



**City of Long Beach**  
**Working Together to Serve**

**Memorandum**

Date: July 30, 2019  
To: Patrick H. West, City Manager *T.M.*  
From: Xavier Espino, Fire Chief *XE*  
For: Mayor and Members of the City Council  
Subject: **Long Beach Fire Department Recruitment Report**

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The Long Beach Fire Department (LBFD), in partnership with the City Manager's Office and the Civil Service Department, undertook a study beginning in April 2019 to proactively review its entire recruiting and selection process, and to identify best practices for strategically recruiting more diverse firefighter applicants. The LBFD is committed to serving the Long Beach community and wants their personnel to represent the City's diverse population.

The attached report summarizes the results of the study and identifies future recruitment strategies. The LBFD identified strategies to recruit highly qualified candidates that demographically represent the City of Long Beach. These strategies will guide the LBFD's development of a strategic plan, which will be released later in the year. The strategies fall along the following five major categories:

1. Selection Processes
2. Recruitment Staffing
3. Recruitment Programs
4. Communications
5. Data Processes

High-level cost estimates are provided for each of the suggested recruitment strategies. The LBFD is currently refining these costs and identifying funding solutions within its existing budget to implement the strategies.

If you have any questions, please call me at (562) 570-2509.

XE:MR:EZ

ATTACHMENT

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# Long Beach Fire Department Recruitment Report



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## Purpose & Background

The Long Beach Fire Department (LBFD) is committed to serving the Long Beach community and wants their personnel to represent the City's diverse population. In recognition of this priority, the LBFD, in partnership with the City Manager's Office and the Civil Service Department, undertook a study to proactively review their entire recruiting and selection process and identify best practices for strategically recruiting more diverse firefighter applicants.

The strategies outlined in this report are derived from data analysis of LBFD applicants, qualitative interviews with current firefighters, a survey of the previous 3 cohorts of Fire Recruits, and best practice research from other cities.

Being a Long Beach Firefighter is a highly desirable and competitive position. Since 2014, when Long Beach's posting for Fire Recruit reopened after a hiring freeze, the position has averaged 3,263 applicants per recruitment cycle.

After conducting a literature review and interviews with other large cities in California, LBFD found that it already employs several best practices in their selection process, which are detailed below:

## Best Practices Already Employed

1. **Fire Science Program at Jordan High School.** LBFD has developed a partnership with Long Beach Unified School District (LBUSD) to start a Fire Science Pathway at Jordan High School. Kicking off in Fall 2019, this program will utilize LBFD personnel to serve as instructors for Fire Science courses.
2. **Application Window Time.** The Civil Service Department's Fire Recruit application is advertised for several months and then is open for two weeks, which allows sufficient time to apply for the position while still limiting the quantity of applications to a manageable number for Civil Service.
3. **Standardized Written Test.** Instead of administering its own written exam, Civil Service and LBFD uses a standardized test.
  - a. The National Testing Network's (NTN) FireTEAM test has four components: a video-based human relations test, a mechanical aptitude test, a math test, and a reading ability test.
  - b. Professional NTN testing centers are specifically designed for testing and staffed with proctors. The tests are professionally validated and offer total scores and dimensional scores for further insight into candidate performance.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "How NTN Works." National Testing Network.

4. **PAT Test Administration.** Lbfd administers its own Physical Ability Test (PAT) at no cost to the applicant.
  - a. Other jurisdictions require a Candidate Physical Abilities Test (CPAT) or Biddle Test certification which is acquired at a cost to the applicant.
  - b. The Lbfd also administers practice sessions for the PAT at no cost to the applicant.<sup>2</sup>
  - c. Administering their own PAT also allows the Lbfd to more holistically understand the candidate. For example, Lbfd has seen instances where a candidate is able to cut up to four minutes from their practice time to their test time, which is a unique insight into the candidates' true abilities and work ethic.
5. **Standardized Oral Interviews.** Lbfd utilizes two rounds of oral interviews, each measuring different applicant qualities using a standardized scoring rubric.
  - a. Interviewers use a rubric to assign an overall score and rank candidates.
  - b. The Captain/Community interview is evaluated solely on the content of the interview. Each interviewer fills out a score rubric.
  - c. The Chief's interview, which includes command staff and Battalion Chiefs, takes a holistic view of the candidate by providing the interview panel access to the candidates' PAT scores, resumes, and first interview scores. Again, each interviewer fills out a score rubric.
6. **Community Involvement.** Stakeholders from the community are invited to participate in the first oral interview. Members of local nonprofits, teachers from local educational institutions, councilmembers and their staff, business owners, members of the business improvement districts, and other leaders in the City are invited to participate alongside the Fire Captains to evaluate the candidates.

## Demographic Overview

### *City Demographics*

Lbfd serves a diverse population of 464,000 people. Nearly three-quarters of the city's residents are people of color. The Hispanic population is the fastest-growing demographic, followed by Asians/Pacific Islanders, and those of mixed race. Immigrants comprise about one-quarter of the City's population. People of color are typically younger (86 percent) while only about half of seniors are people of color (47 percent). This difference demonstrates the demographic shift in the workforce and the communities that Lbfd will serve.

The current demographic breakdown of the City of Long Beach is as follows:

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<sup>2</sup> Hardison, M., Lim, N., Keller, K., Marquis, J., Payne, L., Bozick, R., Mariano, L., Mauro, J., Miyashiro, L., Oak, G., and Saum-Manning, L. "Recommendations for Improving the Recruiting and Hiring of Los Angeles Firefighters," RAND Corporation. 2015.

Figure 1: City of Long Beach Demographics<sup>3</sup>

Ethnicity	Total
Asian	13.2%
Black	12.9%
Hispanic	42.8%
Native American	1.2%
White	27.6%
<b>Total Population</b>	<b>464,000</b>

The current demographic breakdown of LBFD’s sworn firefighters and command staff is as follows:

Figure 2: LBFD Demographics

Ethnicity	Male	Female	Total
Asian	10.0%	0.3%	10%
Black	8.5%		8%
Hispanic	18.0%	0.8%	19%
Native American	0.5%		0%
White	59.1%	3.8%	63%
<b>Total Sworn Employees</b>	<b>374</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>389</b>

The LBFD is a smaller agency compared to major cities and its drill class graduates only 24 people per class, approximately. With a total of 389 sworn employees, LBFD relies on its personnel to be highly trained in diverse skill sets to serve a city with an airport, port, high rise buildings, and beaches. Because of its size, small changes make a big difference in LBFD. For example, the addition of just 5 more females in the ranks would reflect a 30% increase in females.

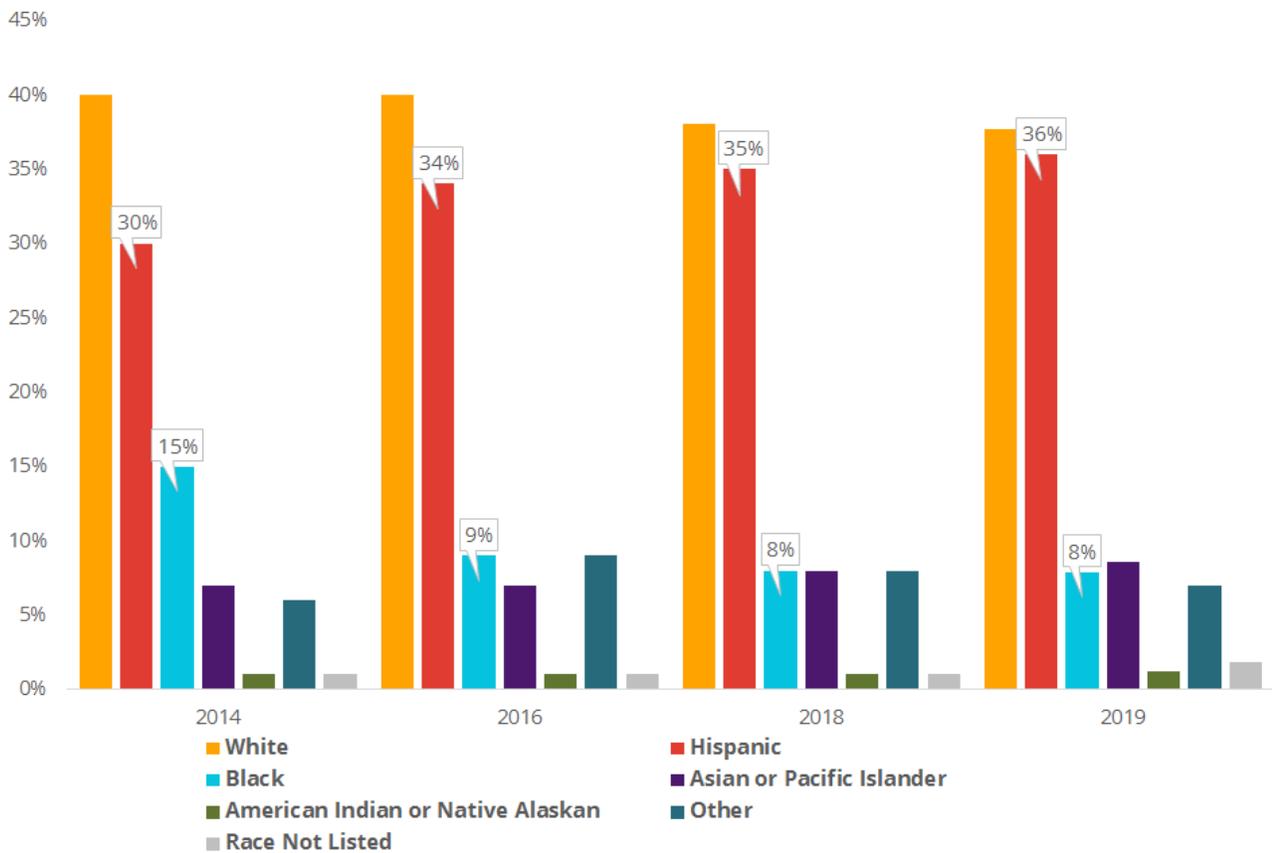
<sup>3</sup> U.S. Census Bureau. (July 2018). *Long Beach, CA Population Estimates*. Retrieved from: <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/longbeachcitycalifornia>

The LBFD is also significantly more racially diverse when compared to the national average of fire department personnel as reported by the National Fire Protection Administration. (Figure 3).<sup>5</sup>

Figure 3: U.S Fire Departments Average Demographics, 2013-2017

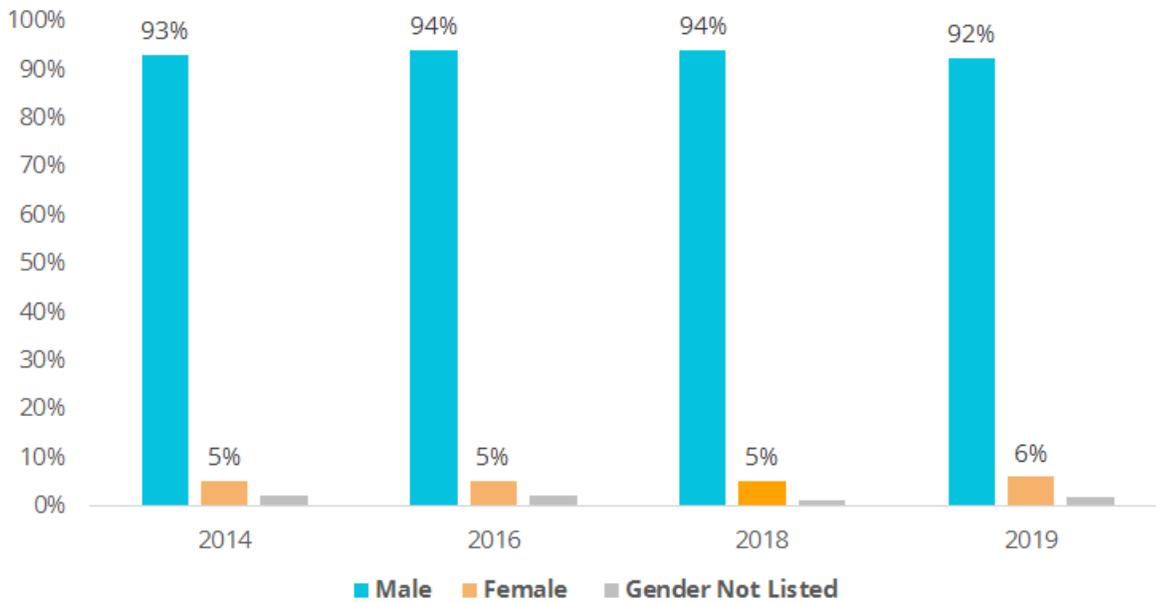
Ethnicity	Total
Asian	1%
Black	9%
Hispanic	8.3%
Native American	-
White	81.8%

Figure 4: 2014-2019 LBFD Fire Recruit Applicants by Race/Ethnicity



Currently, LBFD receives an average of 3,263 applicants for each Fire Recruit recruitment cycle. However, from 2014 to 2019, LBFD’s Black applicants have been reduced by half (15% to 8%). Meanwhile, its Hispanic applicants have increased to a level like White applicants.

Figure 5: 2014-2019 LBFD Fire Recruit Applicants by Gender



LBFD's applicant breakdown by gender is 5% female. This also reflects the state of the department as a whole, which is 5% female.

Figure 6: LBFD Selection Process Overview

Timeline	Step	Description	# of Applicants
September - December	Fire Recruit application	The recruitment is advertised in Sept. and applications are accepted for two weeks in Dec.	~ 3,000
January	Civil Service sends A-band to LBFD	The A-band is developed from applicants who have passed the NTN FireTEAM test with the highest passing scores. Civil Service verifies these scores but does no other screening.	1,100
January	Resume review	LBFD reaches out to A-Band for resumes.	-
February (first two weeks)	Physical Abilities Test (PAT) Orientation & Practice	Based on their resumes, the most qualified applicants are invited to participate in the PAT.	-
February (latter two weeks)	Physical Abilities Test	LBFD administers their own physical agility test, based on the Biddle exam. There is no official passing score and applicants continue to the next round based on their time and demonstrated work ethic.	550
March (first two weeks)	Captain/ Community Interview	Applicants who scored highly on the PAT are interviewed by selected captains and members of the community. Applicants are scored based solely on their interview.	250
March (latter two weeks)	Chief's Interview	Applicants are interviewed by the command staff and selected Battalion Chiefs and scored based on a holistic assessment of their PAT scores, resumes, and previous interview.	140
April	Conditional Job Offers	The Fire Chief and Deputy Chief of Support Services review and select the most qualified 40 applicants.	40
April - June	Background Check	Applicants go through an extensive background check process.	-
June - August	Medical and Psychological assessment	Applicants are reviewed by appropriate medical personnel for their physical and psychological fitness.	-
August - December	Fire Drill Academy	16-18-week academy to prepare Fire Recruits to be Firefighters.	28
December	Graduation		24

## Strategy Outline

The LBFD identified strategies to recruit highly qualified candidates that demographically represent the City of Long Beach. These strategies will inform the Department's development of a strategic plan, which will be released later in the year. These strategies fall along five major categories.

### Short-term Recruitment Strategy Categories

1. Selection Process
2. Recruitment Staffing
3. Recruitment Programs
4. Communications
5. Data Processes

#### 1. Selection Process

The current LBFD selection process is founded on best practices from several other cities. (Figure 6 illustrates the various steps of the LBFD selection cycle.) Since 2014, after the LBFD hiring freeze, the Department has worked to iterate its selection process into one that identifies the most highly qualified candidates that will be successful in the drill academy.

#### Strategy 1.1

##### *Implicit Bias/Cultural Competency Training*

Our selection process has been developed from best practices. However, as in all processes, there is still room for bias. Sending all LBFD staff that participate in the selection process to implicit bias training would give them the tools to identify and mitigate any potential biases. This training staff includes: Assistant Chief of Support Services, Deputy Chief of Support Services, support staff, training captains, PAT administrators, and anyone invited to participate as an interviewer.

LBFD is in the process of developing the capacity to provide comprehensive implicit bias/cultural competency trainings. Approximately 12 firefighters have been sent to training and are currently doing "train the trainer" sessions to roll out to the rest of the staff.

Cost: Overtime for sworn staff.

Best Practice Agencies: County of Los Angeles and the Cities of Seattle, Oakland, and Minneapolis<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Webinar: Strategies for Improving Fire Department Diversity. IPMA - HR. April 19, 2019.

## Strategy 1.2

*Implement, monitor, and evaluate pilot studies to adjust to the selection process*

### *Pilot Study 1: Invite all A-Band List to PAT*

Currently in the selection process, the Deputy Chief and Assistant Chief of Support Services receive the A-Band of applicants from the Civil Service Department and reach out to the A-Band for their resumes. Based on these resumes, the most qualified 550 applicants are invited to participate in the PAT.

This pilot study would invite every candidate on the A-Band to participate in the PAT. This equalizes the process for applicants who may not have as many “resume qualifiers” but are still prepared for the position. This pilot study would be monitored and evaluated based on whether a more diverse pool of applicants is moving on to the next step of the selection process (Captain/Community interview).

Cost: \$36,000

*This pilot study would double the PAT practice time and testing times. The current cost for that two-week process is roughly \$36k.*

Best Practice Agencies: Most agencies do this

### *Pilot study 2: Adopt City of Los Angeles's Test or Other Standardized Tests*

The NTN FireTEAM test is standardized but data analysis from LBFD's previous four recruitment cycles shows that female and Black applicants tend to score lower on the test, which reduces their chance of placing on the A-Band. In our Fire Recruit Survey, 80% of respondents indicated that they had taken the NTN at least twice and 49% of respondents took the test at least 3 times. Survey respondents also indicated this was the portion of the selection process for which they felt least prepared.

Therefore, this pilot study would focus on eliminating the NTN FireTEAM test and instead contracting with a local agency, like the City of Los Angeles, to adopt their written test or developing an independent written test, based specifically on the requirements of an LBFD firefighters.

Cost: Dependent on the cost of test partnership and/or test development

Best Practice Agencies: City of Los Angeles, County of Los Angeles, City of San Diego

Figure 7: NTN FireTEAM Pass Rate

Race/Gender	2014	2016	2018	2019
White	46%	40%	64%	72%
Hispanic	29%	25%	50%	65%
Black	11%	12%	28%	45%
Asian or Pacific Islander	41%	33%	57%	69%
American Indian/Native Alaskan	30%	39%	56%	66%
Other	37%	30%	60%	70%
Race Not Listed	35%	46%	46%	54%
Male	36%	31%	55%	68%
Female	22%	23%	48%	55%
Gender Not Listed	32%	43%	39%	50%

## 2. Staffing Needs

LBFD does not currently have anyone assigned to work on recruitment. This report's strategies rely on having appropriate staff to develop, implement, and monitor programs and policies for recruitment. The recruitment staff (as outlined in Strategy 2.1) will report directly to the Support Services Bureau and the Administrative Officer.

### Strategy 2.1

*Diversity Recruitment and Partnerships Manager*

Classed as a Fire Captain

This position will implement a comprehensive recruitment plan for the Fire Department focused on hiring highly qualified candidates that represent the City's diverse population. The Fire Captain will administer a recruitment unit, monitor the efficacy of the various short

and long-term strategies, and develop strategic community partnerships that align with and further the Department's diversity hiring.

#### *Diversity Recruitment Coordinator*

Classed as an Assistant Administrative Analyst II

This position will provide administrative support to the Diversity Recruitment and Partnerships Manager by implementing data collection standards, monitoring training initiatives/compliance, researching recruitment opportunities, maintaining rosters for various programs, coordinating cadre schedules, and providing consistent communication with strategic internal and external stakeholders.

Cost: \$330,000

Best Practice Agencies: Most agencies of LBFD's size (San Diego, Oakland, and San Francisco) have at least 1 sworn Fire personnel that serves as a full-time recruitment coordinator/manager.

### **Strategy 2.2**

#### *Recruitment Team*

Establishing a cadre of 5 rotating firefighters that represent the diversity of the Long Beach community is a crucial step in building a recruitment team. These firefighters would be funded by overtime and would help in targeted outreach events as directed by the recruitment staff mentioned above. LBFD firefighters would complete a brief application for an appointment to this team to establish their qualifications.

Cost: \$50,000 for four hours a week per year

Best Practice Agencies: Most agencies do this.

### **Strategy 2.3**

#### *Recruitment Executive Team*

To share data analysis from various recruitment efforts and refine the strategic plan, the Deputy Chief of Support Services, Assistant Chief of Support Services, Administrative Officer, Civil Service Personnel Analyst, Diversity Recruitment and Partnerships Manager, and Diversity Recruitment Coordinator will meet quarterly to analyze the efficacy of the recruitment efforts. This will ensure cross-departmental collaboration.

Cost: None

### 3. Communication Strategies

#### Strategy 3.1

##### *Social Media Marketing*

LBFD will utilize Instagram, Facebook, and the City's website to promote recruitment efforts. Recruitment staff will develop videos and flyers to appeal to the target groups identified. Recruitment staff will also target ads geographically and demographically on Instagram. In our survey of the last three cohorts of Fire Recruits, 60% of them said they followed LBFD on Instagram prior to their employment with the City.

Cost: Recruitment Staff time

Best Practice Agencies: The City and County of Los Angeles

#### Strategy 3.2

##### *Update Website*

LBFD will update and use the City's website as a marketing tool with various training resources such as drill academy videos, advice from previous classes, and oral interview prep guides. These resources are already available on the LBFD's training website but will need to be more easily accessible through the main LBFD website.

Cost: Recruitment Staff time

### 4. Data Collection

Establish data tracking standards for the recruitment and selection process.

#### Strategy 4.1

##### *Tracking Engagement*

LBFD recruitment staff will use technology like Google Forms to manage applications for programs and to track every recruitment event and effort. Recruitment staff will also compile After-Action reports after recruitment events to evaluate the effectiveness of every recruitment event and effort. Reports based on this data will be shared with the Support Services Bureau and Civil Service Department in quarterly Recruitment Executive Team meetings to make appropriate adjustments to ongoing recruitment strategies.

Cost: Recruitment Staff time

## Strategy 4.2

### *Validate the Selection Process*

LBFD recruitment staff will also develop methods for increasing the reliability of the selection process, which includes establishing highly structured processes for all steps and conducting reliability checks. Each step of the selection process will be analyzed based on (1) whether it helps select a highly qualified candidate and (2) whether it has a disparate effect on minority applicants.<sup>7</sup>

Cost: Recruitment Staff time; Consider hiring a consultant

Best Practice Agency: City of Los Angeles

## Strategy 4.3

### *Internal and External Surveys*

Internal Surveys: LBFD recruitment staff will develop a survey to understand the culture of the organization and how they will receive these programmatic changes. Recruitment staff will repeat the survey annually to benchmark how perceptions change.

External Surveys: LBFD recruitment staff will develop a community survey that measures the community's perception of the Fire Department and how likely they are to see a Fire Department job as feasible.

Cost: Recruitment Staff time

## 5. Recruitment Programs

### Strategy 5.1

#### *Mentorship Program*

LBFD will establish a comprehensive mentorship program. LBFD recruitment staff will set up a short application for interested applicants to fill out and post it on the LBFD website. From there, recruitment staff can reach out to existing firefighters to connect them with a potential mentee. This mentorship opportunity will especially benefit applicants who do not have any social ties to firefighters.

Cost: Recruitment Staff time; Overtime is not planned for this

Best Practice Agency: City of Oakland

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<sup>7</sup> Hardison, M., Lim, N., Keller, K., Marquis, J., Payne, L., Bozick, R., Mariano, L., Mauro, J., Miyashiro, L., Oak, G., and Saum-Manning, L. "Recommendations for Improving the Recruiting and Hiring of Los Angeles Firefighters," RAND Corporation. 2015.

## Strategy 5.2

### *Women in the Fire Service Day*

LBFD recruitment staff will partner with Long Beach City College (LBCC) to develop a one-day event that begins with a panel of female firefighters in the morning, asking them questions about how they became interested in the fire service and describing their path. In the afternoon, attendees will be able to practice the PAT. Attendees will receive guidance on how to improve from existing firefighters. This event will be open to all but target females.

Cost: Recruitment Staff time and Overtime for firefighters

Best Practice Agencies: City of San Diego, City of Los Angeles, County of Los Angeles

## Strategy 5.3

### *Recruit Strategically*

College athletes and veterans have been proven to have the necessary physical training and discipline to be successful firefighters. Targeting recruitment toward local college sports teams and recent veterans will help LBFD reach a more diverse candidate pool while also recruiting highly qualified individuals. The LBFD recruitment staff will focus on building relationships with local college athletics programs and veterans' organizations.

Cost: Recruitment Staff time

Best Practice Agencies: County of Los Angeles and the City of San Diego

## Strategy 5.4

### *Culturally Specific Recruitment*

LBFD will work to understand the best communication methods for reaching out to the communities that are underrepresented in terms of LBFD personnel. LBFD recruitment staff will develop a recruitment engagement outline based on best practices found in the City's participation in the Government Alliance for Racial Equity (GARE) as well as several other citywide engagement efforts such as Economic Development's Everyone In strategy and Development Services' Climate Action and Adaptation Plan.

This recruitment engagement outline will have two goals: (1) build trust with leaders in communities like the African American, Cambodian, and Latino community and (2) clarify the role of firefighters to dispel myths for these communities to see the fire service as a valuable and viable work opportunity.

Cost: Recruitment Staff time; food costs for event

Best Practice Agencies: Cities of Los Angeles, Seattle, San Diego, and Minneapolis

## City of Oakland: Case Study

In an effort to identify the correct scope for LBFD's recruitment efforts, we reached out to the City of Oakland to understand their recruitment strategy. The City of Long Beach and Oakland share many similarities, both geographically and demographically and, as such, the City of Oakland is an appropriate agency to look to regarding the types of recruitment strategies that a diverse, mid-sized city fire department may implement. Throughout the report, Oakland's best practices are cited multiple times, but they are below in full.

### Similar to the City of Long Beach

- Population is 425,195,
- Features: Port, high rise buildings, airport, oceanfront, and
- Also has a majority minority population
  - White - 34.5%
  - Hispanic - 21.9%
  - Black or African American - 28%
  - Asian - 16.8%
  - Other - 16%

### Oakland's Recruitment Strategies

- Sworn employee assigned as Recruitment Coordinator.
- Developed a Recruitment Unit that does outreach in media, preparation, and youth.
- Focused recruitment on diversity through the City's Equal Access Ordinance: bilingual English-Chinese speakers, women, and Oakland residents.
- Extended their application time (previously it was only 48 hours).
- Changed their written test from the Cooperative Personnel Services Firefight Exam (\$39.95 cost to the applicant) to an IPMA HR Fire Department Test (\$15 cost to the applicant).
- Tracked interest through Google Forms.
- Focused on culturally specific community outreach throughout the City.

## LBFD Recruitment Report - Implementation Steps

Steps to Implementation	Timeline
Update the LBFD website with photos of firefighters from communities that are currently underrepresented within LBFD ranks. <a href="#">3.2</a>	Immediately
Begin rolling out implicit bias training for staff involved in the selection process. <a href="#">1.1</a>	August 2019
Identify a Recruitment Team made up of 5 firefighters to serve as internal stakeholders and recruitment advocates. Meet monthly. <a href="#">2.2</a>	August 2019
Assign a sworn member as a Diversity Recruitment and Partnerships Manager. <a href="#">2.1</a>	August 2019
For the 2019-20 selection cycle, track applicants as they enter and leave the process. <a href="#">4.2</a>	December 2019 - December 2020
Design internal survey for LBFD personnel to understand organizational culture. <a href="#">4.3</a>	January 2020
Establish a mentorship program. <a href="#">5.1</a>	January 2020
Have the Recruitment Team attend different recruitment activities with local colleges and veterans' organizations. <a href="#">5.3</a>	June - September 2020
Recruitment staff to produce a social media strategy. <a href="#">3.1</a>	June - August 2020
Organize first Women in the Fire Service Day. <a href="#">5.2</a>	September 2020
Develop a community survey. <a href="#">4.3</a>	January 2021
Invite all members of the entire A-Band to the PAT. <a href="#">1.2</a>	January 2021
Monitor the 2020-21 selection cycle to understand pilot study's impact. <a href="#">1.2</a>	January - December 2021
Develop and implement a recruitment engagement outline. <a href="#">5.4</a>	January - December 2021