review all policies and procedures to ensure that the system is fair and objective and make adjustments as necessary.
2. Review all written information that describes the promotion process to make certain that language is clear.
3. Work with supervisors to ensure that this information is communicated to employees.

## **JOINT WORK CLIMATE AND HARASSMENT RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Create Bureau-wide ownership of the diversity work by developing an action plan that addresses all of the recommendations in this report ultimately designing a blueprint for guiding PF&R's work to achieve the "desired state." The development of this plan must genuinely engage sworn and non-sworn employees, and must be supported and endorsed by management and labor.
2. Mandatory training must be delivered to all PF&R employees by work group. This training must focus on helping individuals to understand the impact of their behavior on others rather than on what is being done wrong. Guilt, blame and scapegoating as the focus for training will not improve or address the situation – everyone is part of the problem and part of the solution. The training must also include interpersonal communication skills training and finally should provide a safe environment within which work groups can work through how the law can be applied in their work environment. Management must participate in the training.
3. The conflict resolution skills training for supervisors that is recommended under the conflict resolution recommendations must be implemented.
4. The complaint process should be reviewed to ensure it is a system that can work if supervisors are well trained. Once the supervisor training has concluded, information about the training and the complaint process should be communicated to all employees.



## CONCLUSION

It would be easy to consider this report an indictment of the management of PF&R or to see it as a document that seeks to blame white males for the problems and issues that exist. But that over-simplification misses the point – which is that authentic efforts to create change must begin with an accurate picture of what must be changed. Portland Fire and Rescue, like every other historically homogenous profession, faces challenges in diversifying its work force and as a microcosm of society mirrors the stresses and strains going on all over the country in communities that are rapidly becoming more diverse. In reality, management is to be commended for being willing to hear the truth and must also be willing to empower others to help lead in this work.

Some may claim this report focuses more on what is wrong than what is right. To the extent that the purpose of the assessment was to determine gaps between the current organizational state and the “desired state,” there is no other way to do so but to look at what isn’t working. Focusing only on what is working would create a false image of the current state of affairs and would not provide a foundation upon which change can be built.

Moving forward it is critical that time and money be invested in creating a common sense of commitment to the need to diversify the workforce. If it is not invested proactively the expense will ultimately be paid in fighting lawsuits rather than building a strong diverse team. The first step should be to engage a diverse group of PF&R sworn and non-sworn employees in working through and prioritizing the recommendations included in this report. Several recommendations require the creation of a broad based work group to guide the development of various elements of the recommendations – this group can in fact be one group charged with the responsibility of working with human resources and Chief Wilson in the implementation of all of the recommendations. This committee ought to be linked to a community committee that serves in an advisory capacity – if such a group does not exist, one must be created.

The recommendations included in this report serve as a framework for the development of an action plan that can guide PF&R on this journey. Nevertheless, a plan is only effective if it is implemented in a timely manner consistent with the spirit of the recommendations. It is a complex and challenging task but one that will reap benefits for Portland Fire and Rescue for many years to come.



## INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

### INTRODUCTION

Portland once a small town today is a thriving complex metropolis with a diverse population, a light rail system that is a national model and a dynamic business sector. Clearly, the city's growth has been the catalyst for the transformation of the volunteer Fire Department that protected that small town to the first paid Fire Department funded by the city council in 1883 to the multifaceted Portland Fire and Rescue (PF&R) bureau of 720 employees that today serves 531,600 residents living and working in the 149 square miles of its jurisdiction.

Transformation by definition necessitates change – and many things have changed since the days when “firefighter training was ‘on the job’ experience, courage and a lot of luck.” Nevertheless, there is no doubt that the commitment, vision and passion to the mission has been and is the constant tie that binds. The words may have changed over the years, but the heart and soul remains the same.

#### Mission

*The mission of Portland Fire and Rescue is to promote a safe environment for all protected areas, to respond to fire, medical and other emergencies, and to provide related services to benefit the public.*

During the process of conducting this assessment it has become clear that fire fighting is more a calling than a career – more a way of life than a job. The men and women of the PF&R are truly dedicated to fighting the “good fire” and in doing so willingly accept as their personal and professional responsibility risking their lives to save the lives of others. And for this the public owes them a debt of gratitude. They are heroes and heroines but they are also human.

They are human beings that work in the context of shrinking resources; increasing demands for services; an increasingly diverse workforce and public; complex workplace dynamics; and, constant pressure that comes from ensuring that none of these factors affects their safety and the safety of the public. Clearly, this creates stress and tension, and like many other professions there are problems, issues and patterns that must be addressed if, in fact, the PF&R is to achieve its mission.





## **BACKGROUND**

The articulation of the commitment of PF&R and the City of Portland to equal opportunity is unmistakable – it’s stated in General Order 41, and in chapter and verse of the City Code. Additionally, state statute and federal civil rights laws stand watch over employment practices and services to the public. Most pertinent to the day-to-day operation of PF&R are the “strategic directions” as outlined below.

### Strategic Directions

1. Creatively respond to changing service demands.
2. Promote and nurture relationships with the City neighborhoods and key stakeholder groups outside the Bureau.
3. Establish new programs and enhance existing programs to develop staff capacity and resources to their fullest potential.
4. Accelerate efforts to improve internal organizational effectiveness.
5. Demonstrate through words and actions our commitment to be responsive, respectful and sensitive to community and workforce demographics and values.

Specifically, strategic direction five is further detailed as follows:

Demonstrate through words and actions our commitment to be responsive, respectful and sensitive to community and workforce demographics and values. Changing demographics within the City as well as our own commitment to fairness, equity and equal opportunity compel us to continually find ways to work effectively with diverse populations.

Therefore we must:

- Continue to take actions to create a workforce that reflects the makeup of the community while maintaining standards in hiring and promotion.
- Continue to demonstrate respect for and tolerance of differences between Bureau employees and the larger community.
- Continually reinforce our commitment to ethical and equitable treatment of each other.

Recent events; media coverage; the statutes, policies and guidelines outlined above; combined with leadership commitment form the framework for PF&R request for proposal for a cultural assessment. As taken from the request for proposal: PF&R wants to achieve a “desired state” within the Bureau where a diverse work culture is valued and honored, and a



professional work environment is established and maintained at a level where all individuals are treated with respect and dignity. Finally, this desired state must promote both employment opportunities and a professional work environment free of bias, prejudice and harassment.

The goal of the cultural assessment is to improve Portland Fire and Rescue work environment. It is to review and assess the PF&R work environment as it relates to working relationships among a multi-cultural, sworn and non-sworn personnel, and to offer recommendations for training and other tools to establish and maintain cultural and work environment supports to improve PF&R's ability to work in an efficient and effective manner.

After a lengthy and competitive review and selection process PF&R contracted with Metropolitan Group (MG) to conduct the assessment. There were four primary benefits to hiring outside consultants to work on the assessment:

- Obtaining technical expertise,
- Obtaining insight from experts in diversity,
- Guaranteeing confidentiality of responses for PF&R employees by ensuring a process whereby no PF&R employee would see survey responses, and
- Assuring that the study was completed in a timely manner.



## **ASSESSMENT PROCESS**

Simply put, in conducting the assessment MG views the “desired state” as PF&R’s broad statement of its work climate and employment practice goal. The assessment process will generate the data needed to conduct a “gap analysis” or in other words, to determine those areas in which systematic improvement must be achieved in order to achieve the “desired state.” All phases of the assessment were developed and planned in conjunction with PF&R staff in order to maximize resources, reduce costs and to develop a process that was suitable for the PF&R culture. The process was designed to provide a set of tools through which data could be generated that would allow MG to evaluate the current organizational culture and work environment as it relates to working relationships among multi-cultural staff. Throughout this process MG has worked directly with human resources staff, (Jack Graham and Vincent Woods), and as appropriate with Chief Ed Wilson and the members of the Core Executive Team and the Executive Team. The following sections outline the background research, survey development and administration, interview and data analysis processes.

Before proceeding it is important to note that for the purposes of this assessment multi-cultural is broadly defined. The diversity of this definition is demonstrated through the demographic categories included in the survey. Where specific data, findings or recommendations relate to a specific group it will be so noted. Nevertheless, given the historically homogenous (white and male) make-up of the PF&R workforce, particular attention and focus has been placed on the demographic categories of race, ethnicity and gender. Finally, while sexual orientation is a protected class in the City of Portland, based on the City Code, the number of respondents who self identify in any category other than heterosexual is so small that it does not provide a sufficient database from which valid findings can be extrapolated.

## **BACKGROUND RESEARCH**

Prior to the survey development MG conducted background research in order to become familiar with PF&R’s culture, history, statistics and work environment. This research consisted of reviewing written information and site visits. A sample of the written information reviewed includes: demographic information on all sworn and non-sworn employees, human resources information, training materials, affirmative action plan, general



orders, City Code, labor agreement, annual statistical data, newspaper articles, television clips, rules and regulations. Site visits were conducted at Stations 2, 1, 22 and 13. Site visits were arranged by PF&R staff to cover mealtime, roll call, shift change, training, double and single engine companies, and inspectors.

### **SURVEY DEVELOPMENT**

MG worked with the Executive Team to determine the categories for the survey: conflict, management, communication, career development, hiring, promotion, work climate, harassment/discrimination/differential treatment and demographic information. Following the determination of the categories MG developed a draft survey that was reviewed and approved by the Core Executive Team. The final survey consisted of 134 items. Eleven items were demographic questions, 103 were attitudinal statements and 20 were experiential questions.

Each survey contained a page link number in the bottom left hand corner. The purpose of this page link number was to hold the data together as a unit during processing. The numbers found at the top of the page are essentially page numbers that when combined with the page link numbers ensure that data for each respondent for each page is entered together and can be tracked as a unit by demographic category. This process was necessary to control the data while protecting the confidentiality of respondents by not requiring names.

### **ADMINISTRATION OF SURVEY**

After development of the questions the survey was produced by MG. Labels of all PF&R employees home addresses were generated by PF&R and delivered to MG. Packets that included a cover letter with instructions, a return addressed (to MG) postage paid envelope and the survey were sent directly to all PF&R sworn and non-sworn employee's homes. No PF&R employee had access to surveys before they were mailed.

Prior to receiving the survey all PF&R employees received a letter from Fire Chief Ed Wilson encouraging participation and explaining the study. The letter was enclosed with their paycheck or direct deposit receipt. Employees were also informed about the survey through an internal television broadcast by the Chief. Completed surveys were returned directly to MG in the addressed postage paid envelopes by the August 9, 2002 deadline. The survey deadline was extended by one week to accommo-



date employees' vacation. Once surveys were received, they were opened by the MG research team.

**RESPONDENTS**

Surveys were sent to all PF&R employees (720). MG received a total of 287 surveys for a 39.8 percent response rate. Fifty of the surveys received were not processed for the following reasons: 33 were received after the deadline, five were returned shredded and 12 were not suitable for processing. The surveys that were not accepted by the scanner were crumpled, cut or were rejected because of additional marking such as comments and questions written on the survey. Therefore, the report reflects data from 237 surveys. It is important to note that the number of responses for each question varies according to the number of individuals who responded to it. The matrix found below summarizes respondents by gender and ethnicity as compared to their representation in the PF&R workforce. A complete demographic breakdown of respondents is found in Appendix D.

<b>CATEGORY</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL RESPONDENTS IN THE CATEGORY</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE IN PF&amp;R WORKFORCE</b>
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	14.8	5.2
Male	82.5	94.6
Did not respond	2.7	N/A
<b>Ethnic Race/Background</b>		
Asian	3.8	3.4
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	.8	(included in Asian total)
Hispanic or Latino	4.6	3.7
White (not of Hispanic descent)	74.7	81.4
Black or African American (not of Hispanic descent)	3.4	4.2
American Indian/Alaskan Native (not of Hispanic descent)	4.2	1.9
Other	6.3	NA
Did not respond	2.2	NA

*Excerpted From Appendix E*



In addition to surveys, seven letters were received that express:

- the writer's lack of faith in PF&R's ability or commitment to change,
- distrust in the confidentiality of the assessment process,
- confusion about a question or questions on the survey, or
- expressing the sentiment that people need to toughen up.

These letters were not considered as data relevant to developing findings and recommendations.

## **INTERVIEWS**

Given the small numbers of women and ethnic minority employees at PF&R, MG included personal interviews that would yield qualitative data as a component of the assessment. Given that the survey goal was to assess departmental attitudes about diversity it was necessary to focus on women and ethnic minorities both of which are numerical minorities at PF&R. At the request of PF&R a random selection of 15 white males was added to the interview list. Information gathered through the interviews was used to establish depth and consistency between quantitative and qualitative data, and to ensure that the responses and perspectives of the small voices were not lost.

Forty five prospective interviewees received a letter at home inviting them to participate in the process. These interviewees were randomly selected from lists of employees by race/ethnicity and gender. Following the first deadline for participation additional potential interviewees were selected and sent letters. A total of 29 sworn and non-sworn employees were interviewed in MG's downtown office.

Thus, four members of the MG team conducted 45 minute interviews with this randomly selected control group of women, ethnic minorities and white males. (Appendix C – Interviewer Reliability Process). To ensure consistency between the survey and interview processes, interview questions were selected from the final list of survey questions (Appendix C – Interview Questions and Invitation Letter). This group of women, ethnic minorities, and white male employees provided the data necessary for a comparison of interview responses with survey responses.



The demographic breakdown for the group was:

<b>CATEGORY</b>	<b>NUMBER INTERVIEWED</b>
White women	5
White men	8
Women of color	3
Men of color	13
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>29</b>
Non-sworn	7
Sworn	22
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>29</b>

### **DATA ANALYSIS**

Data was run and analyzed by MG staff. Surveys will be destroyed after the final report has been submitted and accepted. Further data analysis, if negotiated and agreed upon, will be done from stored data. No PF&R employee at any time has or will have access to completed surveys, data stored on pc or disk, or any items submitted with surveys.

#### *Statistical Analysis Tools*

The statistical tools used in the analyses of the data were provided by Statistical Package for the Social Sciences Inc. (SPSS 11.0). As such, this computer program provided the following analytical tools: frequencies (frequency, percentage, valid and cumulative percentages), cross tabulations (dependent and independent variable comparison summarized by number and percentage of respondents), and comparison of the means (mean, number of respondents, standard deviation, and percentages).



### Limitations of the Study

There are two areas of limitations which qualify the results and interpretations of the responses to the survey. The limitations result from the subjects utilized, and the methods for generating the data. The subjects, while representing the entire workforce of the bureau, had the choice to either respond or not to the survey. Therefore, the respondents are viewed as partially self-selecting.

In addition, there are two inherent problems, which potentially qualify the results and interpretations of the responses to the survey. First, all standardized tests create categories within which all responses must be placed. The survey, although not a standardized testing instrument, organized the responses into categories. Second, paper and pencil tests measure a portion of reality. The behaviors directly presented are reading and writing, and inferences about the larger realm of human behavior are, finally, only inferences.

### Quantitative Data – Survey Response Data

The survey was composed of items from eight categories: conflict, management, communication, career development, hiring, promotion, work climate and harassment/discrimination/differential treatment.

The harassment/discrimination/differential treatment items were further sub-grouped into questions: experienced and witnessed harassment based on race, sex, disability, age, ethnic background, gender-based, sexual orientation, religion, language, and physical appearance for the purpose of analysis.

The first step of analysis was the grouping of survey items by category, followed by tabulation of frequency of responses by percentage. (Appendix E – Frequency Distribution Report). Items were then subjected to analysis of the means by question within each category cross-tabulated with demographic characteristics as found in questions 124-134. (Appendix F – Report of Means by Topic and Demographic Characteristics). We continued by reviewing data generated by the interviews using as a context the quantitative data processed as indicated above. Finally, inferences were drawn from the compilation of data resulting in major findings and recommendations.





### Qualitative Data – Personal Interviews

To ensure reliability in the interview of those randomly-selected subjects, a process was delineated and implemented for the interviewers. To that end, a session was scheduled by the lead researcher during which the following outcomes resulted:

1. Interviewers were asked to express their individual interpretations of the intent of the questions used in the interviews.
2. Their answers were discussed and analyzed for consistency and accuracy by all.
3. Once a consensus was reached regarding meaning and intent of the questions used in the interviews and given that all interviewers had had previous experience in interviewing, there was no need for “mock” interviews.
4. Finally, the lead researcher introduced to the team a sample of a base opening statement, which was approved and, subsequently, used in all interviews (Appendix C – Interviewer Reliability Process).

Once the interviews were conducted, each interviewer submitted to the lead researcher a summary of the responses to the questions in the interviews (all completed questionnaire forms and additional notes taken during the interviews were also collected by the lead researcher). All summaries were analyzed for consistency, thematic patterns and subsequently compared with the responses to the survey. In compiling both quantitative and qualitative data, inferences were drawn from them, which served as the empirical base for the recommendation in this study.



## FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In general, responses to the survey reflect a high degree of pride and intense loyalty to PF&R and co-workers, dedication to mission, job satisfaction and high morale. These strengths are the foundation for the high quality service PF&R provides to the public. Nevertheless, as established by extensive research our greatest strengths carried to extreme become our greatest weaknesses. In the final analysis the challenge facing PF&R is to take action to ensure that these strengths do not become weaknesses. This will require decisive action and long-term determination to achieving the “desired state.”

PF&R wants to achieve a “desired state” within the Bureau where a diverse work culture is valued and honored, and a professional work environment is established and maintained at a level where all individuals are treated with respect and dignity. Finally, this desired state must promote both employment opportunities and a professional work environment free of bias, prejudice and harassment.

The findings and recommendations outlined below provide a blueprint for building support, clarifying expectations and goals, and continuing to strengthen the PF&R workforce. It must be noted that this assessment process occurred in the context of several significant events: labor negotiations and the media coverage related to the harassment/discrimination suit. There were clear indications during the assessment process that emotions, stress, tension and tempers are running high at PF&R. Calls and letters received by MG from anonymous employees during the process confirmed these observations. Finally, while it is impossible to quantify the impact of these events on the responses of employees to the survey it is assumed that they did in fact have an impact.

Clearly, there are specific issues that rise to the surface. Responses indicate that there were efforts to intentionally influence the results by responding in a certain manner. Nevertheless, the distribution across question categories and cross tabulations revealed an accurate picture of the current climate and the culture of the organization.



The findings and recommendations are presented below by category and are organized as such:

- Desired state – a summary statement of how this category would be reflected in the “desired state.”
- Summary of Findings – overall observations for the category.
- Gap analysis – specific gaps as it relates to working relationships among multi-cultural staff compared to the “desired state.”
- Recommendations – strategies and steps to be used for transforming the PF&R from its current state to the “desired state.”

**CONFLICT**  
**QUESTIONS 1, 16, 29, 30, 42, 49, 56, 68**

*Desired State*

Cross-cultural conflict is proactively resolved through a person to person direct approach. All employees feel comfortable with the skills they have learned and with the support they receive from supervisors and PF&R management in resolving conflict.

*Summary of Findings*

Generally, responses indicate that PF&R employees feel able to address conflict with co-workers and have a high degree of confidence in their skills. Based on the responses it is clear that these are skills employees have developed on their own rather than through PF&R training. Employees also feel very comfortable going to their supervisor to discuss problems or to seek assistance in resolving them; 90 percent responded that they feel comfortable bringing up problems they observe with their supervisors and 89 percent responded likewise for bringing their own problems to the attention of their supervisors. This in combination with other responses reflects a high degree of confidence that issues can be resolved. An in-depth analysis of the means by demographic categories supports the summary of findings as well as those found below on specific gaps.

*Specific Gaps*

Nevertheless, there are three areas that surface as gaps in PF&R’s ability to claim it has achieved the desired state in this category:

- Half of the respondents do not feel that supervisors are well trained in resolving harassment complaints.



While employees generally feel comfortable going to supervisors with issues there are strong indications that this may not be true for situations that involve allegations of harassment. While the total agree for the conflict category of questions ranges from 84-90 percent – it plummets to 38 percent when asking whether supervisors are well trained in resolving harassment complaints. This translates into 50 percent of PF&R employees who believe supervisors are not well trained in this area and nearly 10 percent responding not applicable.

Responses from interviewees clearly reflect differences in perspective on this issue based on gender and ethnicity. One hundred percent of white males believe that harassment situations are effectively dealt with as compared to 50 percent of women and ethnic minority interviewees. Furthermore women and ethnic minority employees also stated that they believe supervisors would benefit from training in interpersonal, and cross-cultural communication and gender differences.

Additionally, data collected from interviewees indicates that women and ethnic minorities are less comfortable going to their supervisors with any issue than white males. Their reasons include: doubts about supervisors' ability and skills, perception of a lack of follow through and follow-up, and concerns about the absence of confidentiality which results in retaliation and isolation. This combination of data in the context of the increasing diversity of PF&R is of concern and seriously impacts the ability of the organization to effectively manage an increasingly diverse work force.

- Forty five percent of survey respondents disagree with the statement that the PF&R encourages person to person conflict resolution.

Furthermore, a review of interviewee statements indicates that white women and ethnic minority employees do not feel that PF&R encourages a direct approach to conflict resolution contrasted by 100 percent of the white males interviewed who perceive that it is encouraged. The earlier conflicts are resolved the greater the chance that working relationships can be maintained and even strengthened. This is best done through a proactive direct person to person approach. Given the differences in perspective this is an areas that merits attention.

- Responses to the survey and information gathered during interviews clearly indicate that PF&R to date has not helped employees develop their conflict resolution skills.



Fifty percent of employees responding to the survey and the overwhelming majority of interviewees point out that while they are comfortable with their conflict resolution skills they did not develop them through any training received through PF&R. The closed-end nature of the survey questions combined with the subjective nature of an individual's self perception of their conflict resolution skills emphasizes the need to address this area. For example, a range of positive and negative styles for dealing with conflict exists such as – negotiation of needs, clear direct communication, avoidance, confrontation or passive aggressive behavior. An individual who feels comfortable with his or her conflict resolution approach may rate their skills as high yet still be contributing to an unhealthy work environment by not constructively dealing with conflict.

### Recommendations

The following recommendations are made as a means to address the gaps as outlined above and to move the PF&R from the current to the “desired state.” They are:

1. Develop and deliver a mandatory training class (minimum of four hours) for all employees on conflict resolution focusing on a person to person approach that emphasizes collaborative negotiation skills and the impact of gender and cultural differences on conflict. The focus must be proactive, solution oriented and should challenge individuals to become more aware of their personal reaction to conflicts as a means to refine their own style. Because employees work and live together the training must address the development of a style that works over coffee in the morning as well as during the height of emotion such as while fighting a fire.
2. Develop a training program (minimum of 16 hours) that increases the skills, comfort level and confidence of supervisors in dealing with the handling of harassment situations. This program will also increase the level of confidence that employees have of supervisors and must include: the impact of cultural and gender differences on conflict; the effect of the dynamics of power and privilege on conflict; interpersonal communication skills; collaborative negotiation and mediation skill development and their legal responsibility as supervisors under applicable civil rights laws.



## **MANAGEMENT QUESTIONS 2, 17, 57, 76, 79, 81, 83**

### Desired State

Management is seen as highly skilled and is viewed by all employees as striving to diversify the PF&R work force as a means to continually improve the quality of service provided to the public. Moreover these changes will be achieved by implementing and constantly evaluating a plan composed of strategies that are seen by employees as equitable in the context of existing under-representation.

### Summary of Findings

Responses to the questions in this section suggest a positive attitude on the part of respondents regarding their supervisors. That is, when it comes to supervisor's appreciation of them as employees, understanding and reinforcement of PF&R policy, comfort in going to them with issues and ensuring a harassment-free environment, supervisors receive high marks.

### Gap Analysis

- In reviewing the responses to questions 57 (If someone treats me differently I feel comfortable bringing it to my supervisor's attention) and 76 (If someone at PF&R offends me I feel comfortable bringing it to my supervisor's attention) there are indications that some employees feel less comfortable than others.

An analysis of the means reveals that women and employees who have a sexual orientation other than heterosexual feel less comfortable raising the issues outlined above with their supervisors. While still within the agree to not applicable range the means on both questions reflects a pattern that indicates a significant difference for men and heterosexuals, thus indicating areas that should be addressed.

- When it comes to PF&R's training supervisors the opinion shared by employees was not as favorable as in other management categories.

While generally responses to this question suggest positive impressions, the disagreement while numerically smaller is considered statistically significant. Slightly over one-third of employees feel that PF&R does not do an adequate job of training supervisors to do their jobs well. Analysis of the means emphasizes this finding by revealing that in answering question 83 (PF&R trains supervisors to do their job well). At a rate of nearly 100 percent, Inspectors and Battalion Chiefs disagree with the statement with non-sworn supervisors trending in the disagree direction.



### Recommendation

1. Develop a task force or committee composed of a diverse representation of sworn and non-sworn employees to assess the specific training needs of supervisors. This group will work with human resource staff and qualified experts to develop the training curriculum/model and to establish a timeline for implementation. This group must include representation across all job groups, lengths of service with PF&R, gender and ethnic groups, and must be supported by labor and management. The ensuing model must be required of all current supervisors and must be offered annually for new supervisors. The training recommended in the conflict category above should be the first priority for this group given that the data clearly indicates this as a need.

## **COMMUNICATION QUESTIONS 3, 18, 31, 38, 45, 50, 58**

### Desired State

All employees have access to the information they need in order to do their job and feel comfortable asking questions as needed.

### Summary of Findings

Effective communication is the factor that in large part determines the degree to which a workplace is able to effectively negotiate the challenges it faces. By and large responses indicate that employees express a positive regard for communication at PF&R. As expected formal notification of policies, rules and regulations are communicated to all employees. Moreover this occurs on a regular basis and is effective in so much as employees also responded that they understand what is communicated to them. Thus, it can be concluded that formal channels and mechanism for communication are successful in ensuring that employees have the information they need to do their jobs.

### Gap Analysis

- In the area of internal communication the responses signify a trend that may indicate an existing or emerging issue.

In looking at the responses to questions 31 (Internal communication at PF&R is effective) and 45 (PF&R's procedures for routine communication with staff are effective) it appears that while the responses continue to echo a positive perspective they also reflect a significantly higher



degree of disagreement than the other questions in this category. Given that internal communication is defined as formal and informal strategies for communication with and between employees, these responses compared with the responses about formal methods of communication indicate that informal routine day-to-day communication is far less effective than formal communication.

#### Recommendation

1. Conduct further research that defines and specifies areas of internal communication that are not effective. Based on the results of this additional research create strategies and tools to ensure that informal and formal communication leverage each other and support a healthy work environment and positive relationships between co-workers.

### **CAREER DEVELOPMENT**

**QUESTIONS 4, 10, 19, 24, 33, 40, 46, 48, 51, 59, 60, 62, 69, 70, 77, 80, 82, 84, 88, 93**

#### Desired State

All employees understand how to access career development opportunities and believe that supervisors and management make fair decisions about participation.

#### Summary of Findings

It would be easy to take a quick look at the numbers and conclude that things are fine at PF&R. However, in-depth analysis reveals that in actuality this is an area of significant concern. In 60 percent of the questions in this category, one quarter (27 percent) to nearly one half (43 percent) of respondents selected items that reflect the perception that career development at PF&R is not fairly administered. Those that responded as such are generally evenly distributed across job groups, length of service, sexual orientation, religion, age, race and gender.

Additionally, survey data does indicate that women and people of color tend to perceive there to be greater unfairness than white males. Ninety-five percent of women and ethnic minority individuals and 50 percent of white males interviewed stated that PF&R does not provide fair and equitable career development opportunities. Analysis of the mean for each question and demographic characteristic supports this conclusion. Nevertheless, what is striking is the relative similarity in responses across all demographic characteristics including race and gender.





### Gap Analysis

It goes without saying that there are significant gaps between the current state in which PF&R employees view career development and the “desired state” as define above. The items detailed below provide specific information on gaps.

- Informal feedback – 92 percent of respondents indicate that informal feedback is useful in the performance of their jobs but only 74 percent indicate that they receive any. Given the level of importance placed on informal feedback by employees one can assume that not getting this feedback has a negative impact on morale and job performance.
- On the subject of performance evaluations there is no doubt that the majority of employees responding do not receive annual performance evaluations and therefore do not place a value on them. This coupled with responses that indicate the perception of unwritten rules and informal job requirements creates an environment where subjective judgments are made about why some individuals have certain opportunities and others do not. In the absence of concrete objective information about job performance it is easy for employees to see unfairness even if it does not exist.
- It must be restated that women and ethnic minorities tend to see themselves as having fewer career development opportunities than white males. As the workforce continues to diversify this will become an increasingly significant issue. Additionally, perception on this issue may change as more of the currently employed women and ethnic minority employees seek advancement.

### Recommendations

1. All employees must receive annual performance reviews, which include the development of career development activities/plan for the coming year. Employees may elect to not develop a plan but must sign a statement to that effect.
2. A system must be developed to ensure that opportunities to participate in career development activities are widely communicated and encouraged for sworn and non-sworn employees. The criteria for participation and the approval process must also be formalized and communicated through this system. Possible systems include a combination of written notifications such as a monthly or quarterly newsletter on opportunities, emails, or an internal website page that is continually updated and available.
3. Reassess the perception of women and ethnic minorities relative to their career development opportunities after recommendations one and two have been implemented.



## **HIRING**

**QUESTIONS 5, 20, 32, 39, 61, 71, 85, 86, 89, 91, 94, 96  
(QUESTIONS 20 AND 86 WERE TAKEN FROM THE PROMOTIONS  
SECTIONS AND CONSIDERED HERE.)**

### *Desired State*

Current and prospective employees believe that the hiring process at PF&R is equitable and based on an applicant's ability to do the job and the ability of PF&R to best serve the public.

### *Summary of Findings*

There is no question about the depth of the feelings about hiring at PF&R. Responses to the survey clearly depict the sentiment that the majority of respondents perceive that ethnic minority individuals have an unfair advantage in the hiring process. Over 50 percent agreed with the statement, "Being a person of color helps in getting a job at PF&R even if you are not qualified" and 65 percent disagreed with the statement, "People of color do not have an advantage competing for jobs at PF&R." Furthermore, given that the Firefighter Trainee Program (FTP) was created for the purposes of diversifying PF&R, it is impossible to look at this subject without considering the responses to questions about the program.

In short, only those that have benefited from the program and those in management positions view the program as fair. Interview responses and analysis of the means indicate that even ethnic minorities and women tend to see the program as limited in its fairness. This response may be the result of living with the pressure and stress that comes from co-workers who perceive them and interact with them as though they are not qualified to do the job because they came through the program. Interviewees stated that this pressure dissipated after they had proven themselves but still hovers in the back of everyone's mind.

In stark contrast to the responses about the FTP is that fact that 76 percent agree that hiring off the regular eligibility list is fair. Moreover 79 percent believe that the FTP should be open everyone. Analysis of the means reveals that this is true across all demographic characteristics including gender and background (race/ethnicity).



### Gap Analysis

The category of hiring is the greatest gap that PF&R faces in achieving the “desired state.” It is impossible to create and support a diverse work climate if the hiring process is viewed as unfair. PF&R must continue to develop ways to diversify the qualified applicant pool in order to increase the diversity of its workforce but it must do so through strategies and processes that are reasonably viewed as fair. Clearly, regardless of the approach taken there will be those who will view any attempt to diversify the workforce as unfair to them. There is no doubt that the FTP has contributed to increasing the diversity of the workforce and it must be acknowledged that 69 percent of survey respondents believe that the FTP is an important part of PF&R’s goal of increasing its ethnic and gender diversity.

Nevertheless, the degree of anger, frustration and divisiveness caused by this current model may still in fact outweigh the benefits by creating intense backlash for PF&R and by putting undue pressure on and stigmatizing those individuals it was intended to assist. This stigmatization may in fact sabotage the performance of some women and ethnic minorities that enter PF&R through the FTP.

### Recommendation

Create a joint management, labor and community task force to develop a single list model for hiring that meets the twin goals of diversifying the workforce and re-establishing the perception of PF&R hiring practices as open and fair. This must be done in the context of two significant factors:

1. The underutilization of women and ethnic minorities that appears to currently exist in PF&R, and
2. The need to be able to effectively interact with and serve an increasingly ethnically diverse public.

The new model will require a set of recruitment and retention strategies that are decisive, creative and proactive. Additionally, it must include an educational outreach component that aggressively communicates that the profession is no longer just for white men.



**PROMOTION**  
**QUESTIONS 6, 11, 25, 34, 63, 90, 92, 95**

*Desired State*

Employees know that decisions about promotion are made objectively and fairly.

*Summary of Findings*

Overall the data indicates that over half, 56 percent of the respondents, do not believe that decisions are made about promotions objectively. This added to an unusual split in which 44 percent believe promotions are based on what you know and 44 percent believe they are based on who you know underscores the finding that there appears to be confusion about how and why employees are promoted. Interestingly the responses of women and ethnic minorities seem to indicate that they believe that promotions are made objectively even though they too are split on the question of who versus what you know. Not surprisingly women and ethnic minorities do not believe that it is easier for them to get promoted but also do feel that a glass ceiling exists for them.

Nevertheless, there are indications that the perception exists that it is easier to get a promotion if you are an ethnic minority individual. This becomes clear when reviewing the responses to the set of questions that asks if it is easier to get a promotion if you are a woman, man and person of color. Approximately 10 percent agree to the statements that it is easier to get a promotion if you are a women or man, yet 29 percent of respondents agree that it is easier to get a promotion if you are a person of color. This data adds to the general finding that employees do not believe that decisions about promotions are made on an objective basis.

*Gap Analysis*

Similar to the analysis for Hiring, the findings describe the gap. In other words there is significant distance to go in order to achieve the “desired state.” PF&R staff must regain their belief that decisions about promotions are made fairly based on objective criteria.

*Recommendations*

In formulating these recommendations an assumption has been made that the formal criteria and process for promotion is in fact fair and objective.



1. Review all policies and procedures to ensure that the system is fair and objective and make adjustments as necessary.
2. Review all written information that describes the promotion process to make certain that language is clear.
3. Work with supervisors to ensure that this information is communicated to employees.

NOTE: the Gap Analysis and Recommendations for Work Climate and Harassment/ Discrimination/Differential Treatment will be presented together due to the integrated nature of the questions, data and findings.

### **WORK CLIMATE**

**QUESTIONS 7, 8, 12, 21, 22, 23, 26, 27, 35, 36, 37, 41, 43, 44, 47, 52, 64, 65, 72, 73, 74, 75, 87, 97, 99, 101, 102, 103**

#### *Desired State*

The work climate functions as a support system for all employees enabling them to successfully do their job and to advance professionally.

#### *Summary of Findings*

On the surface responses to this series of survey questions reflects employees that generally feel respected and comfortable in their respective work environments. They feel valued as a part of the “family” and can rely on their co-workers for their personal safety. Nevertheless, the data reflects issues that must be addressed.

There are indications that a significant number of employees do not share the view that a diverse work force is important to the ability of PF&R to effectively serve the public. Nearly 30 percent disagreed with question 21, “A diverse workforce helps PF&R better serve the public,” and 35 percent disagreed with question 72, “PF&R should reflect the diversity of the public it serves.” In addition, respondents clearly believe that diversity efforts are motivated by political pressures. When asked to respond to the statement, “Diversity efforts are not motivated by a need to be politically correct,” 36.3 percent disagreed and 43.5 percent strongly disagreed for a total disagree of 79.8 percent.

Other areas of concern include:

- 25.7 percent of respondents are not comfortable having gay and lesbian co-workers.



- 25.7 percent of respondents do not believe that their co-workers understand cultural difference.
- 27 percent of respondents believe that sexually explicit jokes are tolerated at PF&R.
- 20 percent of respondents believe that racist jokes are tolerated at PF&R.
- 52.7 percent of respondents perceive that the “good old boy” system still exists at PF&R.

Furthermore, interview responses support these findings and indicate that issues related to the increasing diversity of the workforce are simmering below the surface. These issues include discomfort felt by men about having women in PF&R and differential treatment based on race/ethnicity.

#### **HARASSMENT/DISCRIMINATION/DIFFERENTIAL TREATMENT QUESTIONS 9, 13, 14, 15, 28, 53, 54, 55, 66, 67, 98, 100, 104-123**

##### *Desired State*

Perceived instances of harassment, discrimination or differential treatment are addressed proactively and effectively through a combination of direct communication, when possible, and management intervention. Employees see grievance processes as fair and have confidence in the ability of management to address such allegations.

##### *Summary of Findings*

In reviewing the data for this category it is evident that the majority of employees do not believe that harassment behavior occurs and have confidence in PF&R’s ability to effectively handle allegations of harassment and discrimination. That being said the percentage of employees that depart from these perceptions indicates the need for further exploration. Given that women (14 percent) and ethnic minority employees (13.2 percent) represent a small portion of the PF&R workforce, the significance of dissenting percentages of 20 percent or more is amplified.

Therefore, data generated by survey responses for this category fall into two areas: the occurrence of specific behaviors, and perceptions about the effectiveness of the process through which incidents and complaints are handled.



The findings on the occurrence of specific behaviors are of specific and serious concern given that they fall within the definition of harassment with particular emphasis on those behaviors that contribute to the creation of a hostile work climate. The responses in this category mirror and further validate the results noted in the previous section on work climate. The items summarized below clearly reveal the perception that PF&R employees engage in behaviors that can be construed over time as harassment.

- 27.8 percent disagree with the statement, “People at PF&R do not make fun of people who speak with an accent,” or approximately one out of four respondents perceive that people at PF&R do make fun of people with accents.
- 30.4 percent disagree with the statement, “There is no tolerance for degrading comments about gays and lesbians at PF&R.” In other words about one-third of those who responded believe that there is tolerance for degrading comments based on sexual orientation.
- 34.6 percent of those responding have experienced cultural conflict in the past three years at PF&R. This is validated by the chart found below that summarizes the yes-no responses to questions about harassing behaviors. The chart found below combines the responses to questions about witnessing and experiencing harassment in the workplace. Combining the two categories provides a more accurate assessment of the frequency of behavior that contributes to a hostile work climate.

<b>WITHIN THE LAST THREE YEARS, I HAVE EXPERIENCED OR WITNESSED THE FOLLOWING TYPES OF HARASSMENT IN THE WORKPLACE:</b>	<b>% YES (ROUNDED UP AT .5)</b>
Racial/Ethnic	36
Sexual	22
Disability	6
Age	27
Gender-based	26
Sexual Orientation	14
Religious	19
Language	10
Physical Appearance	37



In terms of perceptions about the effectiveness of the process through which incidents and complaints are handled the data reflects a lack of confidence beyond the acceptable level for any organization. Thirty six and one-third percent do not feel the complaint process at PF&R is effective in dealing with discrimination and 24.5 percent disagree with the statement, “I will report being racially harassed at PF&R because I believe it will be dealt with effectively.” Additionally, 21.5 percent of respondents will not report being sexually harassed because they believe it will not be dealt with effectively.

Finally, 67 percent of those responding disagree with the statement, “White men are treated fairly as a result of affirmative action.” The inference here is that any programs or activities implemented for affirmative action purposes may be viewed as unfair by a corresponding percentage in the workforce.

### Gap Analysis

It is unmistakably evident that there is little trust in management’s motivation for diversifying the PF&R workforce. This fact combined with lack of confidence in the ability of supervisors to effectively handle harassment allegations creates a significant barrier to PF&R reaching its “desired state.” PF&R cannot achieve the “desired state” unless it does so as a committed team pulling in the same direction. Management must regain the trust of PF&R employees if it is to successfully lead the way.

In terms of employee behavior there is no doubt that behaviors defined as inappropriate and harassing occur in the workplace quite frequently regardless of intent. It is equally clear that responses to questions reflect a working knowledge of the law and what behaviors are considered inappropriate, harassing or discriminatory. The fact that they still occur can be attributed to the tremendous clash of values and world views occurring between sworn employees that live and work together. The sentiment that shifts and stations are ‘family units’ and the station is ‘home’ coupled with the dramatic emotional highs and lows that mark their work creates a dynamic tension that may be released through engaging in what is intended to be collegial banter and humor. Nevertheless, in the most strict sense PF&R is legally liable for the impact of these behaviors on employees and as such must find a way to ensure that all PF&R employees are able to do their jobs in harassment- and discrimination-free work environments.





Finally, when all else fails PF&R must be able to rely on its ability to effectively address or resolve allegations of harassment and discrimination. The perception on the part of employees that the system doesn't work results in issues simmering just below the surface until it boils over. The intent of internal formal and informal systems is to resolve the situation as early in the process as possible. This is only possible if there is trust in the system, which encourages individuals to resolve it directly, to seek mediation or to file a complaint with confidence that fair processes will be conducted.

### Recommendations

1. Create Bureau-wide ownership of the diversity work by developing an action plan that addresses all of the recommendations in this report, ultimately designing a blueprint for guiding PF&R's work to achieve the "desired state." The development of this plan must genuinely engage sworn and non-sworn employees and must be supported and endorsed by management and labor.
2. Mandatory training must be delivered to all PF&R employees by work group. This training must focus on helping individuals to understand the impact of their behavior on others rather than on what is being done wrong. Guilt, blame and scapegoating as a focus for training will not improve or address the situation – everyone is part of the problem and part of the solution. The training must also include interpersonal communication skills training and finally should provide a safe environment within which work groups can work through how the law can be applied in their work environment. Management must participate in the training.
3. The conflict resolution skills training for supervisors that is recommended under the conflict resolution recommendations must be implemented.
4. The complaint process should be reviewed to ensure it is a system that can work if supervisors are well trained. Once the supervisor training has concluded, information about the training and the complaint process should be communicated to all employees.



## CONCLUSION

It would be easy to consider this report an indictment of the management of PF&R or to see it as a document that seeks to blame white males for the problems and issues that exist. But that over-simplification misses the point – which is that authentic efforts to create change must begin with an accurate picture of what must be changed. Portland Fire and Rescue, like every other historically homogenous profession, faces challenges in diversifying its work force and as a microcosm of society mirrors the stresses and strains going on all over the country in communities that are rapidly becoming more diverse. In reality, management is to be commended for being willing to hear the truth and must also be willing to empower others to help lead in this work.

Some may claim this report focuses more on what is wrong than what is right. To the extent that the purpose of the assessment was to determine gaps between the current organizational state and the “desired state” there is no other way to do so but to look at what isn’t working. Focusing only on what is working would create a false image of the current state of affairs and would not provide a foundation upon which change can be built.

Moving forward it is critical that time and money be invested in creating a common sense of commitment to the need to diversify the workforce. If it is not invested proactively the expense will ultimately be paid in fighting lawsuits rather than building a strong diverse team. The first step should be to engage a diverse group of PF&R sworn and non-sworn employees in working through and prioritizing the recommendations included in this report. Several recommendations require the creation of a broad based work group to guide the development of various elements of the recommendations. This group can in fact be one group charged with the responsibility of working with human resources and Chief Wilson in the implementation of all of the recommendations. This committee ought to be linked to a community committee that serves in an advisory capacity – if such a group does not exist, one must be created.

The recommendations included in this report serve as a framework for the development of an action plan that can guide PF&R on this journey. Nevertheless, a plan is only effective if it is implemented in a timely manner consistent with the spirit of the recommendations. It is a complex and challenging task but one that will reap benefits for Portland Fire and Rescue for many years to come.



## APPENDICES

- A. Chief's Letter
- B. Survey, Instruction Letter
- C. Interview Questions, Invitation Letter and Interviewer Reliability Process
- D. Breakdown of Respondents by Demographic Characteristics
- E. Frequency Distribution Report
- F. Report of the Means by Topic and Demographic Characteristics

