

LOS ANGELES FIRE DEPARTMENT



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FIRE CHIEF

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BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS
FILE NO. 15-014

TO: Board of Fire Commissioners

FROM: Ralph M. Terrazas, Fire Chief

SUBJECT: LOS ANGELES FIRE DEPARTMENT (LAFD) CADET PROGRAM
ACTION PLAN OVERVIEW

FINAL ACTION:	<input type="checkbox"/> Approved	<input type="checkbox"/> Approved w/Corrections	<input type="checkbox"/> Withdrawn
	<input type="checkbox"/> Denied	<input type="checkbox"/> Received & Filed	<input type="checkbox"/> Other

SUMMARY

As directed by the Board of Fire Commissioners, the LAFD is providing an overview of the LAFD Cadet Program and Action Plan to augment and enhance the current youth curriculum to ensure and apply predictability, structure, and functionality to the LAFD Cadet Program.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Board:
Receive and file this report.

DISCUSSION

The mission of the LAFD Cadet Program is to educate, train, and inspire the cadets so that each develops a positive self-image, to explore the profession of firefighter as a career choice and provide youth access to LAFD members along with positive adult role models within their own communities.

The LAFD Cadet Program is designed to reach youth in every community throughout the City of Los Angeles. The LAFD Cadet Program strongly emphasizes leadership, character building, discipline, academic excellence, and life skills.

The LAFD is recognized as a preeminent leader in the fire service whose members (a major source of volunteers for the LAFD Cadet Program) are leaders of character, the bedrock of our professional ethics, and a principal source of intellectual capital for the LAFD in assisting the youth in our communities.

By continuing to focus on working as one team, communicating with each other, and remaining aligned with the mission, objectives, and values of the LAFD, we will ensure that the seven identified goals of the Action Plan, listed below, are achieved. These goals will ultimately coincide with the LAFD's Strategic Plan:

1. Develop the LAFD Cadet Program with effective administration of the Program in the areas of predictability, structure, and functionality. Expand our partnerships, collaboration, youth opportunities, volunteer advocacy, and command guidance to link the LAFD Cadet Program with the overall LAFD Strategic Plan 2015-2017.

Goal 1 provides strategic guidance to accomplish its mission as the needs and resources of the LAFD evolve in the next several years: to educate, train, and inspire the cadets so that each develops a positive self-image, to explore the profession of firefighter as a career choice and to provide youth access to LAFD members along with positive adult role models within their own communities. Goal 1 aligns with the collaboration aspects of Goal 2.

2. Establish, support, and foster collaboration and partnerships within the community and with other significant entities in order to develop the requisite skills and abilities in our youth, leverage the intellectual capital of LAFD, exchange knowledge with others, and remain connected to the higher education community.

Goal 2 recognizes that the cadet and youth programs are enhanced when it engages with other institutions, agencies, and partners. These collaborations and partnerships support the success of the LAFD, reinforce the strategic communication and transparency objectives in Goal 5. Partnerships also facilitate program and curriculum development and comparative benchmarking with others to help assess, improve, and implement a fundamentally sound youth program.

3. Develop character and leadership qualities in a structured, friendly, and professional setting committed to the core values of the LAFD and professional excellence. The LAFD Cadet Program provides youth with positive adult and peer role models in a safe and supervised environment and ensures that participants are college and career ready.

Goal 3 concentrates efforts on the principal focus of the LAFD Cadet Program. We must attract and admit quality young men and women and then develop them as cadets throughout the LAFD Cadet Program experience. The LAFD Cadet Program Manual and development system will describe the process of cadet development across all aspects of cadet growth. Through the achievement of the objectives supporting this goal, LAFD will provide high-quality cadets that are assets in their communities and for recruitment, mentoring, and eventual hiring consideration.

4. Solidify and expand the LAFD Cadet Program's connection to the LAFD by aligning the youth development programs with Department and City of Los Angeles initiatives, standards, plans, programs, and policies and providing essential intellectual capital to help meet LAFD and Citywide challenges.

Goal 4 focuses effort on the importance of the inextricable link between the LAFD and the cadet and youth development programs. As both a paramilitary organization and a community focused Department, the cadet and youth programs are unique opportunities within the LAFD that must be organized to meet the community and emergency response needs for generations. Close connection to the LAFD ensures that the LAFD Cadet Program continues to align with both current policies and future needs, including employment opportunities, not only by admitting participants, but also by serving as a repository of knowledge and intellectual strength for the future of the youth Programs.

5. Effectively communicate with appropriate audiences to tell the story of cadet and youth programs in order to generate a broad understanding, advocacy, and support for Cadet Program and the LAFD.

Goal 5 expands on the connections with the LAFD discussed in Goal 4, and focuses our effort to ensure our internal and external audiences and stakeholders are well-informed on major, positive changes of the LAFD Cadet Program in all domains that reflect success, adaptation, and innovation. That includes proactively explaining successes and effectively responding to inquiries to provide the most accurate information. Goal 5 is also linked to Goal 7 relative to gaining economic support for the program.

6. Attract, recruit, retain, and develop high-quality staff and faculty dedicated to leader development, professional and academic excellence, community involvement, and continuing growth.

Goal 6 recognizes that to produce exceptional youth (cadet, youth programs, etc.), everyone working with cadets must reflect the highest standards of professional expertise, leadership, and behavior inherent within LAFD values. The LAFD supports the development of staff and faculty so that they can be exemplary professional role models for cadets. Providing staff and faculty members from all backgrounds supports a blend of excellence that reflects diversity in LAFD and contributes to the collective strength of the cadet and youth Programs.

7. Sustain and improve administrative processes and infrastructure, committing to adapting and innovating during any economic era, including a period of declining resources.

Goal 7 concentrates on the efficiency and effectiveness of the processes that achieve all of the myriad tasks that together accomplish the mission of LAFD Cadet and Youth Programs. In a period of constrained resources, we must be agile enough to innovate and adapt, while ensuring that we comply with fiscal constraints, legal obligations, and other requirements. As changes continue relative to the LAFD Cadet Program, we must treat change as an opportunity rather than a disruption, continuing to align LAFD Cadet Program processes with the realities of a fast-paced, ever-evolving operating environment.

Current Program Overview

The current LAFD Cadet Program is largely operated through the utilization of members that volunteer their time and energy in support of the youth of our communities. The LAFD Cadet Program is designed to support young men and women within our communities in developing a positive self-image along with the opportunity to explore the profession of firefighting and/or emergency medical occupations as a potential career choice.

This program is a youth organization for candidates ages 14 through 20 and sponsored by the LAFD and chartered by the Mayor's Volunteer Program. Currently, the LAFD, under the umbrella of the LAFD Cadet Program, has 4 different avenues for participation.

The first program available to middle and high school aged students is the Fire Resource and Education (F.I.R.E.) Program which in association with the Los Angeles Unified School District provide opportunities for youth from the ages of 14 to 17 with an opportunity to learn the basic principles of fire science and the tools used by the firefighters and paramedics.

The second program under the cadet umbrella is the Fire Station Cadet Ride-a-long Program where youth and young adults from the ages of 14 to 21 participate in learning the basic requirements of becoming a firefighter and/or a paramedic and learn the responsibilities of the members who staff the resources deployed by the LAFD. In addition, once the Program participants reach a certain level of proficiency they can participate in and are allowed to ride along with the fire resources as an observer. The LAFD currently has 15 Fire Cadet Post locations strategically located in fire stations throughout the City of Los Angeles.

The third and fourth programs under this umbrella are for cadets who have reached the age of eighteen and have demonstrated a strong will to becoming a firefighter or paramedic by either applying to attend a regional fire academy or becoming a member of the Crew 3 Wildland Fire Program which offer the cadets who participate an opportunity to work as part of a Type II Wildland Camp Crew Member. Participation in the Crew 3 Program reinforces the need to build a strong team and positive work ethic by requiring the cadets to work together to accomplish and meet goals and objectives.

Strategic Environment for Program Development

For many years the LAFD has offered programs specifically developed for the youth of Los Angeles by demonstrating tremendous valor, honor, and understanding in developing life skills and leadership awareness.

LAFD Cadets have demonstrated skill in cultural adaptability, professionalism, and mission command in affiliation with active LAFD members, Cadet Post advisors, coordinators, and administrators. As we engage as a “metric driven, technologically sophisticated, community focused Department while being reflective of the people we serve” the cadet program will include new levels of complexity.

It will be characterized by increased focus on capacity across the full spectrum of operations, from humanitarian assistance and disaster preparedness and relief, to general emergency responses, and a need for increased academic and leadership awareness.

An effective LAFD response to this challenge will require a greater degree of intellectual capability, such as that provided by critical thinkers and creative problem solvers. To lead to a better future, the LAFD Cadet Program will need a strong foundation of values-based leadership skills and professional competence that are equally effective across the broad spectrum of communities we serve.

Strategic guidance from the LAFD emphasizes the importance of our core values. Those values define how and under what conditions we conduct ourselves and for cadets, they are also defined by a combination of values, the LAFD operational principles and vision. Our Cadets will need these collective attributes to guide them in the decisions they will make being leaders in their communities, as well as developing life skills and demonstrating character in the contemporary living and working environment.

In the coming years, the LAFD will develop, expand, and enhance the cadet and youth development programs that will span the spectrum of high school students to young adults including critical partnerships, conducting regular meetings, providing stability and a solid foundation to the program, as well as addressing emerging issues and requirements that affect communities. Through training, encouragement, and leadership awareness, our cadets will be able to make a positive impact across a wide spectrum of life issues.

Moreover, the LAFD Cadet Program’s engagement and youth involvement will be characterized by decentralized, complex interactions conducted in a joint, stakeholder and interdepartmental environment, in accordance with the doctrine of mission of the LAFD. The LAFD Cadet Program’s leader development process must instill intellectual and physical capacity to set the conditions for future success. It must also provide development experiences for cadets to develop an adaptive and open mindset towards academic excellence and enhancing their ability to live productive lives.

Development of the Cadet Action Plan, 2015-2017

This Action Plan provides strategic guidance for the LAFD Cadet Program to accomplish its mission as the needs and resources of the LAFD evolve in the next several years. It is based on partnerships, collaboration, command guidance, and previously developed plans and it links the LAFD Cadet Program with the overall LAFD Strategic Plan 2015-2017.

It ensures unity of effort among several operational level documents, including the LAFD Cadet Manual, Department Manual of Operation, and other key LAFD documents connected to the youth programs. These operational documents along with collaboration and critical input provide the overall campaign guidance to develop a more refined LAFD Cadet Program.

Development of the LAFD Cadet Program Plan also involves completing an in depth analysis of the LAFD Cadet Program's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT).

Increasing awareness of the LAFD Cadet Program's strengths enhances the prominence in knowledge of the LAFD and provides positive reinforcement to the Cadets and LAFD staff who have worked hard to develop those strengths, affirming their efforts to keep LAFD core values and operating principles at the forefront of cadet interaction. Identifying weaknesses in the program provides areas for the LAFD to apply additional attention and resources for improvement and eventually develop them into new program strengths.

Understanding the opportunities available for the academic portion of the program provides fresh ideas and potentially new resources for capitalizing on strengths or ameliorating weaknesses. Addressing threats to the LAFD Cadet Program is essential to continued success. Competing demands for resources throughout the City of Los Angeles and the LAFD could cause the program to lose ground and lessen its ability to maximize its opportunities.

With the mission of writing a new institutional LAFD Strategic Plan, the development of a more robust LAFD Cadet Program would align with the timeframe that would cover years 2015-2017.

Using previous cadet models and collaborating with key personnel, the aforementioned Cadet Strategic Goals were developed to be utilized as building blocks to begin articulating cadet priorities as goal statements. During the development phase of the LAFD Cadet Program, these goal statements will be supplemented, further developed, validated, and objectives included as indicators of success for each goal.

The LAFD Cadet Program will place strong emphasis on college and career readiness, leadership, character building, discipline, academic excellence, and life skills.

During their time in the LAFD Cadet Program, it is anticipated that cadets will receive instruction in an array of study domains that include:

- Leadership Training
- LAFD Vision, Core Values and Operating Principles
- Conflict Resolution
- Physical Fitness
- Life – Skills Education
- Cultural Diversity
- Financial Literacy
- Teen Community Emergency Response Team Training (CERT)
- Emergency Medical Technician I Training (EMT I)
- Fire Prevention

The list of study domains is not all inclusive as professional development and enhancement of the program continues. Through the active involvement of the Fire Commission, LAFD Personnel, and key partnerships (e.g., Los Angeles Unified School District, Los Angeles Police Department, Los Angeles Fire Foundation, United Firefighters of Los Angeles City, etc.) in the planning process, the LAFD Cadet Program development and implementation is an integral component of the overall LAFD Strategic Plan including the essential recruitment piece and succession planning.

Funding the Program

The current composition of the LAFD Cadet Program is structured around LAFD members that volunteer their time to manage and run the program. As the LAFD Cadet Program is developed and implemented and to ensure sustainability, the Department will research various manners in which to fund the program for the youth of our communities including variable staffing hours, fundraising, grants, donations, cost sharing, scholarships, and budget requests.

There are a number of private and non-profit entities that have supported LAFD youth programs in the past through financial and logistical support, as well as assisting to sustain the LAFD's community outreach program's growth and success. They include the following:

- Los Angeles Fire Foundation
- Motorola Solutions, Inc.
- Honda Motor Corporation Foundation
- Fire Academy Support Team (FAST) Foundation
- United Teachers of Los Angeles
- East Los Angeles College (ELAC)
- Neighborhood Councils

It is anticipated that the LAFD will maintain these relationships and continue to search for meaningful partnerships through a shared commitment to garner support for the LAFD Cadet Program.

CONCLUSION

The LAFD is recognized for leadership excellence throughout the Nation and around the world. To continue to be a world-renowned leader development institution, we must ensure that the LAFD Cadet Program grows and adapts to changes in the educational and real world environment.

This Action Plan coordinates the actions of LAFD members, the cadets, staff, stakeholders, and the community in supporting a common Action Plan to ensure that there is unity of effort. The success of the Action Plan is only as good as its execution. It is important that all members involved understand and follow this plan and then provide assessment and feedback so that the Action Plan can be improved in the future.

The Action Plan and indicators provide initial guidance with regard to the execution and assessment as a part of the LAFD's Strategic Plan, but it is the disciplined development and implementation of this plan that is critical to the continued success of the LAFD cadet and youth programs and its stakeholders.

Board report prepared by Richard F. Rideout, Deputy Chief, Training and Support Bureau.