



Credentialing: **Your Career Path To Success**



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Credentialing: **Your Career Path to Success**

By Randy R. Bruegman, CFO

The Credentialed CFO

Setting the bar high and leading by example

In 2000, 16 of my colleagues and I were the first fire officers in the country to become credentialed chief fire officers (CFOs) through CPSE's Commission on Professional Credentialing (CPC), which was a milestone for each of us personally, but more importantly, it was a milestone for our profession as well.

Today, nine of those officers still maintain their CFO designation, having renewed their credentials for the sixth time.

While much has changed in the fire service since 2000, one area that has become increasingly crucial to our success is the elevation of our profession—and that starts with the individual. Over the course of my career, I've had the opportunity to lead five different organizations. Being a credentialed CFO is what first opened the door for me to compete for those positions, but more importantly, it sent a message to those I've led that I not only value professional development, I also expect it from them.

As leaders of the fire service, whether we are the chief of a department or a captain running a station, the men and women we lead each and every day look to us to



Fire Officer designees from the Oak Ridge, TN, Fire Department are recognized during a CPSE awards banquet.



RANDY R. BRUEGMAN, CFO, FIFire, has been the fire chief for the City of Anaheim, CA, since October 2010. He was elected as president of the IAFC in August 2002 and has served as the president of the CPSE board of directors since 2003. Bruegman is a noted author and lecturer on topics such as leadership and managing change in the fire service as well as a contributing author of numerous articles and fire service books. Bruegman has an associate's degree in fire science, a bachelor's degree in business, and a master's degree in management. He is a member of the first group to receive the chief fire officer designation and is a fellow with the Institution of Fire Engineers.

set the example. If we simply get promoted and rest on our past laurels, that sends a direct and clear message to our personnel that continuous professional growth is not needed or valued. If we hope to set the bar high for our personnel and our organizations, then we must "walk the walk," and frankly, there is no better way to do that than to credential your workforce in their areas of expertise.

The credibility of a CFO credential is also an important element in working with our external stakeholders, elected officials, community and business leaders, and other department heads. In today's envi-

ronment, CFO credibility is paramount if we as leaders hope to position our organizations to be successful in the future.

Most importantly, credentialing keeps us focused on our continued development as managers and leaders. We've all worked for individuals who have essentially retired on the job once they reach a certain position; that's a tough place to be as their employee, and it's an organizational killer.

Overall, credentialing is crucial because it provides a roadmap for the success of our personnel, it creates a methodology for continuous self-improvement, and it raises the bar in our organizations. ■

Professional Development & Credentialing

within the Fire Service

Communities today expect the professional leaders that credentialing can provide

Quality training programs are one of the highest priorities in any fire department, as organizations look to ensure that members are prepared for the daily challenges and demands of the job.

Departments use a variety of different training programs, ranging from in-service training exercises to 400-hour academies, to maintain member proficiency. Many of these same departments also push for their employees to obtain certifications via agencies, such as Pro Board and the International Fire Service Accreditation Congress (IFSAC), to provide training validation, but this still leaves multiple opportunities for growth



JOSH WALDO, CFO, CTO, FM, is a 15-year student of the fire service, currently serving as the fire chief in Bozeman, MT. Waldo is a triple designee via the CPSE CPC and is a graduate of the

National Fire Academy Executive Fire Officer program. Waldo holds a master's and bachelor's degree from Eastern Kentucky University and has presented programs at national conferences, such as CPSE Excellence events, Firehouse Expo, Fire-Rescue International and the ISFSI.

and development on the table.

One common question asked by fire service members is, what do I need to do to progress in my organization? Many people point to certifications and experience, but do those elements accurately prepare members for the next step in their career? Do members of your organization have a clear road map to follow for their professional development? If so, does the current road map encourage and challenge members to continue to work toward being a true fire service professional? Having a clearly developed professional development plan helps members track their personal growth with clear expectations that they can follow throughout their career.

Why seek credentials?

If your organization is in the process of developing a professional development plan or wants to improve on an existing

plan, adding professional credentialing is a must. Credentialing recognizes individuals who fulfill prescribed standards of performance, ethics and conduct, and who demonstrate a high level of competence, as witnessed by their peers, through documentation of professional, educational, technical and community service achievements. Different from completing a training course or passing a certification exam, credentialing evaluates a member's overall body of work as a professional. For fire service professionals, the most recognized and respected credentialing body is the Center for Public Safety Excellence (CPSE) Commission on Professional Credentialing (CPC), which provides internationally recognized, third-party verification of professional competence in fire and emergency services. Unlike IFSAC and Pro Board certifications, where acceptance varies from state to state and one organization to

another, CPSE Professional Credentialing is recognized by both the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) and the International City/County Management Association (ICMA) as the gold standard for fire service professionals.

The ICMA states that, “professional designations were developed to help advance professionalism via an extensive application process in which candidates demonstrate competency in various areas by detailing their training, education, experience, technical competencies, professional contributions, associations, memberships, and community involvement in a portfolio or application.”

The CPSE CPC offers five different professional designations for fire service professionals:

1. Chief Fire Officer (CFO)
2. Chief Training Officer (CTO)
3. Chief EMS Officer (CEMSO)
4. Fire Marshal (FM)
5. Fire Officer (FO)

5 Levels of Professional Designation Through CPC



The graphic displays five professional designations through CPC, each represented by a shield-shaped icon with a red top section and a blue bottom section. From left to right: CFO (Chief Fire Officer) with a white starburst on a blue background; Fire Officer with two white vertical bars on a blue background; CEMSO (Chief EMS Officer) with a white Star of Life on a blue background; CTO (Chief Training Officer) with a white flame on a blue background; and FM (Fire Marshal) with a white eagle on a blue background.

Each of the professional designations requires the completion of a candidate portfolio that is submitted to the CPSE where it is then forwarded on to peers for review. The peer reviewers evaluate the candidate portfolio, conduct interviews with candidates and forward recommendations to the 11-member CPC Commission, which makes the final award determinations. Different from most other training or certifications in the fire service, CPSE professional designations have a three-year renewal process, thus requiring designees to continue to work on their professional development in multiple areas.

A starting point

A firefighter who's looking to grow and develop in their organization could start

“One of the most significant benefits of professional credentialing is the comprehensive perspective from which the potential designee is evaluated. In the fire service, we often focus primarily on technical skill performance, and while technical competency is critical to performance, the professional credentialing process challenges the fire officer to take a broader view of their professional growth to include education, professional contributions, community involvement and professional goals. This approach provides the fire officer an invaluable tool for gaining perspective and developing a plan for targeted and continuous professional improvement.”



— Holger Durre, FO, Battalion Chief, Poudre Fire Authority, Fort Collins, CO

their path by applying for the fire officer (FO) designation. The FO designation is open to all company-level officers, junior officers and above who have supervisory responsibilities, and to those who have served in an intermittent acting status for a minimum of 12 months. Applicants must meet eligibility requirements in order to apply for any designation, but for the FO designation, items such as secondary education degrees, academic

not only the organizational professional development plan but also the promotional process will help strengthen these processes and the organization.

Other options for growth

Although the FO designation is the starting point, there's more room for growth in the CPC model, as people progress in their career, depending on the path they choose. Whether a member decides to pursue passions in prevention, training, EMS or other chief-level positions, the CPC process offers designations that can guide members through each area of interest. Each designation has some specific requirements, but the overall process remains the same and again requires the three-year renewal to evaluate continued growth.

Dealing with disequilibrium

Incorporating the CPSE CPC process into your professional development or promotional processes may create some disequilibrium among some of your organizational members, because it is a change, and the process may be unfamiliar to them. From past experience, when I added the CPSE CPC process to my previous department's professional development plan, I experienced some push-back from members who were concerned about a professional designation carrying more weight in promotions than other areas, such as training and experience. Adding the CPSE CPC process requires education that explains that professional designations are issued based on training and experience, along with many other aspects.

Credentialing: **Your Career Path to Success**

“ For me the fire officer designation was a great way to see my career as a whole, where it has taken me and what direction it is going. A huge benefit of the process was that I got my career in order and I can now pull things up at a moment’s notice. The 30 years of information from my career is now organized in one place. This made getting re-credentialed very easy. With the trend of more and more fire service organizations becoming accredited, it only makes sense for the company officers to follow suit with the Fire Officer designation, which can only prepare me for the next level as a Chief Officer. ”



— Jim Roman, Sr., FO, Lieutenant, City of Brentwood, TN, Fire & Rescue

Return on investment

After completing the educational segment with members and getting the process going, the return on investment can be tremendous. In my experience with implementing the CPSE CPC process, I saw many members become re-engaged in their professional development plan; as a result, the number of certified Fire Officer I members increased from 16 to 34, and the number of certified Fire Officer II members increased from zero to 12, all within an 18-month period. This

re-engagement was primarily sparked by members who began working on obtaining their professional designation.

Re-energizing people and giving them something to work toward helped the department add 15 professional designations among 13 people in 3 years, with several more in the works. Growth and development are at an all-time high in my organization—and it all started when my department added the CPC process to the plan.

As I settle into a new position in a new department, I can tell you that having

already developed detailed plans of adding the CPSE CPC process in the near future to the professional development and promotional plans, members are excited and looking forward to the challenge.

Fire service members, by their competitive nature, want to be successful and considered professionals in their field; providing them with the proper guidance and direction is sometimes all they’re missing. The CPSE CPC process gives members a goal to work toward, and the return on investment for your organization easily justifies investing the time and resources to complete the process.

Additional benefits

The process of adding professional credentialing to your professional development and promotional plans will have an immediate impact on organizational members and their future growth. Additional benefits of this implementation include members serving as mentors

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to other department members who are seeking professional designations, and the overall increase in professionalism throughout your organization results in better succession planning options.

“ Professional development is comprised of training, education, experience and continued growth. The CPSE Fire Officer designation is the only metric that captures all of the essential elements. I know when I see one of the Fire Officer designations in the post-nominal of a person’s name that they are a well-rounded



fire officer and have been measured by all elements that comprise professional development in the fire service. ”

— Randall W. Hanifen, Ph.D., FO, FIFireE, Captain, West Chester (OH) Fire Rescue; Vice Chair, IAFC Company Officers Section

Designation Process



The four phases of the designation process.

Rise to meet expectations

As the expectations and demands for the fire service profession continue to evolve, the expectations of future leaders must adapt to meet those new challenges. The days of Fire Officer I certifications being the standard for leaders are fading fast; communities

today expect professional leaders for their organizations. The CPSE CPC has developed the process that provides direction and validation for current and future leaders of the fire service. The next step for your organization to excel is to adopt the CPSE CPC process into your organization. ■

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Credentialing from a **Labor Perspective**

**Labor and management must work
together to develop high-quality fire service
officers and leaders**

Safe, efficient and effective emergency response services begin with proper staffing, adequate equipment and appropriate workplace facilities.

But in the modern fire service, responder knowledge, skills and abilities, along with time-sensitive information, play important roles in the successful outcome of any incident.

Emergency response personnel must be educated and well trained to react quickly, but often they must also step up and lead their peers. In many professions, from education to electrical engineering, steady and continuous training helps professionals stay up-to-date on new technologies and innovations in the industry, allowing them to perform at the highest possible level.



MATTHEW VINCI is the director of Education, Training and Human Relations for the International Association of Fire Fighters, a position he has held since May 2013. Prior to coming to the IAFF, he served on the executive

board of the Professional Fire Fighters of Vermont for 15 years, with 6 years as the president, during which time he successfully passed several pieces of legislation in the Vermont Legislature to increase the funding and resources for training and education of firefighters in Vermont. Vinci served as a captain with the South Burlington, VT, Fire Department, where he started his fire service career in 1993.

Means for growth and learning

In the fire service, many departments are committed to providing advanced training and education, which is a critical step in making our communities safer and giving emergency personnel the stepping stones they need to be successful throughout their professional lives.

One of the best educational opportunities for fire service leaders is offered through the Commission for Professional Credentialing (CPC). The credentialing process develops highly trained emergency response personnel to serve as leaders on the fireground, as well as in the firehouse. Those who strive to ascend in the fire service must embrace education and personal growth, and the credentialing process offers opportunity for both.

From entry-level testing to promotional testing, firefighters and paramedics attend training programs and study for hours to prepare for the testing process. Officer promotions are essential to both helping individuals reach their professional goals, and to ensuring that fire departments have quality leaders in the communities they protect and serve.

CPC designations and the application process

I represent the International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF) on the CPC. The CPC offers five designations: 1) Fire Officer (FO), 2) Chief Fire Officer (CFO), 3) Chief EMS Officer (CEMSO), 4) Chief Training Officer (CTO) and 5) Fire Marshal (FM).

Achieving these designations requires the applicant to submit their professional experience through the designation process and meet specific requirements that are reviewed by the applicant's professional peers.

Peer reviews can be intimidating; however, a full review of a firefighter's educational achievements will better guide them toward personal success. The process is fair, honest and helps set personal and professional goals, which helps the applicant chart a successful career course.

The credentialing process overall is a great example of how labor and management can work together to develop high-quality fire service officers and leaders. Such a partnership rewards the public, the employer and the employee by developing leaders who are focused on delivering the most effective emergency services possible.



“ The credentialing process afforded me the opportunity to perform a self-assessment and compare my training and accomplishments to nationally accepted standards; along with a review by my peers. This reflection allowed me to re-align my career path and develop a plan for continued professional growth and development. The network, training and relationships that have been created since becoming credentialed have allowed me to achieve both personal and professional success. ”

— Rob Frampton, MS, FO, NREMT-P, Captain, Salisbury (MD) Fire Department

cial show the value to the community—and perhaps dissuade them from wielding the budget axe.

It is essential that decision-makers commit to investing in human resources as much as in physical resources. Credentialing is a means to make that investment and ensure bountiful returns for years to come.

Opportunity = job satisfaction

Creating opportunities for upward mobility is vital to optimizing the future of our profession and is extremely healthy for a fire department. Why? It’s well known in the fire service that if employees don’t have opportunities to grow within their department, they move on to other organizations and often create attrition issues.

Developing leaders within an organization is therefore a wise investment for municipal government, because it can yield positive returns for years to come. But firefighters and fire officers need the support of their employer for this to be truly successful.

Needed: a support structure

Employers must not only allow time for professional development, they must also support their employees with a financial investment in this process. Employees who are pursuing a designation have a lot on their plate. Work/life balance both on and off the job, combined with increased responsibilities in the firehouse, can be extremely time consuming.

Several collective bargaining agreements in the fire service have clauses that address educational incentives and financial support. Having this support in place gives employees the proper foundation to get started toward successfully completing the credentialing process.

A jewel in the crown

As noted, credentialing improves individual firefighter performance, but it also adds value to fire departments in the eyes of local officials facing difficult budget decisions. A fire department stocked with well-trained and effective fire officers, firefighters and paramedics can become a point of pride for communities—a jewel in the crown—and can help elected offi-

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Credentialing from a **Fire Officer Perspective**

Mentoring and the CPC play huge roles

Advancement in the fire service is extremely competitive, because there are never as many open or vacant positions as there are qualified candidates to fill them.

We all seem to understand and accept this, but what exactly are we doing to make ourselves more noticeable and attractive to leadership in this highly competitive market? What are we doing in our careers to move to the next level, be it company officer or chief officer? We must continually grow and develop in our profession if we want to succeed, but we shouldn't leave our success to chance. A former chief of mine would often say about his career advancement: "Eventually, someone will make a mistake and hire me." While I understood that his comment was satirical, it made

me think about what I was doing to prepare myself and my department members for the responsibility of becoming a supervisor.

Courses for success

As we cultivate our future replacements and teach our younger officers or potential officers what they need to know and do to advance their careers, we are commonly directed to standard courses and programs, as well as written expectations for each position. The expectations should be laid out and clearly written if they're going to be useful for our department members as they continue to advance their careers. Included in these expectations should be a wide variety of courses and training programs that are designed to develop a well-rounded employee. At minimum, these programs should be related to skill sets such as incident command, fireground operations, EMS, communications, safety, training, and basic managerial responsibilities as a supervisor.

Depending on your jurisdiction, the courses and opportunities might be available via local, state or federal programs. These types of programs are excellent

resources for personnel looking to achieve personal development, and, along with experience, should fulfill the needs of those pursuing a well-rounded career.

Competition = motivation

Although training courses and experience truly help make the officer, ultimately, it comes down to your personal commitment; in other words, we must find ways to achieve our own success.

Several years ago, I was at a point in my career where I was searching for direction and committed to my personal success. I had followed the department expectations at each level and had achieved quite a bit in my short career: I was both a paramedic and a hazmat technician; I had received department recognition; and I had even been recognized for my accomplishments and community involvement by groups such as the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) as their Firefighter of the Year. So overall, my career up to that point had been successful. I had gained a reputation as someone who could get things done, but I wasn't the only one; in fact, most of my peers were receiving the same accolades. With career growth aspirations, and the



MIKE WALTON holds designations as a fire officer, chief training officer and chief fire officer from the Commission on Professional Credentialing (CPC). He is the battalion chief of Professional Services for the Yuma, AZ, Fire Department. His current duties include training, accreditation, safety, recruitment and succession planning. Walton holds a bachelor's degree in fire administration from Waldorf College and is working toward a master's degree in public administration from Columbia Southern University. Walton is active within his state to promote fire department accreditation and professional credentialing.

desire to continue my upward movement, I began to realize the competitiveness of my next position. I had to ask myself, "What can I do to make myself a better officer now and into the future?" Further, "How do I ensure that what I am doing is actually benefiting my professional growth and development?" With the goal of professional growth and development in mind, I looked to a mentor of mine and was directed to the Commission on Professional Credentialing (CPC) and the fire officer (FO) designation.

An introspective application

Taking my mentor's advice as I had in the past, I researched the designation and the process of becoming a fire officer. A review of the application afforded me a comprehensive look at myself as an officer, something I had never done before. I had all the certifications and had met all the established expectations, but I had never identified my weaknesses. I knew my strengths (we all know our strengths), but weaknesses were things that I didn't want to admit I had, let alone confront and work toward changing. The process allowed me to identify the areas that I needed to improve, but I confronted them as challenges. As a result, I found that there were goals I still wanted to achieve and challenges I wanted to overcome.

A motivational road map

Using this information, I developed a set of objectives. This provided me with a "road map" that I would use in both the short and long term to continue to

Officers Designated Through CPC
CFO – 1,175
FO – 344
CEMSO – 115
FM – 110
CTO – 88
Total – 1,832

develop and grow, both personally and professionally. One major challenge I identified through the process was a lack of a formal education. This was a critical obstacle because it prevented me from achieving many of my greatest goals, including my acceptance into the Executive Fire Officer Program (EFOP) at the National Fire Academy (NFA). I knew that if I was going to have any chance of advancing in my career, I would have to achieve these goals at minimum. But remember: It was the FO application that helped direct me toward these goals. The application process and the road map it created became motivators.

In short, I found new direction and career enthusiasm by achieving this designation. And it seems I wasn't the only one motivated to change their professional lives for the better. Several others in my department followed my lead and enrolled in school to achieve their education goals. (*Note: I'm not sure to this day if it was because they too had an educational goal or if they just didn't want to be left behind.*)

Looking back now at the FO applica-

tion and the road map that came from it, I'm confident that both helped me further my professional growth. For 18 years of my career, up to my introduction to the FO designation, I had continued working toward and achieving what I thought was beneficial to my career. But finding the FO designation and the process of obtaining it made me realize that I had always had a road map; I had just never asked for directions.

Ongoing achievement

Today, I've met my goals at the FO level, as well as several other goals, including designations as a chief training officer (CTO) and a chief fire officer (CFO). I've also I've completed my first year of the EFOP, and I'm currently working toward a master's degree. I achieved all of these accomplishments in large part because of the personal understanding I gained through the process of obtaining each designation. I truly believe that these processes have revitalized my career and my aspirations for greater personal and professional success.

Pass the baton

Although reaching my goals was a huge personal achievement, it's important to keep in mind that anyone else can do the same thing. So I'm motivated to share my understanding and encourage others to achieve their goals and aspirations. In other words, I'm dedicated to "passing the baton."

Not only do I completely support the process of applying for the designation, but I have committed myself to continuing this support by establishing a mentorship program to assist and offer direction to those who, like me, want to work toward professional growth and development, but don't know exactly where to begin. Still today, I direct those interested to the FO designation and the CPC (cpse.org).

My philosophy: Prepare the person below you, because at some point you may need them to step into your role, and they must be ready to fill your shoes seamlessly. And what better way to do this than by mentoring them through the fire officer designation program from the CPC? ■

“Going through not only the CFO designation process, but also recently the CTO designation process, has made me a better chief officer and a better person. Having to not just live in the past, but focus on the future in the form of my career and personal goals, has forced me to be involved in continuous quality improvement. One of the many benefits of professional credentialing through CPSE is that you can't just complete the application, get your certificate, and then call it good. Getting credentialed (as opposed to just certified in something) now requires you to up your game, be as well-rounded as you can be, and be focused on the big picture. A rolling stone gathers no moss as they say, and being credentialed allows you to ensure you are the best you can be for your agency, but more importantly for your community and the personnel you are so fortunate to serve.”



— Steve Prziborowski, deputy chief of administrative services, CFO, CTO, EFO, MS, Santa Clara County Fire Department, Los Gatos, CA; Firehouse contributing editor

Mentoring the Next Generation of Leaders

Resources like CPSE play key roles in the process



Chief Reggie Freeman instructing the CPSE Nurturing Fire Service Leaders Through Mentoring Workshop.

Developing and mentoring leaders within the fire service is both a challenging and rewarding process. Unfortunately, little has been done within the fire service to institutionalize the idea that formal mentoring can help our organizations and make future leaders more effective.



TOM JENKINS, MS, CFO, CEMSO, EFO, currently serves as the fire chief for the City of Rogers, AR, Fire Department. He holds a master's degree in public administration from the University of Oklahoma and a bachelor's degree in fire protection engineering from Oklahoma State University. He is the first vice president for the IAFC and has served on numerous national committees and working groups. He is an adjunct professor with Oklahoma State University and Northwest Arkansas Community College. He is a student of the fire profession and a regular presenter at the CPSE Excellence Conference and Fire-Rescue International.

Without a doubt, mentoring occurs in firehouses across the country; however, when you look at how and why it occurs, it is often because of the dedication of a few company officers and the open-mindedness of some firefighters—not because of anything the department is doing to catalyze the opportunity. A willingness to mentor by experienced members and recognition of the importance of mentoring aren't our problems. Our problem is that this profession presents complexities that many other occupations don't have to contend with when

looking at future leadership development. These complexities include scheduling, a variety of work locations and a hierarchy that often complicates the process.

It's about the organization

There are many leadership success stories in the fire service. Most, if not all, of those success stories started with good mentors. Mentoring sometimes has the connotation that it is about the individual. Sometimes, it seems that people perceive the need to mentor as a personal one and not one tied to the organization. If that

“ The Chief Training Officer (CTO) designation for me has proved the benefits of professional development, higher education, community involvement and being measured against my peers. Additionally it has validated mastery of industry-driven training and learning objectives and has provided me with international recognition of knowledge and capabilities. Designation also requires all designees to be lifelong students of the fire service and leadership/management processes. ”



— Brian P. Kazmierzak, EFO, CTO,
director of operations, Penn Township Fire Department, Mishawaka, IN

sentiment is common in your organization’s culture, then it’s time to revisit the entire concept of mentoring and the development of the next generation of leaders. Mentoring should be seen as an essential way to guarantee organizational leadership stamina. If training, experience and education are the building blocks of professional development, then mentoring serves as the mortar. We would never promote someone to a leadership position who lacks the experience, training or education for the position. Similarly, we should not fail to realize that proper mentoring is essential to preparing members for upward advancement.

Mentor for tomorrow

In a profession wrought with stagnation and resistance to change, can we develop future leaders who “see” around corners and construct strategic change? Absolutely. But it requires leaders to understand that we can’t develop future leaders by training them to lead today’s fire departments. Rather, we have to mentor them to lead tomorrow’s fire departments. While some skills stay the same or change only incrementally over time, other skills are emerging and changing at a rapid pace. The opportunity we have to make sure our future leaders understand and hone these skills comes through mentoring.

Getting started

Mentoring can’t reliably exist without some formal, institutionalized process.

There is a wide spectrum of variables and opportunities that you can take advantage of to create a mentoring program. Spending some time to determine what is best for your department is essential. Your organizational layout, rank complexity and specific culture are important to the customization of the process.



Designation candidates demonstrate proficiency in seven areas.

Regardless of the layout and process, a member within the department must serve as coordinator and facilitator. Their leadership, in addition to formal support from the fire chief, will be essential to accelerating the program and making it productive. Departments should be encouraged to provide training for mentors and protégés alike so that expecta-

tions are the same on both sides of the mentoring equation. In much the same way that company officers often exercise influence to assemble an optimal crew that works well together, the mentoring program coordinator should attempt to match mentors and protégés so that the mentoring process is anchored in an environment with a positive interpersonal dynamic between the two.

Helpful resources

Formal mentoring and leadership development may seem like daunting tasks, but don’t be alarmed or discouraged. Some of the best resources for guiding a formal mentoring process can be found within the Center for Public Safety Excellence’s (CPSE) credentialing program. With Chief Fire Officer (CFO), Chief EMS Officer (CEMSO), Fire Officer (FO), Fire Marshal (FM) and Chief Training Officer (CTO) designations available, much of the criteria are directly applicable to the content of a formal mentoring program. An assessment of a protégé could begin simply by determining their immediate, short-term and long-term career goals. A skills and experience inventory could involve a review of the protégé’s targeted designation, with the mentor and mentoring program coordinator using this information to craft a development plan.

Make the best of what we have

Mentoring and leadership development go hand in hand. We can’t rely on luck to steer the direction of our departments. We have to identify talent, and do our best to mentor it using the tools and resources available.

If done properly, a mentoring program will produce dividends in areas far beyond the protégé. The concept will also signal to all members, regardless of their goals and aspirations, that the department is serious about its future. The process will allow for individual members to bridge generational gaps and potentially increase interdepartmental communication. ■

Hiring a Credentialed OFFICER

CFO designation shows commitment, leadership skills

As the chief executive officer for Cedar Rapids, one of my most important duties is to ensure that the citizens of the community have a responsive, well-equipped and well-trained fire department.

Public safety is paramount to a community's success—as well as a fire department's success—when faced with an emergency or disaster. If a fire department fails to provide proper public safety, its errors or shortcomings may define the jurisdiction and its leadership. With that heavily weighted responsibility, a city executive must be able to rely on a competent, professional chief fire officer.

The Cedar Rapids Fire Department (CRFD) was founded in 1869, and in its nearly 150-year history, there have been only 13 fire chiefs. The department has long felt that the selection of a depart-

ment leader is a critical task that requires precision, transparency and multiple levels of input from within the fire service, as well as from city directors, other emergency jurisdictions and the community.

Leadership in an evolving industry

The role of firefighters is constantly evolving, from fire suppression to EMS to hazmat and special operations, and now, to all-hazards emergency response, whether natural or human-caused. Likewise, fire engineering, fire and life safety education, and promoting economic incentives for citizens and businesses to install and maintain fire protection systems are all essential components of today's fire service. Therefore, we must seek and maintain chief fire officers who can demonstrate competence, professionalism and adaptability. Additionally, a fire service leader must not only have a vision for their department, but they must also be able to implement a multi-year plan for addressing a confluence of potential emergency response issues.

New kind of hazard mitigation

Just as the best player in a particular sport doesn't necessarily translate to being an effective and successful coach or manager, the best firefighter on the department may not make an effective

officer. Therefore we must continue to encourage the professional development of firefighters who strive to be our future fire service leaders. There is intricate value in learning to work as a team when responding to crises, and these attributes serve the fire service leader well. But being an effective leader also requires a skill set that is not necessarily matured through being responsible for a single fire crew or a battalion. To be successful, the fire service leader must navigate through legal mandates, planning, budgeting, finance and other media and political considerations. These areas can be thought of as new types of "hazard mitigation" that a budding chief fire officer may not be prepared to handle.

The CFO commitment

One of the most demonstrative means of showing commitment to executive leadership is the attainment of the CFO designation and accreditation of the fire department. The process is intense, and the individual who wants to earn this designation must evaluate actual contemporary cases that contain adaptive problems. The CFO designation reinforces leadership effectiveness and helps the applicant discover that being a leader is about learning specific strategies and behaviors—how to lead people, how to include people and how to achieve results.



JEFF POMERANZ currently serves as the city manager for the City of Cedar Rapids, IA. During his career, Pomeranz has served as city manager for the City of West Des Moines, IA, the City of Port Angeles, WA, and the City of Del Rio, TX. He is a member of the CPSE board of directors. Pomeranz has served as an executive board member for the Iowa League of Cities and the Iowa City Management Association and an adjunct professor for the Master of Public Administration program at Drake University. He was appointed by Governor Culver to serve as the Chair of I-Jobs, a \$200-million economic stimulus program targeted at public infrastructure, designed to benefit flood-impacted Iowa communities following the devastating floods of 2008. Pomeranz received a bachelor's degree in political science from the Rochester Institute of Technology in 1980 and a master's of public administration from the University of Alabama in 1982.

Through the application process, the CFO will learn about the jurisdiction they serve by completing a community risk analysis and mitigation plan. More importantly, they will learn more about the people in their community, the potential threats to the citizenry and how to assemble means for affecting change. Certainly, professional development is enhanced by professional contribution, and the fire service leader who is integrated in civic groups and youth organizations in the community, for example, will become a well-rounded leader due to their active involvement within their jurisdiction. In return, this participation will show the officer how their governance and policy affects the community.

CFO characteristics

Every CFO should possess distinct characteristics that are important for all employees to remember and dedicate themselves to achieving. They include:

1. Being courteous and tactful, and setting an exemplary standard for subordinates.
 2. Possessing effective, efficient, economical and ethical use of resources.
 3. Being able to look beyond the department, keeping an eye on the big picture for the fire service in general, and broader solutions to problems.
- In striving to achieve and/or main-

tain these characteristics, fire service leaders learn a moral and ethical course of action for themselves and the organizations that they lead.

Improvement through action

As a city manager, I'm dedicated to organizational improvement, but that effort takes time. We need leaders who understand their environment who review and analyze alternatives, but who ultimately act. I look for leaders who are unafraid to provide options and solutions.

Every successful fire service leader must also be dedicated to the current and future states of their city, promote diversity and create a culture in which we are dedicated to service. This means that a city director needs to be willing to take the lead, but also be part of a larger goal.

I encourage you to look at the CFO curriculum, interview those who have earned the designation and apply. The values that I've seen in effective leaders are instilled through the CFO program. ■

“By obtaining my Chief Training Officer and Fire Officer through CPSE, it has opened the door in pursuit of my own succession planning. This process has helped me identify and provided me an avenue to reach my future goals!”



— Jeffrey J. Harran, CTO, FO,
Battalion Chief of Training,
Lake Havasu City, AZ, Fire Department

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