



Climate Survey Background

Background

The purpose of this survey is to better understand what drives inclusion and diversity within a fire department and to help departments identify areas where they can strengthen diversity, inclusion and teamwork to create a more inclusive organization. More diversity in the fire service leads to better engagement with the community served by the department. Having emergency personnel that understand and respond to the needs and cultures of diverse communities helps to develop trust and makes for more effective emergency response. It is important for fire service leadership to be able to look beyond the demographics of their department and use data to uncover what makes their members and internal culture truly inclusive.

Methodology

The IAFC contracted Oklahoma State University to develop and conduct this survey in 2019. After seeking six departments to test this survey, the original online questionnaires were sent between August to October 2019. The original online survey was constructed using Qualtrics, a software that is known for both its flexibility and ease of use. This survey included 49 questions (mostly multi-item questions) and took approximately 18 minutes to complete. Most items are scored using a Likert scale of 1-5 or 1-7 (low to high). The survey includes topics such as, diversity in the department, overall climate and inclusiveness, department culture, team culture, and commitment to the department.

Post survey, IAFC staff, along with members of the Council for Future Volunteer Firefighter (CFVF), conducted a site visit to each of the six departments, to see if the results of the survey results reflected what the group saw at the department. These site visits helped to gauge the reliability and accuracy of this survey so that it could be utilized and shared with other departments.

Outcomes

After conducting the survey and the site visits, it can be concluded that this survey is a simple and reliable way to measure the internal climate of a department. With most of these departments, the survey accurately reflected the issues that were stated when each department was interviewed during site visits by IAFC staff and CFVF members. Additionally, most of the departments stated that they answered these questions honestly and without fear of retribution because they knew that this information will only help their department.

Post site visit, the IAFC sent after action reports with the final survey report to departments to explain the results and each of these departments were given resources and tools to implement and improve their internal culture. All departments were thankful and stated that they would like to utilize this survey again to see if they have improved in the areas of concern, like communication, inclusivity, and leadership development.