

2017-2018 BUDGET QUESTION
Response to Request for Information

DEPARTMENT: Austin Fire

REQUEST NO.: 6

REQUESTED BY: Adler

DATE REQUESTED: 2/15/17

DATE POSTED: 3/6/17

REQUEST: Please discuss and list the Austin Fire Department's (AFD) diversity recruitment methods, strategies, and assignment of resources. What is AFD doing to promote diversity within the ranks?

RESPONSE:

AFD is addressing diversity at the entry-level, through the hiring of Fire Cadets, and in promotions to higher ranks. Entry-level recruitment efforts, strategies and assignment of resources are documented in a "Recruitment Strategic Plan: 2015-2020" and more specifically in the "Close-out Report" for the 2015 hiring cycle. Both documents are attached following page 3.

An analysis of the 2015 hiring cycle showed most recruits first learned of the Austin Fire Department hiring process by visiting the recruiting website JoinAFD.com (31.8%); an email from AFD based on filling out an interest card (16.7%); or from an AFD firefighter or employee (16.0%). More traditional recruiting methods were less effective, such as providing information at a career fair/special event (3.2%), radio advertisements (1.6%) or an AFD flier/brochure/postcard (0.5%). Key strategies used by AFD's recruiting section include:

- military-specific recruiting by an AFD firefighter with a strong military background assigned full-time to the Recruiting section
- African-American community engagement coordinated by a civilian Community Liaison
- creating JoinAFD.com recruiting-only website with updated style and multi-media components
- data-mining to determine persons with previous Fire Service experience and those working in construction/labor/technician/fitness fields are more likely to become firefighters
- introducing a new candidate interest card to gather additional information
- pushing out regular e-mail communication to applicants

Recruiting success is measured by the diversity of the applicant pool and, to a lesser extent, the diversity of the applicants who show-up to take the written test and participate in the oral interview. The following chart shows diversity numbers for the 2015 cadet hiring cycles.

2015 Hiring Cycle	Applicants		Written Test		Oral Interview	
Caucasian	36.6%	1152	39.0%	821	38.3%	642
African American	13.3%	418	12.2%	257	12.3%	207
Hispanic	37.4%	1179	36.3%	764	37.4%	628
Asian Pac Island	2.4%	75	2.0%	43	1.6%	26
American Indian	1.1%	35	1.1%	24	1.1%	19
Other	3.0%	95	2.9%	62	2.9%	48
Not Disclosed	6.3%	197	6.3%	133	6.4%	107
Total	100.0%	3151	100.0%	2104	100.0%	1677
Female	9.9%	313	9.9%	209	9.9%	166

The 2015 hiring cycle was unique because all African American and Hispanic applicants for priority hire status (based on the 2012 hiring process) were allowed to move forward to pre-hire assessments while only the top 200 applicants from the ranked composite score list (written score + oral score + possible points for military service) were allowed to continue. The diversity on the final list of candidates hired was close to the diversity found on the written exam with 12.7% African American and 35.3% Hispanic cadets starting the class.

2015 Hiring Cycle - Class 119, 120, 121	Top 200 & Priority Hires		Hired	
Caucasian	34.6%	104	51.0%	52
African American	14.6%	44	12.7%	13
Hispanic	47.2%	142	35.3%	36
Asian Pac Island	0.7%	2	0.0%	0
American Indian	1.0%	3	1.0%	1
Other	0.7%	2	0.0%	0
Not Disclosed	1.3%	4	0.0%	0
Total	100.0%	301	100.0%	102
Female	9.6%	29	9.8%	10

The 2013 hiring process for class 117 and 118 yielded the following result when the DOJ required that AFD only hire from the top 150 candidates on the final ranked list.

2013 Cycle - Class 117 & 118	Applicants		Written Test		Hired	
Caucasian	34.8%	1673	36.0%	1037	61.8%	47
African American	14.2%	685	12.5%	361	11.8%	9
Hispanic	38.7%	1864	38.6%	1112	18.4%	14
Asian Pac Island	2.3%	111	2.6%	75	5.3%	4
American Indian	0.8%	38	0.8%	24	0.0%	0
Other	3.3%	158	3.1%	89	2.6%	2
Not Disclosed	5.9%	284	6.4%	184	0.0%	0
Total	100.0%	4813	100.0%	2882	100.0%	76
Female	11.0%	529	10.6%	305	10.5%	8

AFD is working on the 2017 hiring process with the expectation that we can and will replicate the patterns found in the diversity of the 2015 hiring list. It will be challenging without the added diversity of including priority hire candidates from a previous cycle. Further, we are limited in our ability to adjust the assessment process if testing again shows adverse impact because the specifics of cadet hiring assessments were negotiated in the collective bargaining process several cycles ago.

Influencing diversity through the ranks is also challenging because the details of the promotional process are governed by civil service law and the collective bargaining agreement. Civil service law bases promotions on the firefighter's ability to score well on a 100 question test. The collective bargaining agreement allows the department to add assessments or deviate from the written test. The books for the test are announced several months in advance and firefighters tend to focus

diligently on studying for the test during the weeks leading up to its administration. The Fire Chief routinely tells her executive staff how important it is for them to encourage firefighters to test and to be supportive during the process.

In addition to the written exam, firefighters at the rank of Captain and above also participate in performance-based assessment centers. This additional testing step utilizes external assessors to rate the candidates on their managerial/supervisory skills. The assessment consists of three exercises that focus on a managerial situation, a verbal response to a tactical situation, and a response to a subordinate problem. Research has shown that patterns of adverse impact for African Americans and Hispanics on assessment centers is not as pronounced as the patterns found on written exams. Administering assessment centers along with written exams tends to mitigate the race/ethnic bias found in promotion processes.

The Fire Chief has asked for assessment centers to be added to the Lieutenant promotion process during contract negotiations since 2013, but has been unsuccessful in getting this change to date.

The collective bargaining agreement also allows the Fire Chief to appoint persons to the ranks of Division and Assistant Chief on her executive team. While she has the ability to reach "down" to the rank of Lieutenant for these appointments, it is beneficial for the potential executive to have some management experience prior to the promotion. The Fire Chief and Assistant Chiefs are currently mentoring African American and Hispanic Captains, Battalion Chiefs, and a Division Chief to prepare them for future service on the executive team. Mentoring includes opportunities for training, special project assignments, and short-term job shadowing.

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>AFD Sworn Rank Structure</u> Fire Chief Assistant Chief Division Chief (Shift Commander in Ops) Battalion Chief Captain (over program or multiple apparatus) Lieutenant (over one apparatus) Fire Specialist (apparatus driver) Firefighter</p>
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