

FINAL RECOMMENDATION

October 16, 2000

Recommendation of the Action Plan Team: Leadership and Communications for Issue 6 - 30, Item #108 (page 30 of the Action Plan):

Please consider concurrently with related Item # 105.

Summary: (verbatim from the Action Plan)

“Identify and eliminate constraints to “fast track” development.”

Recommendations:

Time Frame:

The recommendations that follow refer to training course development only. Please see Recommendation #105 for fast track development of other USFA products.

The Superintendent’s Enfranchisement, Endorsement & Handoff redesign will save significant time in the preparation of training materials for customers in the field. For example, by going directly from the in-service/Train-the-Trainer to hand-off, we eliminate the field testing period, typically **18 months**. As long as we follow through, after 18-24 months of teaching a hand-off course in the field, by convening a team of instructors to integrate their lessons learned and best practices into the Instructor materials, we anticipate no degradation of quality, despite this huge acceleration of the development cycle. (See attached graphic and narrative.)

Completed

In addition, the Action Plan team recommends:

Teams could be working on specifications for new development by routinely compiling ideas discussed during weekly team meetings. In this way, the actual preparation of contract documents becomes little more than a refinement and formalizing of plans and initiatives that were already identified, massaged and agreed to over a several month period within the team. The new team structure promotes such routine formulation of proposals within the content area. Typically, it would save **at least a month** of contract language drafting, review and revision after a project is approved and assigned, to be able to move directly from Priorities Review approval into procurement. Contract language for projects that are not approved can be shelved until unfunded requirements can be considered later in the year.

By October 2001

Use the Indefinite Delivery, Indefinite Quantities (IDIQ) contract vehicle or pick three vendors from the GSA schedule (now on-line) to speed award. Can also award a standing fee-for-service contract (fully competitive, advertised, with option years) for an on-site development firm (like SCSC, only for development efforts) with a guaranteed annual minimum. They would develop a working knowledge of how we do business that could save us **a month** on a typical development, after the first development cycle.

By October 2001

Once the training server is connected to the Internet and fully functional including a dedicated PC workstation outside the firewall, completely detached from the FEMA network, development teams could meet on line, instead of waiting until all experts were free to travel here. This should save **1 – 2 months** (and team travel costs) on a typical development contract.

(Pending implementation of a PC connected)
(to the Internet, but outside the firewall.)

Background:

USFA staff recognize the need to shorten the development and delivery cycle, to reach our customers with quality training as fast as possible. Over the years, several innovations have resulted in improvements in the development time required. Now, however, with technological means to conduct meetings, simplified contracting options, a team focus on continual product improvement and willingness on the part of our state training partners to participate in adapting the direct delivery program for courses in the field, we have the opportunity to dramatically shorten the total time required for both development and delivery.

Budget Impact:

The only recommendation on the previous page that has a cost associated with it is the last one. Assuming that a PC workstation can be freed from storage or a computer lab, set up with no connection to the campus LAN or other FEMA network and dedicated to Internet access outside the firewall, the cost would be that of a modem (requiring an exception to the FEMA standard platform), phone line and unlimited use contract with an Internet Service Provider.

This should be available for < \$60/month.

Conclusion:

The combined effect of the innovations on the previous page would be a savings of 3 – 5 months in a typical development, plus an additional 18 months savings in delivery for field courses that will now go directly to Train-the Trainer and be handed off to the states. *(Additional savings for courses that need to be developed to meet high priority emergent needs are discussed in Recommendation #105.)*

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ENHANCEMENTS TO NATIONAL FIRE ACADEMY/STATE FIRE TRAINING PARTNERSHIPS

Background

In order to identify state and local fire training and education issues, the National Fire Academy (NFA) undertook an exhaustive, four-year dialogue with staff, fire organizations, state fire training directors, students and instructors, to better assess the needs of its education and training partners. Establishing a new delivery strategy for the NFA could not have been done without an understanding of the national needs and issues.

The NFA's customer base varies from a state with a state fire training director working alone, to an academically based sophisticated system of fire training and education. Unions and volunteers; chiefs and firefighters; Emergency Medical Service (EMS) and Haz Mat (HM) personnel all differ in their needs; hence, their needs differ.

Generally speaking, the item mentioned most often was the need to have more NFA courses available locally; either through a state training system, a local training system, or some recognized fire organization. A second, although not as frequent, was that training received in one jurisdiction was not recognized by other jurisdictions.

The latter comment is critical to the professionalization of the fire service. It can be argued that the sole reason preventing the fire service from achieving "professional status" is the lack of an acknowledged system of training and education that is universally recognized and reciprocal. Due to the diverse nature and scope of state fire training systems and local fire departments, it is difficult for them to make national changes. Major fire service organizations are membership driven; therefore, it is difficult for them to make nationwide fire training and education changes. Even though the National Board on Fire Service Professional Qualifications (ProQual) and the International Fire Service Accreditation Congress (IFSAC) provide a valuable and necessary service, they are not the whole solution. There is no other place to affect national changes in fire service training and education except the USFA in partnership with State Training Systems.

The purpose of these modifications is to:

- make more NFA courses available locally;
 - begin a system of reciprocity to ensure that education and training received in one state is recognized in another; and,
- bring exceptional courses into the national curriculum;

The modifications to NFA/State Fire Training Partnerships also address concerns expressed:

In the 1973 *AMERICA BURNING* Report in which the Commission "envisioned ...the [National Fire] Academy would serve as the hub of an educational network. The Academy would use existing fire training school programs... The Academy would

function as the core of the Nation's efforts in fire service education – feeding out model programs, curricula, and information, and at the same time receiving helpful advice from those schools and the fire services;"

In the Action Plan sections on Core Mission (parts of #1, #3,#5, #7, #11), Leadership and Communications (#6), and, Advocacy, Partnerships & Marketing (#7). See attachments;

In a survey conducted in 1995 by the Superintendent that asked the major fire service groups to identify what changes and services they wanted to see at the NFA;

At annual meetings of the International Association of Fire Chiefs with each of the major fire service groups;

At annual State Fire Training Director's meetings, Training Resources And Data Exchange (TRADE) meetings, visits to state fire training systems, and discussions with faculty, staff and students;

In classroom visits.

Modifications

Enfranchisement

States are viewed as partners with the National Fire Academy, and as such, may deliver two-week and six-day NFA courses in addition to the current deliveries available to them. Currently, states and the NFA work cooperatively to deliver Regional, Volunteer Incentive Programs (six day), and Direct Deliveries (two day). States have sole control and responsibility (without working with NFA) to deliver hand-off courses.

Enfranchisement establishes that state fire training systems are the NFA in their state, with or without federal funding. As such, state fire training systems are enfranchised to deliver NFA courses using NFA instructors. The release of residential courses to states is proposed to be 3 courses per year, because of duplication costs and course development timelines. States will report student participation in all courses for inclusion in the NFA database. Students will receive NFA residential course certificates.

Endorsement

States have a need for courses that the NFA cannot develop because of time constraints, the number of courses they say they need, and subject matter or resource constraints.

Endorsement recognizes that some state-developed courses are the equivalent of an NFA course in both quality and content.

The endorsement element of this proposal states that the NFA and State Fire Training Systems have agreed upon a set of criteria and a process to have one or several of their courses endorsed as an NFA course. The States will manage the system for assessing courses submitted by individual states; essentially a peer-review process using geographically distant states to perform the assessment. Depending upon workload and need, the NFA may provide assistance to a review committee. Once a course meets the established criteria, it becomes an NFA 'endorsed' course. Endorsed courses are NFA courses delivered locally by local instructors. Students in NFA endorsed courses are

registered in the NFA student database, and, if the state so desires, may receive NFA certificates.

Endorsed courses will be available for distribution to other states that may not have adequate resources to develop a course. The process for exchange, costs, etc. are managed by the states involved.

Two-Day Course Delivery

- Currently, after two-day courses are developed and pilot-tested, they are placed on the Direct Delivery course menu. During this field delivery phase, a course is evaluated based upon student, instructor, and sponsor input and assessments. After a certain period of time, the course is revised, edited, and updated based on the field experience. Due to budget limitations and the need for new course development to replace older courses on the course menu, this revision/edit process isn't as robust as it may have been in the past. Once a course is revised, the NFA reproduces and distributes the course materials, i.e., audiovisuals, instructor guides, and student manuals for distribution to the states. After courses are "handed-off," the NFA conducts Train-the-Trainer (TtT) sessions on the Emmitsburg campus for State and local trainers so that they can go back to their local jurisdictions and train others to deliver the course. This has traditionally been a three to four year process – from initial development to hand-off release.

Changes in the System of Delivery of Two Day courses:

- After two-day courses are developed, they will be 'handed off' without the traditional field delivery phase. States may choose to have a regular "Direct Delivery" of the course (current program), or they can choose a "Train-the-Trainer." TtT Instructor trainees will receive a CD-ROM with the Instructor Manual, Student Guide, test bank, handout materials for on-site printing, and appropriate audiovisuals [videotapes, for example, are too large for distribution on CD, so videotapes will be distributed]. The CD will also include a program that will allow instructors to upload the student data via the Internet to the NFA student database. Once in the database, the new admissions system will have the capacity to immediately download the NFA certificates to the instructor for distribution to students. Additional hand-off course CD-ROMS will be available from either a contractor or directly through the USFA Publications Office.
- Newly developed hand-off courses will be reviewed after approximately 18 months of delivery. Field instructors will be used to develop revisions based on common student concerns, curriculum changes or other similar matters.
- States who choose to remain with the traditional system will operate the same as in the past. They will have access to the Direct Deliveries via the regular delivery process, and purchase of additional delivery materials through NTIS. The NFA will continue to support the Student Manual Program for up to two years after a course is

released. The completion of the revision mentioned above should coincide with the end of the two year student manual support. The revised course materials will be available in CD ROM format only.

Benefits

The Enfranchisement, Endorsement, and Hand-Off programs mentioned above are stand alone elements.

1. States have said that they want more opportunities to deliver NFA courses; enfranchisement gives them that opportunity. Enfranchisement gives States those additional NFA courses they've requested.
2. States say they want courses that meet their local needs with timeframes that are more useful to them. Endorsement provides them that opportunity.
3. States are unanimous in their desire to decrease the amount of time it takes to get a course to them. Putting two-day courses into hand-off/train-the-trainers upon release does that. Additionally, CD distribution reduces the (two months if things go perfectly – four months if they don't) printing/ warehousing/distribution process. The Hand-Off program speeds the distribution of two-day courses and increases the number of students who can receive training in a shorter period of time.

The benefits to local training are evident. States choose to deliver the NFA courses they want, at a time and place of their choosing. These programs provide additional courses suited to their needs and accelerate the release of NFA courses. However, the benefits of enfranchisement, endorsement and hand-off aren't evident unless the NFA is successful in accounting for the increased numbers of students trained. The more training States can document, the more obvious and defensible the value of the changes become.

To simplify and clarify:

ENFRANCHISEMENT

NFA Courses -- → NFA Instructors

ENDORSEMENT

State Courses -- → Peer Review -- → NFA endorsed course - → Local Instructors

Quality

Concern has been raised about maintaining quality, and what the NFA is prepared to do to ensure that its courses maintain their quality.

There will probably be continual tension in individual perception between the maintenance of NFA quality standards and wide distribution of NFA courses. At one end of the perception is that the NFA must continually monitor every course delivered by

every State to ensure that quality is maintained. The NFA has neither the staff nor the resources to pursue that role. Moreover, the States are in a better position to identify their training requirements and monitor quality at the local level. At the other end of the perception, is the concern that the NFA will become a 'curriculum factory' for the State fire training systems. The reasonable course of action remains somewhere in the middle; assurances of quality while giving States flexibility in delivery and scheduling.

In the endorsement model, the NFA has completed an agreement with State fire training systems. States originally proposed a substantial list of requirements, and the NFA's staff of instructional designers added to and/or modified that list. The agreement states:

1. The course must have clearly stated (written) learning objectives;
2. The course must have a published instructor lesson plan (Instructor Guide); although Student workbooks are not required participant materials should be appropriate for the methodologies and learning objectives;
3. The course must have learning activities designed to assist participants in applying the content. Activities should be structured, wherever possible, in realistic context that promote the transfer of learning from the classroom to the job;
4. The course must have appropriate evaluation(s) designed to measure participant accomplishment of the stated course objectives;
5. Copyright release letters must be kept on file for any articles, tables, graphics and audio-visuals that are not the original work of the developers. All items listed above must be published and readily available to the course instructor and participants of this program (other state training systems);
6. Suggested instructor requirements should be included in the course materials;
7. All copies of instructor guides and student materials will include a statement that the course is part of this joint program. It is suggested that the same wording be used as is used on the certificates issued within this program;
8. NFA endorsement does not imply that the course has been reviewed by any accrediting agency, nor that it has received a recommendation for college credit award. State fire training agencies must seek that review and approval independently.

All courses placed on the endorsed list must be generally accepted as courses that teach skills and functions intended for use by fire service officers.

1. It is not the intent of this requirement to limit subjects to those identified in the NFPA 1021 standard, nor does the primary audience need to be currently serving fire officers.
2. It is the intent of this requirement to exclude basic fire fighting skills training much like those required by the NFPA 1001 standard, basic fire fighter training courses, elements of fire fighting and other courses commonly used to train fire fighters in the basic skills of fire fighting.
3. It is the intent of this program to include specialized skills training (rescue, etc.), public educator, fire prevention, inspector, and other unique technical specialties.

For any strategy to be successful, there must be a general agreement among the parties involved that set the goals and direction. Within that strategy, there are also processes that must be negotiated among the parties. At a national level, considering the wide variances in capability among State Fire Training Systems, it is nearly impossible to address every State's individual process concern. However, collectively, the NFA and State fire training systems can establish processes through State participation in the North American Fire Training Director's (NAFTD) group.

As previously described, the strategy for the National Fire Academy (NFA) is:

- To make the State Fire Training organization in each state a recognized part of the NFA. The best and simplest way to accomplish this is to allow States to deliver NFA Residential, Regional, VIP, two-day, hand-off and endorsed courses.
- A second way of recognizing the value of State training systems' expertise, and full partnership with the NFA, is to establish a mechanism that will include state-developed courses into the NFA's curriculum.
- Together, these two initiatives will begin the process of establishing a national system of fire training and education that is universally recognized and reciprocal across the country.

As with any new initiatives, each party has concerns. In discussions with NFA staff, and NAFTD members, four principal concerns have emerged:

- the maintenance of quality in training and education;
- control/oversight;
- reporting requirements; and
- finances.

For State delivered NFA residential courses, the NFA will ensure quality by requiring states to use NFA residential instructors. Those instructors will be required to deliver the courses with the same quality as expected in Emmitsburg. If the NFA receives complaints that courses were shortened, or delivered in a manner incongruent with an Emmitsburg delivery, the matter will be investigated. If found to be true, and depending upon the circumstances, the instructor will be removed from the qualified list.

NAFTD and the NFA have agreed upon a set of criteria (see page 5) by which their courses should be evaluated for inclusion to establish the course as an endorsed course. The process will be managed by the State fire training systems, using peer review by geographically remote states.

The States initially requested a 'no reporting requirement.' Discussions ensued and, based on a number of circumstances, both parties have agreed to use the General Admissions Application Short Form 75-5a, to collect the necessary student data.

The NFA submitted an FY 00 budget request which included a \$25,000 grant to each state for training (\$20k) and administrative support (\$5k). The grants were approved, and the money will be used to deliver the NFA Residential, Regional, VIP, two-day, hand-off

and endorsed courses, and to provide state-level support to report all students trained into the NFA database. To date, 44 states have applied for the grants. The critical element of the grants program is the reporting of student data to the NFA. Without the student data, it is impossible to justify the value of the grants.