

2022

## Building Strong Leadership in a Fire Service Organization

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# Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Eddie D. Gauntt Jr.

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Walden University  
2022

Abstract

Building Strong Leadership in a Fire Service Organization

By

Eddie D. Gauntt Jr.

MA, Columbia Southern University, 2018

BS, Columbia Southern University, 2016

Professional Administrative Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Public Administration

Walden University

May 2022

## Abstract

This study site fire department is one of many metropolitan fire departments in the world and has lost many leading personnel to retirement. The position of focus in this study is chief officer, which encompasses the top three positions within the organization: the ranks of district fire chief, assistant fire chief, and the fire chief. The loss of this leading personnel has caused a decline in the strength of the leadership within the department, making it necessary to rebuild that leadership to secure the department's future. The purpose of this qualitative study was to provide an understanding of the assumptions and perspectives of current chief officers as to what is expected of leaders in regards to experience; education; training; certifications; and knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) to replace the leadership lost over the years. Twelve chief officers within the department were interviewed, and the resulting data were analyzed using a manual system of coding. Within this system of coding, the data were grouped, and any biases identified and discussed, while variables related to required education, training, and certifications within the fire service were used to make sense of the data. The collected data were utilized to create a leadership development plan outline that involved specific requirements to help develop skills in upcoming employees destined for leadership. Using this outline, the organization can create a plan that will help develop leadership KSAs for emerging leadership within the organization. The evidence within this study is the scholarly documented beliefs and concepts of fire service professional leaders within the organization which may result in positive social change.

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## Dedication

I want to dedicate this research to my mother, who instilled the desire always to push myself to higher limits. My mother believed that education was essential in the success you desired in your life and could take you as far as you wanted to go. She sacrificed as a single mother with five children to afford what at the time was an expensive education to make sure I had a strong foundation for learning.

## Acknowledgments

I would like to pay a special tribute to my family for standing by me during this time frame. My wife, Diane Gauntt, and two daughters, DeAndra Gauntt and Alexandria Gauntt sacrificed many days to allow me to complete this research and be a part of the great Walden family. I would also like to thank the participating Fire Department for their cooperation in what I believe will be a contributing factor for leadership, not just within the organization, but any organization looking to build strong leadership for the organization's future success.

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## Section 1: Introduction to the Problem

The fire service is a profession that is instilled with tradition, pride, and brotherhood. This is true not only at the scene of an emergency but also within the administrative offices and the fire station. The study site fire department is committed to creating safer communities through prevention, preparedness, and effective emergency response to sustain a safe, vibrant, and growing city. One issue that the organization faces is the development of new leaders for its continued success and the fire service organization as a whole. Because of steady growth in the U.S. economy and a lowering unemployment rate, the ability to retain experienced employees for public safety jobs has become increasingly difficult (Fiscus, 2019). Replacing the experience and the leadership of these employees has been an ongoing challenge for the organization.

### **Introduction to the Client**

The client-agency for my public administrative study (PAS) is the local fire service organization, a municipal fire department. This fire service professional organization is one of 27,174 fire departments listed with the National Fire Department Registry, according to the U.S. Fire Administration website. These fire departments range in many different sizes, but the study site organization is considered a municipal size fire department, which means it has a minimum of 350 sworn personnel.

This fire service organization operated on approximately a \$36 million budget for the fiscal year of 2019 and provides fire protection and emergency medical services for approximately 200,000 local citizens within the community that covers approximately 162 square miles. The organization has been providing services to the local community

since its founding in 1898. This is a paramilitary-style organization, with a structured, top-down leadership style. The rank structure starts with the beginning level firefighter and ends at the top level with the fire chief of the department.

There are many facets to this fire department, like many other fire service organizations. This organization provides services for fire suppression, emergency medical services, hazardous material mitigation, public education, fire prevention, and life safety code enforcement, just to name a few.

### **Background of the Problem**

As one of the leading public safety organizations, the study site fire department has a high demand for constant qualified leadership. In past years, this organization has lost many experienced leaders to retirements, which has left a void in the leadership spectrum for the department at the rank of chief officer. A chief fire officer is an individual that has demonstrated the knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) for the fire profession through education and strong leadership (Edwards, 2010). As of October 2020, there were 27 chief officers within the department to include the fire chief. Only four out of the 20 chief officers have more than 10 years of experience at their current rank. On average, the remaining 23 chief officers have approximately three years at their current rank. Five chief officers have less than six months at their current rank, and during the study there were three vacancies. With the lack of experience and leadership within the organization, there is a need to develop a plan to build the standard of leadership within the department. There is currently not a plan in place to develop the leadership abilities of the current chief officers for the organization.

The department is authorized for 480 personnel, but currently has 399 personnel for daily operation, a significant deficiency of 81 positions. This gap has been caused by budget restraints, a decline in recruitment, and an increase in retirements and has created a serious concern within the department regarding a potential leadership gap for the future of the organization. The study site fire department has no leadership development, officer development, or mentorship programs in place, which can create a serious problem for the organization (see Viscuso, 2013). Inconsistencies in leadership from a fire officer or chief officer can accumulate out of complacency, and this is why this organization is interested in the development of a well-thought-out plan of action for its chief officers looking to build on their leadership abilities within the fire service.

Firefighting is a profession. A profession is an occupation that is esoteric, complex, and discretionary and requires theoretical knowledge, skill, and judgment that others may not possess or cannot easily comprehend (Sylves, 2015). This is true within the study site organization. The leaders of the fire service need the knowledge of how to be a leader and the training to develop the skills of being a leader. Leadership requires courage and the willingness to lead with determination and action (Burns, 1978). Understanding what an effective and influential curriculum for training, education, and development can do to create a vision of success is critical to the development of the known knowledge, skills, and abilities required of the organizations leader's; therefore, I conducted this study to explore how training, education, and development can affect both new and current employees. Local fire departments such as this one are the first line of

defense during times of disaster and must be fully equipped and staffed with strong leadership personnel for the disaster response initiative to be successful.

### **Problem Statement**

The study site organization is losing chief officers through retirements and needs a plan for how to best build strong leaders within the department to replace these leading senior employees. Leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal or mission (Northouse, 2019).

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand the assumptions and perspectives of current leadership (i.e., district fire chiefs, assistant fire chiefs, and the fire chief) concerning what is needed for strong leadership within the organization in regards to experience, education, training, certifications, and KSAs as well as to use this information to create a leadership development plan outline for the department. By interviewing present leaders within the department, the results of this study will allow the fire chief to understand what type of education, training, certifications, and experience will help develop strong leadership within the leadership staff. This information can be used to create a plan for the department, including a set of strategies for the career development and educational programs of future and current leaders. The plan for development may involve leadership courses and lectures from many sources, such as the National Fire Academy, Alabama Fire College, and the vast number of educational institutions that provide leadership curriculum.

### **Research Question**

What is the perspective of current chief officers as to what is expected of leaders in regards to experience, education, training, certifications, and KSAs to replace the leadership lost over the years?

### **Nature of the Administrative Study**

In this qualitative study, I collected data through interviews with the 12 participants. The interviews involved open-ended questions that allowed the participants to express their opinions and views from their own experiences as to what is expected of leaders within the organization, such as higher education needs, fire service certifications, needed experience, or leadership training. Out of qualitative data collected from the interview responses, a picture was also be developed, which gave a voice to the research (see Creswell, 2014). The findings provide the department leaders with insights on leadership development needs, such as experience, education, training and required certifications, along with required KSAs.

Before the interviews took place, I began by assuring the participants that their comments would be kept confidential and in a secure location. The participants were also advised that the results would be published with none of their names included. While conducting the interviews, I accurately documented and recorded the data collected. The interviews took place in my office, which was free of distractions and influence. There were no gender, race, religion, or cultural biases apparent within the collection of data or its interpretation.



Qualitative data observations yield detailed, thick descriptions, and interviews capture direct quotations about an individual's personal perspectives and experiences (Patton, 2002). I used a rich, thick description to report the findings after looking for themes and patterns within the data collected of the study and applying these findings to a plan for building future leadership for the organization.

### **Significance**

This study contributes to filling the gap identified in the problem statement regarding the lack of a plan to develop new leadership to replace existing leadership within the organization and the fire service as a whole. The findings can be used to guide current and future members of the department in developing the basic concepts for leadership KSAs. This study can also support professional practice within the organization through leadership development planning and allow for the practical application of best practices related to obtaining the needed experience, education, training, and leadership development.

The results of this study can be used to help develop the envisioned leadership for any organization, whether public, private, or nonprofit. Every organization, regardless of its mission, depends on its leadership for guidance, stability, and future success. By identifying the assumptions and perspectives of existing leaders within an organization, based on their own experience as to what experience, education, training, certifications, and KSAs are needed for growth as a leader, an organization can identify individual needs for development and increase the worth and dignity of all employees regardless of their cultural and social background for positive social change.

### **Significance to Practice**

The research findings can lead to positive social change in many facets of governmental-level response to disaster events and community-level response to disaster events. For years, researchers have been trying to understand the importance of strong leadership to build democratic governance in public organizations to better serve the public with transparency, accountability, and empowerment (Northouse, 2019). By identifying a path to building strong leadership, policy practices can be challenged and restructured for a clearer vision for local governance and stronger missions for private corporation management and national Non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

### **Significance to Social Change**

Many individuals believe that through strong leadership, they can change their social, professional, and personal livelihood. Northouse (2016) proposed that leadership is one of the most highly sought-after commodities in the world. Many in the field of leadership studies continue to ask themselves what makes a good leader (Northouse, 2016). The results of this study may provide individualized guidance on leadership and a model in the organization for achieving it. By understanding what the perceptions of leadership are among an organization and how to develop it, any person if they so desire, regardless of race, sex, religion, or cultural background, will be able to enhance their leadership skills and lead the world's organizations and communities.

### **Summary**

Understanding the need and how to build strong leadership within the fire service profession as a whole began with understanding how vital leadership was to the study site

organization. Strong leadership in the fire service, which was compared to serving in the military, is the leadership needed to influence another individual to risk their lives to save another (Viscuso, 2013). Strong leadership is vital to the success of any organization, and the study site organization was no exception. In the findings of this qualitative study, I provided an understanding of the perspectives of present leadership concerning what was needed to build strong leadership within the organization and this information was utilized to create a leadership development plan outline. This strong level of leadership will help the organization face the major challenges of today, such as employee retention and development. The study site organization is losing seasoned leadership, while inexperienced personnel has quickly moved up through the ranks to the role of chief officer. This quick movement has minimized the chance of current department leaders to develop the necessary KSAs to build strong leadership qualities.

In the following section, the conceptual framework that aided in identifying the expectations of the study are described. Within the description of the conceptual framework, the assumptions, beliefs, and theories that supported the study are discussed. I reviewed the available literature on the topic to inform the deliverable to the organization, which was a development plan outline. The development plan will show how to build strong leadership within a fire service organization to solidify the current effectiveness of the organization and enhance its future success. Transformational and coach-style leadership styles will also be discussed in detail in Section 2. The research will describe how each style is currently utilized within the study site organization and

the characteristics and components of the styles of leadership and how they assist in effective leadership.

## Section 2: Conceptual Approach and Background

With the many experienced employees in leadership positions that have moved on to retirement within the study site fire department, the organization must find a way to rebuild its leadership structure. In this study, I sought to understand the assumptions and perceptions of chief officers as to what is expected and needed to develop strong leadership in the organization. In the conceptual framework subsection, I explain the expected criteria, based on education, experience, training, and certifications, needed for a fire service organization develop strong leadership.

Based on the findings of this study, the deliverable for the organization is a leadership development plan outline for building strong leadership for the organization to replace the lost leadership from retirements and the plan outline is based on required KSAs and two identified leadership styles: transformational leadership and coach-style leadership. The results of this study may be relevant to any organization, not just fire service organizations.

### **Concepts, Models, and Theories**

The conceptual approach aided me in identifying the training expectations, educational expectations, required certifications and needed professional experience for chief officers to strengthen their leadership abilities. I interviewed the chief officer participants to identify the criterion for a leadership development plan keeping in mind two well-known styles of leadership (i.e., transformational leadership and coach-style leadership) that are discussed in detail later in this subsection. Locke et al. (2014) stated that a “Conceptual framework is a system of concepts, assumptions, expectations, beliefs,

and theories that supports and informs your research,” (p. 275). The concepts of education, training, certifications, and experience are assumed by current leadership to play a role in building personnel to be strong leaders.

In this subsection, the form of the expected deliverable of the study was identified: a leadership development plan outline. I also explain the two leadership styles that helped guide the creation of the leadership plan outline. In the discussion of the conceptual framework for this study, additional key concepts for leadership assessment related to the KSAs, education, training, experience, and certifications necessary for leadership development are also provided.

### **The Deliverable to the Client Organization**

The deliverable to the client organization will be a development plan outline for building continuous strong leadership throughout the organization. To have a professional reputation as a competent organization with a quality of excellence as its standard for performance, an organization must have a plan for employee development (Whiteside, 2002). This development plan outline put forth a leadership development framework built around the competencies the employees need to be successful at their job responsibilities (see Wright, 2018). In the leadership development plan outline, I will create employee vision, professional development, and also make development goals clear and precise. The leadership development plan outline will include a description of the required knowledge needed for the position, the skills required of the employee, and the required job performance abilities.

Through a leadership development plan outline, current and future leaders will see the competencies required for each position in the organization and can work on the requisite KSAs to meet those competencies for their current position or to attain future positions within the organization. Cultivating self-awareness is key to encouraging employees to take on leadership positions, and this self-awareness can be identified through a plan for development (Whiteside, 2002). Through reading the development plan, the employee will understand where they are in their leadership development process and can also identify the needs for future leadership development. Far too many organizations live in the present while not fully thinking about the future of their organization until an unexpected change occurs, but by identifying future leaders, an organization is investing in its future success (Wright, 2018).

A leadership development plan can help an organization's employees set their career goals to obtain leadership or senior management positions within the organization. Within the development plan, I considered the personal needs of the employee, which ranged from community service opportunities to the development of external leadership skills, such as public speaking and social networking. The leadership development plan encourages professional growth and skill-building for the employee.

### **Leadership Styles in the Conceptual Framework**

The plan that will be delivered to the client organization for building leadership competencies will be partly based on the perspectives of the chief officers and focused on two common leadership styles: transformational leadership and coach-style leadership.

### ***Transformational Leadership***

The transformational leadership concept was first introduced by James McGregor Burns in 1978 while studying the political arena (Burkus, 2010). Burns was a professor of political science at Williams College for many years and the author of many books, one of which won the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Award. Burns wrote about the many qualities of leadership, such as integrity, initiative, moral resolve, and authenticity that are specific qualities of transformational leadership. Burns stated that the degree of a leader's effectiveness can be measured by how the leader influences and engages with their followers, calling the approach, transformational leadership and stating this was the foundation for intellectual ideas and the platform for moral power. Transformational leadership is an ideological leadership style that can transform an organization to meet the needs of the organization's followers and leaders. In the transformational leadership style, the leader is constantly encouraging the employee outside of their comfort zone (Becker, 2020).

For more than a quarter of a century, transformational leadership has been studied for its ability to produce positive performance outcomes within an organization. Today, it is widely used in private businesses and within governmental organizations and has rapidly become the leadership approach of choice for many organizational leaders (Burns, 1978).

Transformational leadership is one style of leadership that will be encouraged among the potential leaders within the leadership development plan outline for the study site department. This style of leadership is always transforming and improving. One



example of its use in action would be current and future leaders in the department receiving a list of requirements for future leadership opportunities along with a timeline of completion. As an approach, transformational leadership has the potential to influence the department chief officers towards continued growth as they progress through their careers to become strong leaders for the department.

**Impact of Transformational Leadership.** Transformational leaders concentrate their efforts on transforming their employees to support each other and the organization as a whole (Burkus, 2010). Burns studies showed that followers of a transformational leader responded to the leaders' ability to create a feeling of trust, admiration, loyalty, and respect within the organization, and because of this, they were more willing to work harder than originally expected (Burkus, 2010). Transformational leaders tend to have followers that are more committed to the organization and followers that are extremely satisfied with their work because the transformational leaders pay attention to the individual needs of the followers (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Through recent research, transformational leadership was proven to be a powerful source for leadership success in any sector of business (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Transformational leadership is also the most common choice of leadership approach because it provides a better fit for today's complex workgroups and organizations (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Over the years, transformational leadership has become the most dominant approach to leadership today, and it is widely used by many companies around the world (Sayyadi, 2020).

Followers seek inspirational leaders to help guide them through uncertain environments, but followers also want to be challenged and feel empowered if they are to

be loyal and high performers within the group (Sayyadi, 2020). The transformation leadership style is intended to stimulate followers to be creative and innovative as well as develop their collective leadership capacity, which was the focus of this research study.

**Components of Transformational Leadership.** The four components of transformational leadership can contribute to strong leadership development. These four components are idealized influence, individual consideration, intellectual stimulation, and inspirational motivation (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Understanding these components can lead to leads to knowledge of how to continue to build a vision, knowledge sharing, empowerment, and inspiration. The four components of transformational leadership are explained in more detail in the following subsections.

***Idealized Influence.*** In this component, the leader develops a vision and that vision is shared with the employee to improve the relationship between the employee and the leader (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Bass and Riggio also proposed that this component will help instill pride and confidence in members of the department.

***Individualized Consideration.*** Per this component, the leader concentrates on identifying the individual needs of the employee (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Bass and Riggio proposed that these types of leaders will also empower followers to build a learning climate and support the goals and objectives of the organization.

***Intellectual Stimulation.*** The leaders will propel knowledge sharing in the department to generate more innovative ideas and solutions for new and demanding issues that come up constantly in the dynamic world of the fire service (see Bass & Riggio, 2006).

***Inspirational Motivation.*** In this component, leaders focus on inspiring employees and do not just treat them as human assets but as a necessity (Bass & Riggio, 2006). This behavior sets a higher level of desired expectations for the employee through inspirational motivation according to Bass and Riggio.

**Characteristics of Transformational Leadership.** There are 10 known characteristics of transformational leadership that guide a leader in enhancing the morale, performance, and motivation of an organization's employees: controlling their ego, self-management, ability to take risks, make difficult decisions, share collective consciousness, inspirational, consider new ideas, adaptability, proactive, and lead with vision (Lee & Ogden, 2019). For an organization to compete today, it must embrace these characteristics of transformational leadership (Lee & Ogden, 2019). These 10 characteristics will inspire change driven by a strong sense of purpose and will allow the leader to create a culture of trust and innovation within the organization.

**Transformational Leadership Within the Organization.** Transformational leaders help followers grow and develop into leaders by responding to the individual needs of the employee and empowering them (Lee & Ogden, 2019). By aligning the objectives and goals of the organization, the employees, and the department leaders, leadership development can be accomplished to replenish and strengthen the current leadership within the study site fire department. After this study, organizational leaders have to remain focused on implementing the findings of the study by empowering its employees and providing them with an example of the hard work needed to transform the

organization, its culture, and its trajectory for success, all of which aligns with the characteristics of transformational leadership.

### ***Coach-Style Leadership***

The second style of leadership that guided this study was coach-style leadership, which is focused on identifying and nurturing the strengths of each leading member of an organization (see Becker, 2020). This style of leadership encourages coming up with a strategic plan to help the growth and development of a leader, which was one of the goals for this study. Coach-style leadership requires the leader to engage with people to try to gain an understanding of what motivates them (Janse, 2018). This style helps encourage further education and training among personnel to build on individual strengths and weaknesses. The coaching leadership style is about the leader inspiring their organization, building the employees' confidence, and teaching them the skills they need to develop (Janse, 2018).

**History of Coach-Style Leadership.** The coaching-style leadership was defined by Paul Hersey and Kenneth Blanchard, two leading experts in the late 1960s (Eden Project, 2020). The coaching style of leadership will help current leaders motivate while leading others to develop their leadership skills (Becker, 2020). Becker proposed that coach-style leaders are normally good communicators and they are comfortable with the delegation of work. Becker also stated that this style of leadership provides positive results through focus and personal development. The coaching style of leadership is characterized by two aspects, which are a partnership with others and collaboration with and among others (Lee, 2020). This style of leadership can be adapted to any situation

based on the personnel involved (Becker, 2020). The leader takes the lead in situations and guides the follower by giving direction. Although there is limited information on coach-style leadership outside of the sports arena, it is a widely used secondary style of leadership in many organizations.

**Coach-Style Leadership Within the Organization.** Many times coach-style leadership is associated with sports and athletes, but in this study, we are looking not at the individual that will be administering the leadership style but the style of leadership that is being administered. Through coach-style leadership, it is assumed that leaders will learn to be motivators for employees seeking to be future leaders for the organization, leaders will learn to create partnerships with their followers that will build on their desire to be a part of the leadership staff. A good leader utilizing coach-style leadership gives limited directions to their employees and lets them think for themselves about solutions to the problem by asking questions (Janse, 2018). The study will show that personnel will be encouraged to work in a responsible manner and creativity will be encouraged, which will hopefully help build upon their leadership abilities and expand their knowledge based on both styles, coach-style and transformational.

### **Leadership Development Concepts in the Conceptual Framework**

There are four key components to leadership development and they are connected to KSAs, which are most often obtained through education, training, certification, and experience. Training is a planned effort of an organization to facilitate learning for its employees and improve their job performance to further the organization's mission and goals (Edwards, 2010). A quality training program involves the improvement of job-

related skills and knowledge. In the fire service quality training can be directly related to increased job performance, safety, and organizational advancement (Edwards, 2010).

There are several organizations such as the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) that have created a consensus of the standards for a firefighter, fire officer, and chief officer. Standards that serve as a basis for performance through certification programs. Certifications are a confirmation of desired characteristics and abilities of an employee for the organization through an accredited agency (Edwards, 2010). These certifications are recognized as being professional, intellectual, competent, and responsible. Individuals that have been certified are recognized on the local, state, and national levels. These certifications increase the reliability and credibility of the employee's performance.

As a firefighter moves up through the department they will benefit from the experience that they receive. Through experience, a chief officer can develop the traits of success, personally and professionally. These traits are the vision necessary to be successful and the technical knowledge for leading, which is needed from the beginning level of firefighter to the top-level chief officer (NFPA, 2012). With experience, a chief officer has encountered and observed many job-related events, through these experiences practical knowledge and wisdom are gained. The knowledge gained can be used to make beneficial decisions for the organization and its personnel.

The importance of education in the fire service cannot be overstated (NFPA, 2012). Education in the fire service helps create thinking, while also creating chief officers with the ability to perform a task related to their position. With education chief

officers with the organization will learn to complete risk analysis, create safety initiatives and rules of engagement, and tactical performance guidelines. There are several levels of educational degrees available such as associate degrees, bachelor's degrees, master's degrees, and doctoral degrees. There are also many forms of venues in which the organization chief officers can receive educational degrees such as traditional, online, and blended. Educational degrees are also offered through many known colleges and universities throughout the nation. As mentioned earlier education is essential and should be part of every organization's short- and long-term plan (NFPA, 2012).

### **Relevance to Public Organizations**

Every organization has a structure that dictates the flow of information and service. This organizational structure can come in many forms, but this organization has a top-down structure that dictates the flow of information and the service it provides to the public. This is the case for many fire service organizations, but it is the case for many organizations whether public, private or non-profit. As we know leadership normally comes from the top position within any organization and leadership is what will make an organization thrive. Maxwell (2002) argued that “your leadership ability, for better or for worse, always determines your effectiveness and the potential impact of your organization” (p. 1). With that being said the effectiveness of any organization is determined by the level of leadership that exists within it. The higher the level of leadership the higher the potential of any organization. The lower the leadership within any organization, the lower the effectiveness and the potential of that organization.

Understanding this, it is understood how critical it is to have a recipe for building strong leadership within any organization to solidify the current effectiveness of the organization and the future potential of the organization. For most professional organizations this is an important criterion, but it gets diminished through complacency, retirements, lack of recruitment, or failure to develop the needed leadership. Recognizing the knowledge, skills, and abilities required to be leaders within their organization, while knowing what the organizational leadership staff is looking for from the leaders of their organization, will help design a development plan for building strong leadership within the organization. As stated before, this will help any organization whether public, private, or non-profit build strong leadership as they go forward.

### **Organization Background and Context**

This fire service organization operates on approximately a \$36 million budget for the fiscal year 2019. Provides fire protection and emergency medical services for approximately 200,000 local citizens within the community that covers approximately 162 square miles. The organization has been providing services to the local community since its founding in 1898. This is a paramilitary-style organization, with a structured top-down leadership style. The rank structure starts with the beginning level firefighter and ends at the top level with the fire chief of the department.

There are many facets to this fire department, like many other fire service organizations. This organization provides services for fire suppression, emergency medical services, hazardous material mitigation, public education, and fire prevention, and life safety code enforcement just to name a few. The organization is committed to



creating safer communities through prevention, preparedness, and effective emergency response. This is done to sustain a safer, vibrant, and growing community in its entirety that people will be proud to call home. As one of the leading public safety organizations this organization has a high demand for constant qualified leadership.

Strategies and practices that have been used in the past to address this organization's problem, have been professional development. Professional development is achieving the needed experience, education, training, and certifications to maintain personnel KSA's (Edwards, 2010). In the past fire service leaders have used professional development, mentorship programs, and higher education opportunities to promote leadership development within the organization. In this organizations case, the leadership diminished due to the loss of leadership from retirements. Any organization's leadership staff, through this research, will be provided with the basis for building strong leadership within their organization.

### **Role of the DPA Student Researcher**

My role with this organization is the chief of operations, which entails managing the daily operations of the suppression division, Emergency Medical Service (EMS) division, and its Investigations Bureau, among many other job duties. I have a bigger responsibility, which is the basis of the study, which is to lead this fire service organization and build its leadership for the future of the organization. This study provides the leaders of this department, including me a better understanding of what the assumptions and perceptions of leadership are within the department and how to build strong leadership for its current and future leaders through a leadership development plan

outline. As the researcher, I was not only an observer, which was my main role, but I also benefited from this research study by strengthening the leadership in the department that I belong to and have spent over 22 years of my professional life with. I also hold the rank of chief officer within the organization, but I was not one of the chief officers interviewed for this study. I worked alongside the fire chief to select the sample population for the study and formulated the interview questions. As I have discussed the evidence of the many retirements of chief officers in the past years showed a weakening of the leadership within the organization. My motivation was to rebuild what has been diminished from the retirements of leading personnel within the department. Not just to solidify its current position, but its future as a leading fire serviced organization also.

During this research, I could only foresee a single bias that I as the researcher may have and that was whether education or experience would play a bigger part of leadership development. I addressed this bias through data from the interviews. There were several chief officers that had formal education in their background and there were some that did not have any formal education in their background. To which there were several chief officers with many years of experience and there were some very young chief officers within the department. Based on the data from the interviews I gained the perception of which one is needed more if either, or the same. Being that I am a part of this organization's leadership group and to eliminate any ethical issues, I was not selected to be interviewed. I confined my involvement to the role of the researcher and my personal views was not be part of the research results. The data collected spoke for itself.

## Summary

Understanding leadership determines the effectiveness of an organization, which implies that having strong leadership is vital to the success of any organization, which includes this organization. Within this qualitative study, I and the leadership body of the organization now understand the characteristics of leadership and what that entails. This research study is a guide for the study site organization, but it can also guide in building strong leadership to all public, private, and nonprofit organizations worldwide. This organization for many years has lost some of its leading personnel to retirements and has been unable to replace that leadership. Although there were different opinions on how this can be remedied, the research showed a true basic concept for how strong leadership can be rebuilt within the department. The chief officers of the department were the sample population for the study, which has been discussed in detail, along with the evidence identified in the answers to the questions to the organizational problem within the research. I gathered the data through interviews with the participants and the data collected was analyzed with a manual three step process in which a picture was created from the assumptions and perspectives of the participants.

### Section 3: Data Collection Process and Analysis

The problem that the study site organization needs to solve is how to build strong leaders within the department to replace the senior chief officer leadership as they retire. The purpose of this qualitative research study was to gather data through interviews to understand the assumptions and perspectives of the current chief officer within the organization as to what is expected of leaders regarding their experience, education, training, certifications, and KSAs and create a leadership development plan outline based on the information gathered to replace this lost leadership within the organization. In past years, the organization has lost many leading employees to retirement, which has diminished the department's leadership staff mainly at the chief officer rank. Building leadership within the department is vital to the future and success of the organization.

In this section, I presented the sources of evidence used for the research study, the sample population, and the data collection and analysis procedures. This section also included a discussion of any ethical issues that could have arose and the consent and privacy considerations made for the participants. I also described the analysis process, including how the data were sorted, how the data were coded, and how I made sense of the data collected.

#### **Practice-Focused Question**

The practice-focused question for this study was: What are the perspectives of current chief officers as to what is expected of leaders in regards to their experience, education, training, certifications, and KSAs to replace the leadership lost over the years?

This information was used to develop an outline for the department to build new and ongoing leadership for the future.

Leadership is composed of concepts, like power, knowledge, and integrity; that give a leader the ability to influence others (Northouse, 2016)). The chief officer rank of the study site organization has lost some of that ability to influence others primarily due to retirements. Understanding what the perceptions of these officers are regarding the knowledge and skills required for leadership within the organization helped develop a leadership plan outline for the study site to replace the experienced leadership lost and answered the research question. The KSAs found are defined and applied throughout this qualitative research study. Current chief officers of the study site were the sample population interviewed to collect for the study.

### **Sources of Evidence**

The evidence for this study was generated from interviews of the chief officer leadership staff of the study site department. This evidence helped me identify the employees' needs, which I used to develop the leadership plan outline to strengthen current leadership and assist in developing new leadership within the organization.

### **Participants**

The fire chief for the study site fire service organization permitted me to interview chief officers for this study. There was a random selection of the participants, minimizing any biases that could occur during the data collection process. I selected a sample population of personnel from this organization at the level of chief officer, including the fire chief. I am a member of this organization, which made the members easily accessible

for face-to-face interviews at the department headquarters. I did not have a supervisory role over any of the chief officers interviewed for this study, so there was not any pressure for them to participate. An audio recorder and an interview protocol form were used during the interview to enable me to properly document the participant's comments, which were transcribed at a later time.

The International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) and NFPA (2012) stated that leadership for an organization is like the oil that makes a machine work and that leadership is vital in the fire service during emergency and nonemergency situations. Therefore, in this study, all participants were chief officers within the organization who are considered senior leadership. As chief fire officers in the fire service, they are tasked with accomplishing many different goals as an individual with authority. A chief officer has to be in command of emergency incidents that span from fires as simple as residential cooking fires to building fires involving major incidents with hazardous materials to natural disasters that affect the entire community. Chief Officers have to be able to direct, oversee, and evaluate emergency scenes; understand building construction; manage daily activities; and perform departmental administrative duties to evaluate the risk factors concerning life safety factors (Edwards, 2010). A chief fire officer must be able to develop the most appropriate strategy at critical moments in an event (IAFC & NFPA, 2012). They also have to make a sound decision based upon the information that is available to them at that moment and be proactive in organizational management through accountability and constant evaluation. Along with displaying good communication skills, chief officers must be able to document all incidents and occurrences appropriately

for future referencing while having the ability to brief the fire chief on large-scale and high-profile incidents that occur within the department. This is just a small amount of the duties required of a chief fire officer, but the span provides an example of how vast and widespread the duties of a chief fire officer are.

In this qualitative study, I collected data through interviews with the 12 participants from the sample population. The population for this study was the chief officers within the organization who are considered the senior leadership. There were 26 chief officers, including the fire chief that composed the senior leadership at the time of the study. I used a single-stage sampling process, which means that as the researcher, I had direct access to the participants and was able to interview them directly (see Creswell, 2014).

### **Procedures**

I used a randomly selected portion of the population from the rank of chief officer to get an unbiased population of participants for the study. Random selection gives all participants an equal opportunity to be selected for the study (Creswell, 2014). Random selection was completed by placing all chief officers' names in a list from the most senior chief officer to the least experienced chief officer. I then selected every even numbered chief officer on the list, which resulted in 12 participants selected for the study. If for some unforeseen reason there had been any chief officers that refused to participate in the study, I would have went back to the list and selected the next chief officer in line on the listing. Any selected participant refusing to participate was excused from the interview process and their refusal to participate was kept confidential.

I requested an email list for all chief officers within the department from the fire chief. An email was then sent out to the randomly selected leaders in which I explained the study and invited them to participate in it. They were asked to accept the invitation by responding to the email with the phrase, "I accept this invitation and consent to the interview."

I sent another email to schedule the interviews based on the reported availability of the participant. Through this email, the participants were notified of the time and place of the interview. When the participant reported as requested for the interview, I asked if they had any questions in regards to the email request. Before I began asking the interview questions, each participant was asked to sign a consent form to which they had already consented by email, again letting them know their comments would be kept confidential.

I conducted one-on-one interviews with the participants at the department headquarters in my office, which has a rear entrance for privacy and confidentiality. The interviews took approximately an hour each. The interviews were concluded with a thank you for participating and an assurance that the results of the study would benefit the organization.

### ***Instrumentation***

The interview protocol form had researcher-developed questions to cater to the client organization and answer the research question. I created the questions to be semi structured and open ended so they would foster conversation for an intellectually stimulating interview and exchange of information. I designed the protocol form, which



contained components, such as the title of the research being done, questions related to the data needed, and a final thank you statement for being a part of the research journey.

### ***Recordings***

I audio recorded the interviews on a handheld recording device with a playback option. The recordings were saved for later review as a secondary backup to the interview protocol form.

### **Protections**

All information collected is protected in a secure file cabinet within my work office, which is behind lock and key, to be kept confidential. I filed the interview protocol forms and keep them in a secure file cabinet. Audio recordings were filed along with all documentation related to the interview, also stored in a secure file cabinet.

### ***Strategies for Recruitment***

I used random selection to select 50% of the department's chief officers for the study. To assure random selection within the rank of chief officer, all chief officer names were placed on a listing from the most senior chief officer to the newest to the rank. I chose a random starting point on the list and every other chief officer on the list was selected from that point. This criterion for selection helped ensure an unbiased selection of participants and eliminated any ethical concerns related to recruitment.

### ***Consent and Privacy***

All data were kept confidential and in a secure location. I acquired consent from each participant at the beginning of their interview. The interviews were conducted at the

department headquarters in my office, which has a rear entrance for privacy and confidentiality.

### ***Client Organization Approval***

The client organization is a fire service organization that is steeped in pride and tradition. I spoke with the fire chief of the organization, and he graciously granted me permission to interview the department's chief officer personnel. I was also granted access to all department documentation relevant to the study. The fire chief understood that this study would be conducted while all participants were on duty with the department. This agreement was documented within a client organizational approval letter from the fire chief.

### ***Walden Institutional Review Board Approval***

I received Walden University Institutional Review Board approval on August 22, 2021; the approval number is 08-23-21-0987534.

### **Analysis and Synthesis**

I analyzed the data to develop an understanding of the problem using the participants' perspectives to identify the factors that emerge from the research. Analytical strategies are decisions made by the researcher to accomplish the goals and objectives of the research (Creswell, 2014). Utilizing a bottom-up strategic approach, I analyzed the interview transcripts to identify the structure, order, or patterns of the data collected.

### **Analysis Systems**

I used a manual system of coding to analyze the data. The information gathered was coded initially and then organized into categories and brackets identified by abbreviations or word phrases (see Creswell, 2014).

I used a three-step coding process to analyze the documented interviews and recordings. The first step was reporting information on who participated in the study and how many chief officers participated out of the available chief officers within the department. Next, the factors that could be related to biased responses from the participants were considered. Then, I examined the responses based on the participants' time in rank and educational background in leadership to identify any changes in the responses between groups of participants. Third, I conducted a descriptive analysis using variables that could provide explanations for standard deviations within the analysis, such as educational background, previous leadership training, experience, etc. Then, I further broke the data down to determine what themes emerged from the participants' responses. Finally, the findings were compiled into the final results of the study and the emergent themes were used to develop the plan for the department to replace retired leaders and build strong leadership in the future.

### **Analysis Procedures**

Tesch's eight steps for forming codes was utilized (Creswell, 2014). The first step in the process was to read all the transcripts/interviews. The second step was to pick one interview to go through while asking the question of, what is it about? The third step was to make a list of related topics of the substance of the interview. The fourth step the

topics were abbreviate as codes. The fifth step was to find the most descriptive term for the topics and create categories with them. Step six was to finalize the categories and place them in alphabetical order. Step seven was to place the data in the appropriate categories, and step eight is where any data that needed to be recoded was completed (Creswell, 2014).

This helped categorize the collected data from the participants with descriptive terms related to the text within the interviews (Creswell, 2014). These descriptive terms will help the readers of the study make sense of the literature based on past literary documentation. All interviews were read to get some ideas of what the data was referring to. Then one interview was picked to read carefully, while asking myself, “what it is about?” and describing the core of the text data. All descriptions were then grouped into categories, based on most important, important, and not necessary. This was done with all accumulated interviews from the participants. Once this process was complete, a preliminary analysis was performed as described above.

### **Data Integrity**

Understanding that data integrity is the overall accuracy, completeness, and consistency of the research data. The following process provided insight into how I plan to ensure that the data collected was accurate and untainted. The data secured in a locked file cabinet and safe from external forces. Data integrity also involves implementing a process to assure the data was used uniformly throughout the research study. The data then placed on an interview protocol form which was standardized for uniform data use. The data then entered on the form in the same manner, during the interview, without any

outside influences. The data is stored in the same manner, in a locked file cabinet for future use. The data is also transferrable for research use similarly by taking into account any discrepancies.

### ***Transferability***

Transferability refers to the external validity or generalizability of the study results (Trochim, 2021). It is recommended that the researcher provide thorough descriptions of the data to enhance all facets of the collected data such as the location of the interviews, participant behaviors, and any other factors that could have bearing on the results (Trochim, 2021). The use of structured interviews, with the interview protocol form, ensured that all participants in the study received the same questions in the same order and format. Additionally, a researcher who wishes to “transfer” the results of this study to a different study, will be responsible for making the judgment on how sensible the transfer will be.

### ***Credibility***

Credibility refers to establishing a criterion to provide validity that the results of qualitative research are credible or reliable from the perspective of the participants in the research. Credibility provides a perspective that the purpose of the research study is to describe or understand the problem of interest from the participant’s view. The participants within the study provided legitimacy to the credibility of the results based on their knowledge of the organization’s leadership standards.

### ***Dependability***

The data documented and recorded, which helped alleviate any discrepancies that could have arisen between the documented answers and the recordings. An audit was conducted that matched the answer and comments recorded with the written answers and comments. This audit was conducted by an individual who is not a member of the organization and selected by me, the researcher.

### ***Confirmability***

To assure confirmability and trustworthiness of the research, a level of confidence was established that I eliminated all biases within the research. The findings of the research were based strictly on the data received from the participants within the study, which provided the foundation for an audit by the participants for the study.

### **Summary**

The data collection process and analysis helped identify the research question and the way that question was answered within the research. Clarifying the purpose of the study and assuring that it aligned with the question to be answered gave purpose to the PAS. Within this section the sources of evidence were identified and how that evidence was collected and recorded for use. The participant procedures were identified along with any ethical concerns in regards to consent and privacy. An agreement was received from the client organization to gain access to the participants and any other needs for the PAS. A system for analysis and synthesis was described that assured data integrity and define analysis procedures. The next section of the PAS includes the results and findings of the study based on the research data, with recommendations to the client organization.

## Section 4: Results

In this section I provided the results of my study including an analysis of the data and the findings and implications along with recommendations.

### **Introduction**

The problem addressed by this study was that the study site organization is losing chief officers through retirements and needed a plan for how to best build strong leaders within the department to replace the leading senior employees as they retire. The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand the assumptions and perspectives of present leadership concerning what is expected of leadership within the organization in regards to experience, education, training, certifications, and KSAs and to use this information to create a leadership development plan outline for building strong leadership within the department. The leadership plan involved courses on leadership and certification courses through the National Fire Academy, Alabama Fire College, and many local and nationwide educational institutions. The research question for this study was: What are the perspectives of present leadership concerning what is needed for building strong leadership within the organization?

### **Demographics**

For this study, my plan was to interview 13 participants, but due to two chief officer retirements, there were only 24 chief officers to select from. Therefore, still using 50% of the sample population provided only 12 participants for the study. The participants for the study were all male in gender because there were not any female employees with the chief officer rank in the organization at the time of this study. One

chief officer selected refused to be part of the study. The process for selecting the participants to be interviewed involved me placing the name of each chief officer on a list based on their amount of time at the rank. I then selected every two chief officers. When the one chief officer refused to participate, the next chief officer on the list was selected. There was only one possible participant who refused to participate, so no other adjustments had to be made.

The participating pool comprised two Black participants and 10 White participants. There is no other racial group within the ranks of chief officer for this organization. Out of the 12 participants, four chief officers received postgraduate education during their career or before their career started with the organization. Out of the remaining eight chief officers, 50% believed education to be an important aspect of building strong leadership within the organization.

### **Interviews**

I conducted the interviews in an office of the partner organization's headquarters, located on the third floor of a three-story building. The interviews were conducted within 3 days, starting at 9:00 a.m. and ending at 2:30 p.m. each day. All interviews took approximately an hour, with a thirty-minute break in between them to allow each participant the ability to leave in privacy. I recorded the data collected during the interviews on the interview protocol form that contained the interview questions. A hand-held audio-recording device was also used to record the interviews for later review and reference. The interviews went according to plan, without any need to make adjustments



to the original plan. The participants all showed up to the interviews on time as scheduled, and the interviews lasted no more than an hour as expected.

### **Analytical Strategies Employed**

To familiarize myself with the data, I read my notes of each of the interviews and reviewed the audio recordings. Topics were identified from the participants' answers that were then abbreviated as codes, such as leadership characteristic (LC) or personal development needs (PDNs).

As discussed earlier, I grouped the data collected from the interviews under related codes (e.g., all data collected from the interview questions related to the two styles of leadership utilized within the organization were grouped under the topic of transformational leadership or coach-style leadership). The data were then further grouped into specific themes describing the data collected based on the perspectives from the participants (e.g., the data collected from the interview questions related to transformational leadership or coach-style leadership were further grouped into a specific theme, such as preferred leadership style [PLS]). The data indicated that transformational leadership was the preferred style of leadership within the organization and was identified as the leadership style necessary for building strong leadership within the organization.

I used this process for coding to identify six categories from the data collected within the interviews: components for building leadership (CBL); components of leadership (CL); leadership characteristics (LC); personal development needs (PDN); preferred leadership style (PLS); and required knowledge, skills, and abilities (RKSA).

All data collected during the interviews were then placed in the appropriate category. The categories are described in detail in the following subsection and displayed in Table 2.

### **Findings and Implications**

I organized the findings by using Tesch's eight-step process, which began with reading the interviews and making a list of relating topics based on the substance of the data within the interviews (Creswell, 2014). One example of this process is the interview questions related to the KSAs required of a chief officer. Out of nine available KSAs, I asked the participants to identify the top five for being a leader within the department. This helped identify the category RKSA.

### **Descriptive Topics Identified From the Interviews**

In the following subsections, I provide detailed explanations of the six categories that emerged from the interviews.

#### ***Preferred Leadership Style (PLS)***

Evidence for this category was derived from the participants' responses selecting different aspects of each leadership style that represented the organization. Eight out of the 12 participants agreed that transformational leadership is used within the department and is the preferred leadership style (PLS) needed to build leadership within the organization. The four that disagreed stated that not all of the current leaders support the organization's personnel and create an environment of trust and admiration, so they felt that not all aspects of transformational leadership are being utilized by particular current leaders. Understanding what is required of a leader is vital to the leader's success within the organization (see Viscuso, 2013). If a leader understands their role and

responsibilities and what type of leader is needed for the organization, they have a head start on building characteristics of being a leader.

### ***Leadership Characteristics (LC)***

The category of Leadership Characteristics (LC) was based on the responses to interview questions where participants selected the importance of each characteristic related to the leadership style utilized within the organization. There are 10 leadership style characteristics of transformational leadership utilized within the department, and I asked the participants to rate each characteristic based on its importance for being a leader within the organization on a scale of one thru 10, with one being the most important. The data from these interview questions also provided a reason why the participants scored each characteristic the way they did. The results related to these interview questions are described in detail later in this section and Table 5.

### ***Components of Leadership (CL)***

I identified the category Components of Leadership (CL) category based on the participant responses to interview questions for selecting the importance of the components for leadership and their relationship to building leadership within the organization. Similar to the LC category, the participants graded on a scale of one thru four, the importance of each component in building the leadership abilities for each employee and why each component is important. This category will help current and future leaders for the organization identify their strengths and weaknesses and guide them to improve and build on their leadership abilities. The results related to these interview questions are described in detail later in this section and Table 7.

### ***Components for Building Leadership (CBL)***

I identified the components for building leadership (CBL) category based on responses to the interview question asking participants to select the importance of each component for building strong leadership within the organization (i.e., experience, education, training, and certifications). The data from the interview questions indicate which elements the chief officers perceived as essential for building leadership abilities among current and future leaders of the department. The participants were also able to explain why they perceived each component as necessary. The results related to these research question are described in detail later in this section and Table 6.

### ***Required Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities (RKSA)***

The required knowledge, skills, and abilities (RKSAs) category is based on responses to interview questions asking participants to select the top five KSAs needed for building strong leadership for the organization. Their responses showed the top five KSAs out of the nine available and explained why they are important to the development of leaders for the organization. Understanding the importance of these KSAs will provide current and future leaders of the organization with a development guideline for increasing their leadership ability. Using the guideline, a current or future leader of the department can identify which KSAs they perceive themselves as proficient in and which KSAs they need to develop as they go forward. The results related to these research questions are described in detail later in this section and Tables 3 and 4.

### ***Personal Development Needs (PDN)***

The category of personal development needs (PDN) is based on interview question 8 in which each chief officer participating was asked what their thoughts were on the training they received to be chief officers and what helped them the most. Their responses provided data that each employee can utilize to improve their own leadership qualities based on their own needs for development, such as, self-motivation, determination, confidence, and integrity.

### **Analysis of Data**

I used the most descriptive term for each topic and created categories with them. Once the descriptive categories were created, they were placed in alphabetical order. Table 1 shows the topics in the three phases of analysis, except for placing the final categories in alphabetical order.

**Table 1**

#### *Three Phase Analysis*

| Data Collected from Interview Questions Topics                       | Descriptive Topics         | Abbreviations of Topics |
|--|----------------------------|-------------------------|
| Transformational or coach leadership style                           | Preferred leadership style | PLS                     |
| Perceived characteristics of transformational leadership             | Leadership characteristics | LC                      |
| Components of the preferred leadership (transformational leadership) | Components of leadership   | CL                      |

|  |                                    |      |
|--|------------------------------------|------|
| Necessary components for building leadership training, education, certifications, and experience | Components for building leadership | CBL  |
| Required knowledge, skills, and abilities for building leadership                                | Required KSAs                      | RKSA |
| Important aspects of personal development  | Personal development needs         | PDN  |

### ***Required Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities (RKSA)***

Each participant made their selection of the nine KSAs, and Table 2 shows the chief officers perceived that the top five needs for developing leadership within the organization are decision-making skills (DMS), human relations skills (HRS), oral communication skills (OCS), supervising skills (SS), and technical knowledge (TK). This finding is confirmed within the table by identifying the number of times the KSA was selected by the 12 participants. Out of the nine KSAs required, 11 out of the 12 chief officers selected DMS as significant to the position for leadership development within the organization.

**Table 2**

### *Required Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities – Top five*

| Chief Officer# | TK | SS | MS | DS | JS | DMS | HRS | OCS | WCS |
|----------------|----|----|----|----|----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| CO2            |    |    | ✓  |    | ✓  | ✓   | ✓   | ✓   |     |
| CO4            | ✓  | ✓  |    |    |    | ✓   | ✓   | ✓   |     |
| CO6            | ✓  | ✓  |    | ✓  |    | ✓   |     | ✓   |     |
| CO9            |    |    | ✓  |    | ✓  | ✓   | ✓   | ✓   |     |
| CO10           |    | ✓  |    |    | ✓  | ✓   | ✓   | ✓   |     |
| CO12           | ✓  | ✓  |    |    | ✓  |     | ✓   | ✓   |     |
| CO14           | ✓  | ✓  |    |    |    | ✓   | ✓   | ✓   |     |
| CO16           | ✓  | ✓  |    |    |    | ✓   | ✓   | ✓   |     |
| CO18           | ✓  | ✓  |    |    |    | ✓   | ✓   |     | ✓   |

|                |      |       |      |      |      |       |       |      |      |
|----------------|------|-------|------|------|------|-------|-------|------|------|
| CO21           | ✓    | ✓     |      |      |      | ✓     | ✓     | ✓    |      |
| CO23           | ✓    | ✓     |      |      | ✓    | ✓     | ✓     |      |      |
| CO24           |      | ✓     |      |      | ✓    | ✓     | ✓     |      | ✓    |
| Total selected | 8/12 | 10/12 | 2/12 | 1/12 | 6/12 | 11/12 | 11/12 | 9/12 | 2/12 |

By utilizing the information from the table 3, the data identified that out of the nine KSAs, the chief officers perceived the top five KSAs could also be placed on a scale of importance. This scale would identify the KSAs on a scale of one to five, with 1 identifying the most significant skill required to develop leadership within the organization. The top five KSAs are DMS, HRS, OCS, SS, and TK. The data identified that DMS as the number one KSA as it was chosen 11 times, and participants identified it as the number one required KSA four times. DMS were selected by the participants more than any of the other nine available. The next KSA identified in this manner would be HRS, making it the number two significant KSA required to develop leadership within the organization.

**Table 3**

*Required Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities – Ranking of Importance*

| Chief Officer# | TK | SS | MS | DS | JS | DMS | HRS | OCS | WCS |
|----------------|----|----|----|----|----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| CO2            |    |    | 5  |    | 2  | 1   | 4   | 3   |     |
| CO4            | 1  | 5  |    |    |    | 2   | 3   | 4   |     |
| CO6            | 2  | 5  |    | 4  |    | 1   |     | 3   |     |
| CO9            |    |    | 5  |    | 2  | 1   | 3   | 4   |     |
| CO10           |    | 5  |    |    | 2  | 3   | 1   | 4   |     |
| CO12           | 5  | 4  |    |    | 3  |     | 2   | 1   |     |
| CO14           | 2  | 1  |    |    |    | 3   | 5   | 4   |     |
| CO16           | 3  | 4  |    |    |    | 2   | 1   | 5   |     |
| CO18           | 1  | 4  |    |    |    | 2   | 3   |     | 5   |
| CO21           | 3  | 2  |    |    |    | 4   | 1   | 5   |     |

|              |     |      |     |     |     |      |      |     |     |
|--------------|-----|------|-----|-----|-----|------|------|-----|-----|
| CO23         | 1   | 3    |     |     | 2   | 4    | 5    |     |     |
| CO24         |     | 4    |     |     | 2   | 1    | 5    |     | 3   |
| Total points | 8/3 | 10/1 | 2/0 | 1/0 | 6/0 | 11/4 | 11/3 | 9/1 | 2/0 |

The top five KSAs are identified below in order of importance, per the data collected in table 3 and how many times it was chosen as the number one required KSA.

#### Top Five Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities

- Decision-Making Skills (4)
- Human Relation Skills (3)
- Technical Skills (3)
- Supervising Skills (1)
- Oral Communication Skills (1)

#### ***Ten Characteristics of Transformational Leadership***

Current leadership has identified transformational leadership as one of two leadership styles and the PLS. The study looks into the 10 characteristics of transformational leadership, which can help a leader guide the employees of an organization. These characteristics will help guide the leaders of the organization in developing and enhancing the performance and morale of the personnel within the organization. Table 4 shows on a scale of 1 thru 10, with one being the most important, which characteristics are most important for development as a leader within the organization.

**Table 4**

#### *Ten Characteristics of Leadership*

| Chief Officer | Control Ego | Self Manage | Take Risk | Difficult Decision | Shared Conscious | Inspire | New Ideas | Adapt | Proactive | Lead Vision |
|---------------|-------------|-------------|-----------|--------------------|------------------|---------|-----------|-------|-----------|-------------|
| CO2           | 2           | 6           | 10        | 4                  | 8                | 9       | 5         | 7     | 1         | 3           |
| CO4           | 9           | 10          | 8         | 3                  | 7                | 2       | 6         | 5     | 4         | 1           |
| CO6           | 1           | 10          | 6         | 5                  | 9                | 3       | 4         | 7     | 8         | 2           |



|        |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|--------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| CO9    | 4  | 8  | 10 | 3  | 9  | 5  | 6  | 7  | 2  | 1  |
| CO10   | 1  | 10 | 9  | 8  | 7  | 6  | 5  | 4  | 3  | 2  |
| CO12   | 2  | 8  | 5  | 9  | 7  | 5  | 6  | 7  | 7  | 9  |
| CO14   | 6  | 3  | 5  | 2  | 7  | 8  | 4  | 10 | 9  | 1  |
| CO16   | 8  | 3  | 7  | 2  | 6  | 9  | 5  | 10 | 4  | 1  |
| CO18   | 4  | 5  | 2  | 3  | 1  | 7  | 8  | 6  | 9  | 10 |
| CO21   | 9  | 4  | 6  | 7  | 5  | 10 | 8  | 2  | 1  | 3  |
| CO23   | 4  | 10 | 5  | 3  | 9  | 8  | 1  | 7  | 2  | 6  |
| CO24   | 4  | 9  | 2  | 7  | 10 | 6  | 8  | 9  | 5  | 3  |
| Totals | 54 | 86 | 75 | 56 | 85 | 78 | 66 | 81 | 55 | 42 |

Looking at the data and understanding that if one is considered the value for the most important characteristic, then when the values are totaled, the most essential characteristic will have the lowest total. Understanding this, the data below identifies having the vision to lead as the number one characteristic needed for building strong leadership within the organization, with a total of 42. The data below also identifies self-management as the least necessary characteristic for building leaders within the organization with 86. The following is the order of importance selected by the participants.

#### Leadership Characteristics Order of Importance

1. Lead with Vision (42)
2. Controlling their Ego (54)
3. Proactive (55)
4. Make Difficult Organizational Decisions (56)
5. Consider New Ideas (66)
6. Ability to Take Risks (75)
7. Inspirational (78)
8. Adaptability (81)
9. Share Collective Consciousness (85)
10. Self-Management (86)

Within the data retrieved from the interview questions, other components were identified that would help build strong leadership within the organization. Idealized influence, individual consideration, inspirational motivation, and intellectual stimulation. Considering coach-style leadership as one of the current leadership styles within the organization and based on the data received, the study will apply strategic planning as part of the need for building strong leadership, along with the importance of collaboration and the need for building partnerships with others.

### ***Components for Building Leadership (CBL)***

Table 7 shows the components required for building leadership within the organization, such as training, certifications, education, and experience. The participants selected the top three components necessary for building leadership for a chief officer within the organization. The number one represents the essential component necessary for building leadership, while the number four represents the component not selected. Again the participants were asked to rank their top three components and explain why they ranked them. Each component has a total value that represents the chosen value placed on its importance by the participants. The lower the total value, the higher the priority. This data will help the organization understand what components are necessary for building strong leadership within the department.

The data shows that the participants identified experience as an essential CBL within the organization. One participant stated that experience makes us who we are as leaders within the organization. A second participant noted that experience is necessary as a leader to do their job. A third participant stated that experience is the most important

because it builds on a cognitive base to respond and build on other items that add to an individual's growth and ability as a leader.

The second component identified as necessary for building leadership within the organization is education. One participant in the study stated that a leader has to educate themselves on something before doing or performing it. Another participant stated that education gives specific knowledge. This participant stated that education consists of past experiences and trials necessary to make decisions today. Overall, many participants indicated that education is required to validate a leader's knowledge.

The participants collectively identified training as the third necessary component for building strong leadership within the organization. One participant stated that an individual could receive feedback on the subject at hand through training, identifying any weaknesses and strengths. Another participant noted that a leader could gain preparation and decision-making ability through training. A third participant stated that training creates a pattern response that allows for a natural and comfortable interaction of life and work situations.

The participants identified certifications as the least necessary component needed for building leadership by department chief officers, although some considered it essential. The participants viewed certifications as a way of validating what an individual has already learned through years of experience, education, and training. Although the participating chief officers had different opinions of which components were necessary for building leadership within the organization, they all agreed that they were essential to achieve the goal of building strong leadership within the organization.

**Table 5***Necessary Components for Building Leadership*

| Chief Officer | Training | Certification | Education | Experience |
|---------------|----------|---------------|-----------|------------|
| CO2           | 2        | 4             | 3         | 1          |
| CO4           | 3        | 4             | 2         | 1          |
| CO6           | 2        | 4             | 3         | 1          |
| CO9           | 2        | 4             | 3         | 1          |
| CO10          | 2        | 4             | 1         | 3          |
| CO12          | 3        | 2             | 4         | 1          |
| CO14          | 2        | 4             | 1         | 3          |
| CO16          | 3        | 4             | 1         | 2          |
| CO18          | 3        | 4             | 2         | 1          |
| CO21          | 2        | 4             | 3         | 1          |
| CO23          | 4        | 3             | 2         | 1          |
| CO24          | 2        | 3             | 4         | 1          |
| Totals        | 30       | 44            | 29        | 17         |

*Four Components of Transformational Leadership*

These four components can benefit the organization in building strong leadership within the department. Seven out of the 12 participants felt that the organization utilizes transformational leadership to its fullest. Other participants did not feel the department utilizes the entire spectrum but only certain aspects of this leadership style. Eight out of the 12 participants stated that the department also utilizes coach-style leadership. The four participants who decided no for coach-style leadership noted that the department did not utilize this leadership style. The following table shows the department chief officers' perception of the importance of the four components of transformational leadership on a scale of one thru four, with one being the essential component.

**Table 6***Four Components of Transformational Leadership*

| Chief Officer | II | IC | IS | IM |
|---------------|----|----|----|----|
| CO2           | 2  | 3  | 4  | 1  |
| CO4           | 1  | 4  | 2  | 3  |
| CO6           | 2  | 3  | 4  | 1  |
| CO9           | 2  | 4  | 3  | 1  |
| CO10          | 3  | 1  | 4  | 2  |
| CO12          | 4  | 2  | 3  | 1  |
| CO14          | 1  | 3  | 4  | 2  |
| CO16          | 3  | 4  | 1  | 2  |
| CO18          | 3  | 4  | 1  | 2  |
| CO21          | 4  | 2  | 3  | 1  |
| CO23          | 2  | 3  | 4  | 1  |
| CO24          | 2  | 4  | 1  | 3  |
| Totals        | 29 | 37 | 34 | 20 |

The table 6 identified the order of importance for the four components of transformational leadership. The data identified inspirational motivation (20) as the number one component. One participant stated that inspiration is needed for many personnel. Although and individuals can inspire themselves, can they inspire others? Idealized influencer (29) is the second most important component of transformational leadership. Here, the leader develops a shared vision with the other employees to improve the relationship between the leaders and the employee. One participant stated that a positive relationship could enhance the organization and create a sense of trust, especially when the leader's vision is clear. Knowing the organization's path will give current and future leaders a feeling of belonging and responsibility for the organization's future success. Intellectual Stimulation was identified as the third valued component among the four. Here the leader propels knowledge sharing, and one of the participating chief

officers stated that a leader could improve the department by generating new ideas. The fourth and last component was individual consideration, in which one participant said that identifying the needs of the employee will induce positivity and understanding among the personnel. The participants all agreed that this would allow the person to be placed where they would be more beneficial to the organization.

The four components of transformational leadership were all valued as essential for building strong leadership within the organization by the participating chief officers. However, some had a difference of opinion on their order of importance. Three out of the 12 chief officers stated that the four components were an example of the required values needed to be a progressive leader for this fire service organization. Ten out of the 12 participants identified that a strong leader may not necessarily have all four components but may only need two or three of the components to develop into a strong leader.

### **Interpretation of Findings**

Utilizing Tech's eight-step process and the data collected from the interviews of the participants, the following categories were the result of the coding system used. First, the interview questions asked whether the chief officers participating in the study considered transformational leadership or coach-style leadership as the more dominant leadership style used within the organization. The participants identified PLS as a category from these questions.

Next, the data from the interview questions found that transformational leadership was the more dominant leadership style within the organization. The interviews asked questions regarding the characteristics of transformational leadership and which

characteristics the participants perceived as the most important and why. From this data, the participants identified, LC as a category.

From the data collected within the interviews, as a reminder, transformational leadership is identified as the dominant leadership style within the department. The next category identified from the data collected within the interviews is related to the four components of transformational leadership, the dominant leadership style utilized within the organization. The participants ranked the four components of their significance to a leader's ability, and the following category, CL, was identified.

The data collected during the interviews asked the chief officers participating in the study what they perceived as the top five essential KSAs of a chief officer within the organization, which is the leadership position within the organization. The KSAs are necessary for the leadership position within the organization, so the category of RKSAs was found by utilizing the Tech's eight-step coding system.

Training, certifications, education, and experience are components to building strong leadership. The category, CBL was identified from the data collected during the interviews. Lastly, the study participants were asked their thoughts on their training and what helped them the most. During the interviews, the participants identified what aspects of the chief officer job a new chef officer needs to know. The participants identified PLS as a category from these questions.

The following are the evaluation and recommendations that resulted from the analysis and synthesis of the data collected. This section will also outline the study's

implications for the client organization and what positive study's implications will have on social change.

### ***Components for Building Leadership (CBL)***

**Education.** According to the data collected, education is the second most crucial component and is a vital tool within the fire service. The IAFC and NFPA (2012) stressed the importance of education in the various emergency response fields; both associations desired to create thinkers that can adjust to the dynamics of the situation at hand. During the interviews, the participants identified why they feel education is essential. They perceived that education provides personnel with the ability to apply practical strategies to a dynamic emergency. Education gives leaders the knowledge to complete risk analysis of an emergency scene. Education offers leaders the ability to use the appropriate tactical efficiency while applying the proper safety rules for the situation. For future leaders and even current leaders of the organization looking to strengthen their KSAs, planning their education is vital.

**Experience.** This is an accumulation of years of hard work, determination, and dedication. Many decisions will take place based on looking back at challenges and successes, which helped an individual arrive at the point of a chief officer. Data collected from the participants showed that they perceive that an individual's experience can dictate how they direct, oversee, and evaluate on-scene emergency operations, which is vital for leaders of the organization. Data also showed that experience would benefit a leader's daily activities and personnel issues. Lastly, the experience can affect how a leader trains and motivates subordinates. The chief officers for the organization



understand that during an employee's time in the department, they will encounter many different aspects of the fire service. The chief officers participating in the study perceived that experience within a particular department element would give confidence to current and future leaders of the organization to evaluate, plan, and communicate their decisions. Canton (2007), when discussing leadership and decision-making, expressed that leaders should demonstrate leadership in crises.

**Training.** According to the data collected, training is the third most crucial component for building strong leadership and comes in the form of courses and hands-on training taken over the years of the employee's time with the department. The participants within the study agreed that training builds and strengthens the foundation for a leader KSAs. Training is a psychomotor and hands-on skill learned (IAFC & NFPA, 2012). Training deals with the technical knowledge of accomplishing a task (Edwards, 2010). The data within this study identified that training is the technical knowledge needed to complete a hands-on skill. The participants stated that training is necessary to master the job, perfect the skills, and remain ready for any leadership situation. The chief officers agreed that training creates a pattern for response and allows for a natural and comfortable interaction to life and work situations that can benefit leaders.

**Certifications.** The data identified certifications as the fourth most crucial component for building leadership. Many of the participants feel that certifications are received when training is received. Some of the participants within the study did agree that certifications validate the ability to complete skills and abilities and acknowledge needed to complete a particular task. The overall perception of the need for certifications

for building leadership is that it is not as important as the other components, but it can help.

### ***Components of Leadership (CL)***

Understanding these components gives members of the department in senior leadership positions the knowledge of how to continue building a department with vision, knowledge sharing, empowerment, and inspiration. As Sayyadi (2020) explained, transformational leadership over the years has become the most dominant approach to leadership today, widely used today by many companies around the world.

**Idealized Influence.** This was identified as the second most crucial component of leadership, which helps develop a vision. That vision is shared with the employee to improve the relationship between the employee and the leader. This style will help instill pride and confidence in members of the department. Department employees will be more willing to express their values and beliefs and put the organization's mission before their interests.

**Individualized Consideration.** This was identified as the fourth most crucial component of leadership, here the leader concentrates on identifying the employee's individual needs. The leaders will also empower followers to build a learning climate and support toward the goals and objectives of the organization. Organization leaders will have to consider employees' different abilities and needs. Understanding the employee's needs, department leadership can develop various training programs to develop their strengths and build on their knowledge, skills, and abilities by understanding their needs.

**Intellectual Stimulation.** This was identified as the third most crucial component of leadership, which will propel knowledge sharing in the department to generate more innovative ideas and solutions for new and demanding issues that come up constantly in the dynamic world of the fire service. Organization leadership must emphasize effective communication and coordination between the many divisions that make up the leadership continuum. Through this collective coordination, new ideas may emerge that will lead the department into the future.

**Inspirational Motivation.** This was identified as the most crucial component of leadership, which helps a leader focus on inspiring employees and not treating them as human assets but as a necessity. Inspirational motivation sets a higher level of desired expectations through emotional stimulus. Inspirational motivation gives the organization's employees looking to be leaders an optimistic view for the future. Inspirational motivation also gives them enthusiasm and confidence to achieve their leadership goals within the department.

Transformational leaders help followers grow and develop into leaders. Leadership growth and development can be accomplished by responding to the employee's individual needs and by empowering them by aligning the objectives and goals of the organization. For the employees and the department leaders, leadership development is accomplished to replenish and strengthen the current Leadership within the department. Organization leaders must focus on implementing the department's vision by empowering its employees and providing them with an example of the hard work needed to transform the organization, its culture, and its trajectory for success.

Transformational leadership will challenge department leaders to be innovative problem solvers and develop their follower's leadership capacity via coaching, mentoring, and development.

### ***Leadership Characteristics (LC)***

Data collected during the study identified on a scale of 1 thru 10 the importance of the ten characteristics of transformational leadership, the preferred leadership style chosen by the organization. Developing leadership ability begins with identifying the characteristic of a leader and enhancing them. The following are the 10 characteristics for building leadership in order of importance placed within the data by the participants.

**Leading With Vision.** The participating chief officers identified leading with a vision as the most important characteristic needed for building leadership. The perception of the chief officers is that transformational leaders will set a realistic and achievable vision for the organization. They will communicate their ideas and take note of the opinions of their employees.

**Controlling Their Ego.** The second most crucial component for building leadership, according to data collected, is for a leader to keep their ego under control and not let it interfere with the organization's best interest. One chief officer stated that when leaders control their ego, it establishes an organizational atmosphere of success. Several chief officers said that having an ego can prevent listening and prevent trust among leaders and employees.

**Proactive.** The third characteristic is being proactive. Transformational leaders are visionary in their approach to the success of the organization. One of the participants

stated that when a leader has an assertive style, they can minimize and even prevent mistakes. Many participants said that being proactive help anticipate issues and contingencies.

**Making Difficult Decisions.** The fourth characteristic shown within the data is making difficult organizational decisions. Transformational leaders do not shy away from difficult decisions. One chief officer stated that a strong leader has to make the tough decision, although it may not be the most popular decision. All chief officers agreed in their interviews that a difficult decision has to be made for the organization's success.

**Consider New Ideas.** Organization leaders need to learn to be open to new ideas, which is the fifth leadership characteristic needed by the organizations leaders to build on their leadership development. One chief officer stated that a strong leader must be open to new ideas. Being open to new ideas will help the organization grow and meet the needs of the employees and the public it serves. These new ideas stated by the participants can range from advanced equipment to new training requirements.

**Ability to Take Risk.** The sixth most crucial characteristic is the ability to take risks. Department leaders must trust their instinct and use the intelligence gathered by team members to make informed decisions. They seek input from their followers to make decisions for the organization.

**Inspiration.** The seventh characteristic for a leader shown in the data, would be inspiration. Organization leaders must learn to inspire their followers. They must have the ability to motivate others and treat each employee as a valued individual. One participant stated that an inspirational leader could affect the morale of an organization in a positive

way. The idea is that this positive inspiration will boost the outcome of the employee's responsibilities.

**Adaptability.** Organization leaders must constantly adapt to the new changing work environment. Recent changes in new technology, training requirements and employee motivational beliefs can come. One participant stated that the fire service is constantly changing, and the organization must adapt to these changes. The participant noted that this would be the only way the organization could meet the needs of the public.

**Collective Consciousness.** The ninth leadership characteristic, is to share a collective consciousness. Organization leaders must consider the feelings of their followers to obtain a clear direction of the organization and achieve a collective consciousness for the organization. One participant stated that having a collective conscience will help the leader receive buy-in from their employees. All the participants said that having buy-in from all the employees will solidify the success of the organization's mission.

**Self-Management.** This is the last characteristic needed in leadership. A fire service organization leader should be highly motivated and require little to no direction. They must love their jobs and be motivated. One participant stated that self-managing displays the ability to lead yourself and lead others. Eight out of the 12 participants indicated that none of the other characteristics could exist unless leaders manage themselves.

### ***Personal Development Needs (PDN)***

The study participants expressed that they would have liked many of the aspects identified in the other categories of this study. Such as training on relating to employees, being open to change, the ability to listen and take advice from others, and experience, to mention a few. Some participants also noted that the employees looking to develop their leadership skills must also have self-motivation and determination. The organization's current and future leaders should identify these personal development needs to solidify the building of solid leadership within the organization.

### ***Preferred Leadership Style (PLS)***

The two leadership styles, transformational and coach-style, were described to each participant for the study. They were then asked whether the leadership style represented what they know the organizational leadership to be today. According to the data collected from the participants, eight out of the 12 participants feel that the department utilizes transformational leadership. In comparison, the other four participants perceive that the department uses coach-style leadership. From the data collected, the participant identified that the organization desires to create an atmosphere of success and encourage members to accept one vision, which is in line with the characteristics of transformational leadership. Participants also identified that the organization desires to assign members in positions based on their talents, knowledge, and comfort zone, aligning with coach-style leadership.

When the participants were questioned about whether they preferred one leadership style over the other during the interviews, all the participants perceived

transformational leadership as the preferred leadership style of the department. When asked why they perceive it as the leadership style for the department, all 12 participants confirmed that this is the select leadership style in the fire service nationwide, and it fits the mission and goals of the department.

***Required Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities (RKSA)***

This research study accomplished an understanding of the KSAs required for leadership positions within the department. These KSAs are a set of competencies required for all positions within the department, and each position has its own set related to the requirements for that particular position. For this study, we are focusing on the position of chief officer for the organization.

During the interviews, many participants expressed that the KSAs measure an individual's ability to complete a task successfully and efficiently and show their competency in that particular skill or ability. A reminder that fire service leaders created a set of examinations for competency development of knowledge, skills, and abilities to further validate the fire service as a professional body (Sylves, 2015). These KSAs provide a guide and a measurement for all department employees that strive through training and educational development to be future leaders within the fire service profession.

The data collected for the study shows that the participants perceived that the order of importance for the KSAs is as follows. First, DMS which provides a leader with the ability to process information and choose between two or more alternatives. Second, HRS, provides a leader with the ability to create relationships and interact healthily with



others. Third, OCS, which is the ability to communicate ideas and thoughts to others verbally. Fourth, SS, which is having the ability to interact with others, monitor, and dictate tasks. Fifth, TK; here the leader will have a specialized skill or expertise in an area.

The data also identifies that current and future leaders must learn to be decision-makers to build strong leadership within the organization. Leaders must develop HRS. Perfect their oral communication and develop their SS. They must also increase and develop their TK. Based on the order of importance, the recommendation is that future and current leaders for the organization begin their leadership development by learning how to make decisions.

### **Unanticipated Limitations or Outcomes**

I found several unanticipated outcomes. Before the interviews, one chief officer within the organization retired. During the selection of the chief officers, the previously selected chief officer was number eight in the selection process. In order to compensate for the retired participant, the next chief officer in selection process was interviewed, which was participant number nine. The retirement also resulted in the sample population being twelve instead of thirteen. Although this was unanticipated, it did not cause any limitations to occur that would impact the outcome of the study. The study outcomes had minor variations from what you may have expected. Two chief officers perceived that education was the most essential component for building leadership, even though they did not have post education degrees. This was unanticipated as most participants who did

not have post education did not feel it was the most important when the four post education participants perceived it as the essential component for building leadership.

Another unanticipated outcome of the study was that several of the participants conferred with transformational leadership as the style of leadership represented within the organization but commented that there were some aspects of the leadership style that the current leaders failed to utilize effectively. Within transformational leadership, the leaders should create a feeling of trust, admiration, loyalty, and respect. However, based on the interviews, five out of the twelve participants stated that the organization has leaders in top positions that create distrust within the department. Six out of the 12 participating chief officers also said that there is a lack of respect between leaders within the organization, which was an additional unanticipated outcome within the study.

These unanticipated outcomes are not detrimental to the study results but need to be identified to the organization and corrected within the department. Identifying issues and correcting them is the benefit of recognizing these unanticipated limitations and outcomes.

### **Implications Resulting From Findings**

#### ***For the Client Organization***

For the organization, the findings will explain how critical it is to have a recipe for building strong leadership within the organization. The results will help solidify the organization's effectiveness currently and for the future. Over the years, the criterion for building strong leadership has diminished through complacency, retirements, lack of

recruitment, or failure to develop leadership. The study's findings will guide the replacement of the lost leadership for the organization.

The findings from the study will identify which KSAs are required to be leaders within their organization. The results will determine which leadership characteristics are needed to be a leader for the organization. The study's findings will also identify which components are required to build leadership for the organization, such as education, training, certifications, and experience. All the results above will be the basis for developing a plan outline for building strong leadership within the organization. The implications for the organization are building strong leadership for current and future leaders within the organization.

### ***For Positive Social Change***

As discussed earlier within this study, there is a belief that there can be a change in an individual's social, professional, and personal livelihood through solid leadership. By identifying what makes a good leader, we can provide individualized guidance on leadership and a model for achieving it. If a person desires, regardless of sex, race, economic background, or cultural background, they will be able to enhance their leadership ability, which should increase their social standing, professional standing, and personal livelihood with the world, organizations, and communities.

### **Recommendations**

The recommended solution for the organization will be a leadership development plan outline that will utilize the findings of this study, which are the guidelines for building strong leadership for the organization. The organization can create a group that

can develop a plan structured for leadership development based on the following guidelines identified within the participants' data.

### **Components of Leadership (CL)**

The elements of leadership are what a leader needs to develop a vision shared with the employees within the organization to improve the relationship between the leader and the employee.

### **Required Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities (RKSA)**

The leadership development plan outline will also utilize the RKSA's identified as essential to the leadership development within the organization. Within this leadership development plan, current and future leaders of the organization will see competencies required for leadership positions within the organization and can develop the KSAs to meet those competencies such as SS, JS, and HRS.

### **Components for Building Leadership (CBL)**

The leadership development plan outline will also utilize the building leadership components identified within the study. The project will identify the needed experience, education, training, and certifications to build the employee's leadership ability and enhance their development. The plan will stress the importance of each component based on the data received from the participants. Understanding that experience was identified as the number one essential component, the project will identify needed experience for strengthening leadership development.

**Leadership Characteristics (LC)**

The leadership development plan outline will utilize the identified required LC and the PDN of the employee discussed within the findings of this study. The project will identify the 10 elements needed to be a strong leader and which skills to develop and strengthen the employee's leadership skills.

**Personal Development Needs (PDN)**

The leadership development plan outline will create a vision and professional development and make development goals clear and precise for the employee utilizing the preceding development needs and the employee's own perceived PDN. This leadership development plan outline will help develop the employee's individual needs. As one of the participants stated, understanding the employee's needs and providing that need gives the perception that the leader cares about the employee.

**Preferred Leadership Style (PLS)**

Transformational leadership was identified by the study participants as the leading leadership style used within the organization. Understanding the aspects of transformational leadership, the participants concluded this leadership style as the most utilized and desired style for the organization. The leadership development plan outline will provide direction to current and future leaders based on all the aspects of transformational leadership.

With a leadership development plan outline, each employee will understand where they are in their current leadership development and their needs for future leadership development, which is designed based on the data retrieved during the study.

The leadership development plan outline will also encourage professional growth for the employee and future leader and strengthen the organization's effectiveness by building strong leadership within the organization.

### **Strengths and Limitations of the Study**

Every organization needs current and future leaders for their continued success. To maintain this leadership stability, the organization must know the leadership makeup for their organization and how to build and strengthen that leadership. The strength of this study is that the results will provide a guide for any organization that needs to make strong leadership for current and future leaders. Although the main focus of this study is the fire service, the study can be correlated to any organization based on its perception of what leadership is.

Based on the focus of this study and the desired outcome, the only limitation identified for this study would be that fact that there were only male participants for this study, which did not influence the outcome in anyway. As mentioned, many organizations can use this study earlier as a reference for building leadership. The only restriction would be whether the personnel within the organization will be willing to participate and be honest in their perception of what leadership should be for the organization. This study mentioned to the participants to eliminate personal agendas from their answers to get accurate and correct data. In this study, all participants were honest and free of secret plans when being interviewed and answering the questions.

## Summary

This fire service provider is a proud organization with a long history that dates back to the 1800s. In recent years the organization lost a lot of its leadership to retirements. To secure its future, the organization needed a plan for building strong leadership. To bridge this knowledge gap, the study was conducted with 12 participants from the leadership rank within the department. The makeup of the 12 participants was all male, people of color, and four with post education. The participants were all in the position of chief officer within the department.

The evidence was collected from interviews and a questionnaire with the participants. All discussions went as planned with no issues. The strategy for coding the data received was an eight-step process used to create categories that will be applied to the department's plan for building future strong leadership. The findings showed the PLS for the organization, the RKSA's, and the components and characteristics needed for building leadership within the department. The implications for the organization is an understanding of what is necessary to build strong leadership within the department. Positive social change can come from this study through increased economic status and social status based on the strengths of increased leadership abilities. The power of this study is that any organization can incorporate it for building strong leadership.

### Section 5: Dissemination Plan

The plan for disseminating the work of this study, as discussed earlier, will be completed by the fire chief of the study site organization. The fire chief will send out an interdepartmental memorandum to all department personnel and instruct his information technology personnel to upload this memorandum to the organization's web page for viewing by all department personnel and departmental recordkeeping.

My plan is to send a memorandum to the fire chief of the organization describing the organization's need for the study and the sample population used for the analysis without identifying the participants as well as presenting the results of the research and how they will help the organization build strong leadership.

#### **Summary**

Through this study, organization leaders will be more willing to express their values and beliefs and put their mission before their interests. Department leaders will have a guide for understanding the employees' PDNs, certification requirements, required experience, and educational and training requirements to develop their strengths and build on their KSAs as a leader. Organization leadership will learn the importance of effective communication and coordination skills that are needed within the administration. With the findings of this study, organization leadership can also see the results of the collective coordination of new ideas that will emerge and lead the department into the future for continued effectiveness as a leading fire department. The results of this study is a guide for organizational employees looking to be leaders and will



provide an optimistic view for the future and provide them with the enthusiasm and confidence to be strong leaders within the department.

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## Appendix A: Deliverable Memorandum

**MEMORANDUM**

To: Fire Chief

From: E. D. Gauntt, Chief of Operations

Date: March 23, 2022

Re: Recommendation Memorandum with a Leadership Development Plan Outline

**Introduction**

This fire service organization has a top-down leadership structure that dictates the flow of information and its service to the community, which is the case nationwide for many fire service organizations. As we know, leadership will make an organization operate efficiently and effectively. The higher the leadership level, the higher the potential of any organization, more specifically this fire service organization. It is critical to have a recipe for building strong leadership within our organization to solidify the current effectiveness of the organization and its future potential.

**Background**

The leadership diminished within the organization due to the loss of leadership from retirements. The organization's leadership understood that it was essential to develop a plan to build strong leadership throughout the organization and replace the administration lost. This organization has a professional reputation as a competent organization with a quality of excellence as its standard for performance. This study, Building Strong Leadership within a Fire Service Organization, is essential for our

organization's leadership development framework, based around the competencies needed by our current and future leaders to be successful at their job responsibilities.

### **Participants**

To understand what is needed to build and develop the leadership for the current and future employees within the organization, it was vital to understand the current perception of leadership for the organization. To accomplish this task, chief officers, who are considered the leading rank in the organization, were chosen to be the participants within the study. Twelve chief officers participated in the study. I have interviewed the 12 chief officers to gather data on the research question of, what the perspective is of current leadership as to what is expected of leaders concerning required education, experience, training, and certifications for leadership development within the organization to replace leadership lost. The participants identified the style of leadership utilized within the department. They identified the required knowledge, skills, and abilities (RKSAs) of a leader. The chief officers also recognized and rated the importance of experience, education, training, and certifications in leadership development.

### **Critical Findings**

Analyzing the data collected during the interviews identified the following essential findings. The participants for the study identified transformational leadership as the leadership style most utilized within the organization and the most desired leadership style for the organization. The participants also identified transformational leadership as the desired leadership style for the organization. The participants also identified leadership characteristics (LC) that all organizational leaders need to develop, such as

applying inspirational motivation, creating intellectual stimulation, promoting individualized consideration, and idealized influence. The participants also identified the necessary components for building leadership (CBL): educational needs, experience requirements, training needs, and required certifications. The participants also identified the RKSAAs necessary for building leadership. During the interviews, the participants also expressed personal development needs (PDN) they felt were essential to their development as leaders. These key findings were identified from the data collected during the interviews and used to recommend you for building strong leadership within the organization.

### **Recommendation**

The recommendation to the organization is a leadership development plan outline applying the findings of this study. The leadership development plan outline will create employee vision and professional development and make leadership development goals clear and precise. A leadership development plan outline will contain actions that current and future leaders can follow daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly. The project will detail the RKSAAs of the position, the LC and components of leadership building required of a chief officer, and the required years of experience, educational levels, training, and certifications as shown below.

#### Leadership Development Plan Outline

##### I. Preferred Leadership Style (PLS)

###### 1. Transformational Leadership

##### II. Components of Leadership

###### 1. Idealized Influence

###### 2. Individualized Consideration

3. Intellectual Stimulation

4. Inspirational Motivation

### III. Leadership Characteristics (LC)

1. Ten Characteristic of Leadership

a. Controlling their ego

b. Self-management

c. Ability to take risks

d. Make difficult organizational decisions

e. Share collective consciousness

f. Inspirational

g. Consider new ideas

h. Adaptability

i. Proactive

j. Lead with vision

### IV. Components for Building Leadership (CBL)

1. Experience

2. Education

3. Training

4. Certifications

### V. Required Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities (RKSA)

1. Decision-Making Skills

2. Human-Relation Skills

3. Oral Communication Skills

4. Supervising Skills

5. Technical Knowledge

### VI. Personal Development Needs (PDN)

1. Thoughts on a leaders own development.

2. Most desired development need of the employee.



Cultivating self-awareness is key to encouraging employees to take on leadership positions within the organization. Within the development plan outline, the employee will understand where they are in their leadership development, and they can also identify any personal development needs for future leadership development. Far too many organizations live in the present while not fully thinking about the future of their organization until an unexpected change occurs. Still, by identifying the needs of our current and future leaders, our organization can invest in its future success.

### **Summary**

This study is conducted and tailored to help your organization build the leadership ranks based on your current leading chief officers' perception of leadership. The results of this study can be placed on your department web page to inform all department personnel of the required characteristic, components, KSAs, and PDN necessary for building leadership abilities. At the same time, you understand what is needed to make the organization's leadership and incorporate the information into a leadership development plan. The leadership development plan outline will create a leadership vision and leadership development. A leadership development plan outline will also make development goals clear and precise.

## Appendix B: Interview Questions

**Interview Questions**

Candidate selection number: \_\_\_\_\_ Candidates Name: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Although there are several common leadership styles, transformational leadership and coach-style leadership are the two most common styles of leadership within the fire service. Based on your experience in the organization, which of the two styles would you say is the main leadership style used in this department today and why?

**Transformational Leadership:** Transformational leaders concentrate their efforts on transforming their employees to support each other and the organization. A transformational leader can create a feeling of trust, admiration, loyalty, and respect within the organization, and because of this, they are willing to work harder. Does this represent the leadership style at the organization? Why or why not?

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**Coach-Style Leadership:** Coach-style leadership, which focuses on identifying and nurturing the strengths of each leading member of the department. Coach-style leadership encourages coming up with a strategic plan to help the growth and development of the organization's members.

Does this represent the leadership style at the organization? Why or why not?

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2. There are ten characteristics of transformational leadership and they are in this list I am handing to you. I would like your perspective of ranking them in order from the most significant characteristic to the least significant characteristic for building leadership within the organization. After you complete your ranking, then I would like to discuss why you ranked them in this order

1) Controlling their ego: 1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9  
10

Why: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

2) Self-management: 1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9  
10

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Why: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3) Ability to take risks: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9  
10

Why: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4) Make difficult organizational decisions:  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9  
10

Why: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5) Share collective consciousness:  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9  
10

Why: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

6) Inspirational: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9  
10

Why: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

7) Consider new ideas: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9  
10

Why: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

8) Adaptability: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9  
10

Why: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

9) Proactive:            1        2        3        4        5        6        7        8        9  
                                  10

Why: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

10) Lead with Vision: 1        2        3        4        5        6        7        8        9  
                                  10

Why: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**3.** The four components of transformational leadership are provided in this list I am handing to you.

- Which of these components would you identify as the number 1, most vital component for a leader, and why?
- Which would you rank as second most vital? And why?
- Which would you rank as third most vital? And why?
- Why did you rank the remaining component last?

**A) Idealized Influence.** Here the leader develops a vision and that vision is shared with the employee to improve the relationship between the employee and the leader. \_\_\_\_ /  
 Why: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**B) Individualized Consideration.** Here the leader concentrates on identifying the individual needs of the employee. \_\_\_\_ /  
 Why: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**C) Intellectual Stimulation.** The leaders will propel knowledge sharing in the department to generate more innovative ideas and solutions for new and demanding issues. \_\_\_\_ /  
 Why: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**D) Inspirational Motivation.** Where leaders focus on inspiring employees and do not just treat them as human assets but as a necessity. \_\_\_\_ /  
 Why: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

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4. Within couch-style leadership, a strategic plan is vital to the development of leaders. How important to you is a strategic plan for your development as a leader? and how do you feel it will be beneficial to you?

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5. Coach-style leadership is characterized by two aspects, partnerships with others and collaboration with others. This makes this leadership adaptable to any situation based on the personnel involved.

- What are your thoughts on the importance of collaboration with others as a leader?
- What are your thoughts on the importance of partnership with others as a leader??

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6. Let's discuss training, certifications, education, and experience as necessary components for building strong leadership. Which of those four do you think is the most important? And why?

7. Which would you rank second and why?

8. Third and why?

7. Here is a list of the required knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) for the chief officer leadership position. What are the top five essential KSAs that you would identify as significant to the position for leadership development and why? (A list of the KSAs will be provided for this discussion)

8. What are your thoughts on your training to be a chief officer? What helped you the most? And what was missing that you wished you would have received?

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9. What is your opinion are the most important aspects of the chief officer job that new chief officers need to know?

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10. Do you have anything else that you would like to share that might be important as the organization develops a new approach to training?

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