

**Determining the Need to Better Prepare Personnel for Higher Levels of  
Responsibility, Job Performance, and Leadership within the Beavercreek Township  
Fire Department**

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A proposed research project submitted to the Ohio Fire Executive Program

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## **CERTIFICATION STATEMENT**

I hereby certify that the following statements are true:

1. This paper constitutes my own product, that where the language of others is set forth, quotation marks so indicate, and that appropriate credit is given where I have used the language, ideas, expressions, or writings of another.
  
2. I have affirmed the use of proper spelling and grammar in this document by using the spell and grammar check functions of a word processing software program and correcting the errors as suggested by the program.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## **ABSTRACT**

The Beavercreek Township Fire Department (BTFD) currently does not have an officer development program in place and needs to evaluate the need, if any, to create such a program for the current and aspiring officers.

The purpose of this research was to identify and describe what public and private organizations are doing to prepare less experienced employees for advanced levels of responsibility; what area fire departments similar to BTFD are doing to prepare firefighters for advancement and leadership; what KSA's are thought to be necessary in a qualified fire officer; and what KSA's current BTFD officers believe are needed to serve as a BTFD fire officer.

The problem was determining the need, if any, to better prepare personnel for higher levels of responsibility, job performance, and leadership within the BTFD.

The author used descriptive research to investigate and answer the following research questions.

1. What are selected public and private organizations doing to prepare less experienced employees for more advanced levels of responsibility and skills?
2. What are area fire departments similar to BTFD doing to prepare firefighters for advancement and leadership responsibilities?
3. What, if any, knowledge, skills, and abilities are widely thought to be necessary to serve as a qualified fire officer?
4. What knowledge, skills, and abilities do current BTFD officers believe are needed to serve as a BTFD fire officer?

The author used literature reviews from various resources and conducted an internal and external questionnaire to gather pertinent information. The internal questionnaire was administered to BTFD current officers and eligible OIC's. The external questionnaire was administered to fire chiefs randomly chosen throughout the state of Ohio. The results gathered from the literature reviews and the internal and external questionnaires were utilized to formulate the discussion and recommendations and will be presented to the BTFD senior staff.

The results of this research confirmed and supported the value of leadership development/mentoring programs and the need to better prepare personnel for higher levels of responsibility, job performance, and leadership within the BTFD.

The recommendations supported by the research performed included developing and implementing an officer development/mentoring program within the BTFD, beginning from the ground up, continue to investigate to determine what type of development program will benefit and accomplish the goals of the department, placing a strong emphasis on continued communication involving current and future officers to assist in program development, and beginning the process and implementation of the officer development/mentoring program as soon as feasible for the BTFD.

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## INTRODUCTION

### **Statement of the Problem**

The problem this descriptive research addressed was determining the need, if any, to better prepare personnel for higher levels of responsibility, job performance, and leadership within the Beavercreek Township Fire Department (BTFD).

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to identify and describe what public and private organizations are doing to prepare less experienced employees for advanced levels of responsibility; what area fire departments similar to BTFD are doing to prepare firefighters for advancement and leadership; what KSA's are thought to be necessary in a qualified fire officer; and what KSA's current BTFD officers believe are needed to serve as a BTFD fire officer.

### **Research Questions**

The research questions this descriptive research investigated are:

1. What are selected public and private organizations doing to prepare less experienced employees for more advanced levels of responsibility and skills?
2. What are area fire departments similar to BTFD doing to prepare firefighters for advancement and leadership responsibilities?
3. What, if any, knowledge, skills, and abilities are widely thought to be necessary to serve as a qualified fire officer?
4. What knowledge, skills, and abilities do current BTFD officers believe are needed to serve as a BTFD fire officer?

## **BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE**

The Beavercreek Township Fire Department (BTFD) is located in Greene County, southwestern Ohio and protects more than 48 square miles of Beavercreek Township, the City of Beavercreek, and the Village of Alpha (Beavercreek Township Fire Department, 2012).

Governed by the Beavercreek Township Trustees, the BTFD serves a population of approximately 52,156 residents providing fire suppression, emergency medical services (EMS), auto extrication operations, hazardous-materials operations, technical rescue operations, and fire prevention services (Beavercreek Township Fire Department, 2012).

The BTFD was established in 1946 as a four-station volunteer fire service and has progressed into a combined staff of over 100 career, regular part-time, and civilian members. Those members currently operate out of four stations and respond to over 5,000 calls per year with 76% of those service calls requiring an emergency medical response (Beavercreek Township Fire Department, 2012). BTFD currently has a maximum of 22 and a minimum of 18 line personnel on duty every day operating 24/48-hour shifts with three platoons (Beavercreek Township Fire Department, 2013). Individual platoons operate with a battalion chief, four station lieutenants, and the remainder of the crews supported by career and regular part-time personnel (Beavercreek Township Fire Department, 2013). BTFD administration staff consists of a deputy chief of operations, a deputy chief of administration and the fire chief. All members of the administration staff fulfill a 40-hour workweek. The BTFD also maintains a designated fire prevention bureau.

Presently the BTFD hires only from within to the full-time and officer ranks. The Local 2857 Collective Bargaining Agreement governs candidates for promotion to the rank of lieutenant. Beavercreek Township & Beavercreek Professional Firefighters I.A.F.F. Local 2857

(2011) states the process will establish an eligible list of candidates and in the event of a vacancy, the Chief may select the best candidate from the top three. If the eligible candidate list drops below three, then the Chief may offer a new test or wait to fill the vacancy until the next scheduled test. Each candidate must satisfy five minimum requirements to become eligible to test. The test consists of three parts including the assessment center constituting 70% of the score; the Chief's interview constituting 20% of the score; and education and experience constituting the final 10% of the score. The candidate is not required to possess any additional education, training, abilities, skills or officer-in-charge experience.

The process for the deputy chief involves a panel interview, chief's interview, chief's written assignment, and an assessment center (T. Gustafson, personal communication, April 30, 2013). The assessment center consists of a budget spreadsheet activity, fire scenario, EMS scenario, and a personnel scenario (T. Gustafson, personal communication, April 30, 2013). In order to be eligible to enter the promotional process, the candidates are required to obtain the rank of lieutenant or battalion chief. The candidates are then ranked and the chief may choose any of the candidates to fulfill the available position.

The process for the battalion chief involves producing a cover letter, a resume, and answering three questions chosen by the chief and submitting all documents electronically. Then each candidate participates in a panel interview and chief's interview (D. VandenBos, personal communication, August 14, 2013). Candidates are ranked and the chief may choose the most qualified of the candidates for promotion. In order to be eligible to enter the promotional process, the candidates are required to obtain the rank of lieutenant (D. VandenBos, personal communication, August 14, 2013).



The BTFD is currently at the onset of a substantial attrition rate of officers (Beavercreek Township Fire Department, 2013). The department operates with 12 lieutenants, three battalion chiefs, two deputy chiefs, a fire chief, and ten ranked officers-in-charge (Beavercreek Township Fire Department, 2013). Within the span of one year, the department experienced the loss of two battalion chiefs and one lieutenant due to retirement. The retired group of individuals carried over 100 years of combined experience.

The department is also preparing for the tremendous loss of KSA's and leadership over the next five years with the eligible retirements of one senior firefighter, six additional lieutenants and one additional battalion chief (Beavercreek Township Fire Department, 2013). The realization of the extremely high number of eligible retirements in leadership positions over the next five years brings to light an additional importance for this research project and the BTFD.

Over the past several years the BTFD line officers have been asked to take on additional responsibilities such as operating departmental budgets, preparing budgets, making department purchases, overseeing department programs such as uniforms, fire gear, EMS supplies, health and wellness, chairing committees, writing department articles for community newspapers, developing policies and procedures, writing grants, assisting with radio communication operations, and computer aided dispatch run responses. This is a small portion of the overall set of additional responsibilities that the BTFD officers are being asked to accomplish and maintain. The fire service in general is doing more with less and the requirements of the officer position are becoming more comprehensive and requiring a larger skill set. In recognizing the implementation of a broad range of responsibilities, the BTFD has remained status quo with the requirements to become a fire officer within the organization.

Determining the need to better prepare personnel for higher levels of responsibility, job performance, and leadership will benefit the department in areas such as stronger leadership, leaders with more confidence, leaders with better-developed KSA's, and more experienced leaders. This research will also benefit the department in helping to develop better managerial skills, daily report skills, operational knowledge, technology skills, and communication skills. The overall knowledge and information gained from this research will potentially benefit the department, the leaders themselves, and the community by producing better prepared, knowledgeable, and well rounded officers.

An additional need for this research was discovered while performing a safety audit of the BTFD in 2010 per NFPA Standard 1500. The BTFD Safety Committee performed the safety audit, prepared a report based off the findings, and submitted the report to the fire chief. The safety audit found the department is lacking in officer development per NFPA standards (Beavercreek Township Fire Department Safety Committee, 2010). The areas found deficient were training commensurate with duties and functions, maintaining proficiency in skills and knowledge, training supports minimum qualifications and certifications of members, fire officers meet NFPA 1021, and annual skills checks for member proficiency (Beavercreek Township Fire Department Safety Committee, 2010).

The potential impact this study will have on the BTFD is not only to develop a stronger department but also benefit the community by providing a more educated, more reliable, and more confident leader with developed KSA's. The results identified in this research will push the envelope in helping to better the department, the personnel, and the community. The results will highlight the strengths and weaknesses and allow the department to tweak the needed areas for better-prepared leaders and continue to progress the strengths already established in current

leadership positions. Viscuso (2012) identified how departments need to provide the correct tools, motivation and learning curve in order to prepare leaders and develop leaders to the fullest extent.

The results of this research will be presented to the senior staff of the BTFD and evaluated to better understand the current state of the department's officers, how well the officers have been prepared for leadership positions, to discover areas of weakness and strength, and to determine the need to pursue an officer development or mentoring program. Gina Hernez-Broome (2004) states, "development is increasingly seen as a process of developing and leveraging strengths and of understanding and minimizing the impact of weakness" (p. 28).

The research provided a significant new knowledge base for the administration to evaluate and process. The administration will learn if the current officers and OIC's would value an officer development/mentoring program, if they feel a program would have assisted preparation to operate as an officer or OIC, what KSA's the current officers and OIC's believe are of importance, and any additional information current officers and OIC's had to offer. The research gathered will assist in bringing to light the need, if any, for the BTFD to develop an officer development program in the future. Results will provide valuable information to determine where the current and aspiring officers in the BTFD stand in regards to an officer development/mentoring program. The results will also assist in determining if those officers were prepared to step into a leadership role and assume the responsibilities of the position.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

A research study completed by DDI and Dell working together to develop a program around the Dell Leadership Profile provided interesting findings. They had over 500 managers

participate in the program titled Managing@Dell with feedback collected from 157 of those managers. Development Dimensions International, Inc. (n.d.), states the program had three objectives in mind: establish a solid foundation for managing the knowledge, techniques, skills, and processes required to achieve success in the Dell environment, help managers to learn how to be successful, and build skills in managing day-to-day leadership interactions. According to Development Dimensions International, Inc. (n.d.), Dell also committed to ensuring employees the opportunity to develop to their full potential and to hire, develop, and retain the best people. With this commitment, Dell recognized nine competencies to identify, select, and develop leaders that were used in several different processes, such as performance management, training, and succession planning.

The overall result of this study was positive for Dell and their continued training has proven to be beneficial in accomplishing Dell's goals and objectives. "Overall, managers believe the Managing@Dell programme has produced a positive impact on the organization. They see very strong positive improvements in the areas of respect and open communication" (Development Dimensions International, Inc., n.d., p. 3). Dell also unveiled some negative findings during this study that pinpointed leadership development was a lower priority, more time was needed for personal development, and a lack of opportunities. This large corporation has identified some of the same issues identified by the fire service but has also developed a successful program overall to support and address performance management and people management skills (Development Dimensions International, Inc. (n.d.)).

In research conducted by Fragoulis, Valkanos, and Voula (2011), 68 individuals answered questionnaires dealing with the perception executives in companies and organizations have considering mentoring within the company or organization. The authors went on to state

the results showed that a large percentage of the participants found mentoring to be a success and that mentoring provided direction, skills, and competencies that related to the organization. The results also showed that not only were the participants' various overall skills developed, but the mentors also benefited from the process. The same author reported the research continued on to point out the individuals involved acknowledged that the mentoring process helped the companies and organizations improve operations and achieve goals, develop better relationships within, and contribute to company growth. This information is valuable to the research because it assists in supporting that mentoring and leadership development programs help guide and improve the employee, the organization or company, and the overall mission of the organization or company (Fragoulis, Valkanos, and Voula, 2011).

Merchant (1996), reported that organizations have become more involved in the career development of the employee and not holding the employee entirely responsible. This allows the employees to contribute more to the organization's mission according to the author. The same author examined the Career Development Program of the Altamore Springs Police Department and evaluated the methods and techniques that have been successful in the development of the Career Development Program. In the private sector, "organizations that emphasized customer service, organizational performance, professionalism, and employee empowerment were most likely to have Career Development Programs" (Merchant, Private Sector section, p. 4).

"Organizations in the public sector are service-driven and operate on budgets that are generated primarily by taxes" (Merchant, Public Sector section, p. 5). This research shows the economic side of developing such a program plays a larger part for the public sector than the private sector and causes slower development and implementation of a program. Economic concerns within the fire service in general make this a huge concern for initiation of a new leadership

development program within the BTFD. Overall, Merchant (1996) found that career development programs were a success and benefit to the employee and the organization. The research found that public and private sectors can have successful programs but the public sector is limited and slowed by the service-driven concept and economic side. The research also assisted in answering research question number one of this report by not only demonstrating the success of the Career Development Program of the Altamore Springs Police Department in the public sector but by supporting the private sector leadership development programs. The difference of success between the private and public sectors being economic and time driven.

Gina Hernez-Broome (2004) for the Center for Creativite Leadership, produced an article that reviewed leadership development trends in the field in the past, present, and future eras. The past took note of how placing value on mentoring has caused organizations to reevaluate and attempt to foster mentoring practices into leadership development programs (Hernez-Broome, 2004). The research of the past also examined various types of leadership styles and the effectiveness of those styles, feedback, and the balance in life from companies of all industries. This research has shown that mentoring has been of value and success in the past and could be an asset for the BTFD if incorporated into a formalized leadership development program.

“Today, effective leadership is commonly viewed as central to organizational success, and more importance is placed on leadership development than ever before” (Hernez-Broome, 2004, p. 27). According to Hernez-Broome (2004), leadership development training is best done when it involves actual on-the-job situations and action rather than removing the individual from the job and relying on knowledge and instruction.

This article was beneficial in the discussions and information provided on how Chief Executive Officers (CEO) are making investments into leaders and leadership development and

are becoming role models for the organizations upcoming leaders. The CEOs of these organizations are also making that commitment to drive home the importance of educating leaders internally.

This report went on to discuss and bring to light that leadership is more than just the KSA's each individual leader possess. The author expressed the need for expanding leadership development programs to encompass all needs of the organization to benefit the overall mission or goals while still maintaining the foundation of KSA's (Hernez-Broome, 2004).

Hernez-Broome (2004), also focused on the impact of technology, expense of investment, and return of investment for developing leaders in the future. These run parallel with some of the major concerns of educating and developing leaders in the fire service today.

Murphy (2006), in research of a large Canadian police force, highlighted various negative responses to an executive development program. Negative responses from the research included: the right employee for the available position was passed over a majority of the time; the program was restrictive in nature; the organization is not utilizing the current knowledge base of the employees; no mentoring program to assist those employees that struggled with the program; and various other negative issues expressed by the employees according to the same author. This research discovered that leadership development programs do have significant flaws and the program needs to be designed and implemented with regards to the goals and mission of each individual organization.

Wilkerson (2007) reported in research findings involving succession planning in the public sector that leading candidates for leadership positions could participate in a more intensive development program. The author continued on to discuss how dividing the leadership

development and succession planning process is a trend in the public and private sectors that could be detrimental to the process of developing future talent.

Most of this report discussed succession planning for both the public and private sectors. Also discussed was how succession planning is generally better termed as leadership development programs and how these programs are geared to develop the KSA's of the current employees and not planning for replacement (Wilkerson, 2007).

The research provided comparable interests in the public and private sectors to focus on improving performance in the now to benefit the future of the organization. In addition, the research provided the knowledge that public sectors have all the appropriate tools and abilities available or within to provide adequate leadership development programs for the organization. The acknowledgment that succession planning is also referred to as leadership development opens up a whole different database of information for future and more in depth research outside the scope of this research.

Previously published research from the archives of the Ohio Fire Executive Program and the National Fire Academy Executive Officer Program provided a wealth of knowledge in regards to what similar fire departments currently have in place, if anything, and results from the authors' studies. Also discovered was a large quantity of previous research available dealing with the topic of leadership development and the issue being a larger spread area of concern among the fire service than first realized.

The Miami Township Fire Department, located in Montgomery County Ohio, relies heavily on individual knowledge base and experience and has provided minimal department officer development training or planning to prepare future and current officers for the position. This knowledge may or may not reflect the vision of the organization (Baber, 2011). Whereas,



the Ravenna Township Fire Department, located in Portage County Ohio, conducted a department survey to reveal over three-quarters of participating departments failed to provide officer training prior to promotion and just over half provided officer training after promotion. Fire Officer I, Fire Officer II, Ohio Fire Executive, Fire Safety Inspector, MCTO series and Fire Instructor were the classes utilized by participating departments that provided officer training prior and after promotion (Bosso, 2007).

The Willoughby Fire Department, located in northeast Ohio, follows civil service guidelines and promotes officers from within the department (Anderson, 2010). The author went on to state that the Willoughby Fire Department has training and education policies for newly promoted officers, but nothing in place for future advancement within the department to administrative positions. Anderson (2010) also reported that officer training has come to the forefront over the last several years with the department offering officer certifications and the Ohio Fire Chiefs Executive Officer Program.

Survey results from outside the Willoughby Fire Department discovered main topics of value for the administrative fire officer including communication skills and experience but failed to recognize seniority (Anderson, 2010). This was a result of interest with such strong recognition of seniority in other areas of the fire service which may play a role in the individual chosen to participate in such leadership development programs.

The Mt. Lebanon Fire Department, located on the southern side of Pittsburgh Pennsylvania, revealed results including an absence of any formal program specifically designed for the organization (Abbott, 2012). The author continues on stating after a recent accreditation process, it was discovered that the volunteers have a career direction to follow, but they have no career direction for the current career personnel, succession planning or officer development

process in place (Abbott, 2012). The author also mentions the department currently does not have a structured process for developing junior officers to senior chief officers and the department does not have a structured development program for any of the current chief officers (Abbott, 2012).

Abbott (2012) sums up the study by stating departments must embrace the concept of officer development and to provide a successful program it must address the needs of the individual, the organization and the community. The author's idea embraces some of the same concepts discussed by the researcher in regards to the potential impact this study will have on the BTFD. This research will not only develop a stronger department but also benefit the community by providing a more educated, more reliable, and more confident leader with developed KSA's.

The information provided from the various departments chosen for this research confirmed that most departments struggle with leadership development programs but provide or promote outside training and minimal in-house training. A majority of the training is directed towards individual development and not necessarily tied into department goals or the department mission.

## **PROCEDURES**

This research was initiated by investigating various resources to answer the questions for this descriptive research project, gain knowledge for the BTFD in making decisions to determine the need for an organized leadership development program, and to better understand what other fire departments are finding successful.

The research process began in the Spring of 2013 by accessing resources such as online libraries, Sinclair Community College Library and EBSCO host, books, World Wide Web, previous Ohio Fire Executive Program and National Fire Academy Executive Officer Program research projects, research based projects, articles, journals, reports, and e-books. Information was also gathered from BTFD documents and websites. The research information was studied to provide the reader with a better knowledge base and understanding of the material available to assist with determining the need to better prepare personnel for higher levels of responsibility, job performance, and leadership, and to determine the need to pursue an officer development or mentoring program.

Information gathered and prepared from the literature reviews and department documents allowed the development of two questionnaires to collect additional information for this research. The first questionnaire was an Internal Questionnaire (Appendix 1) distributed to all personnel operating in an officer capacity that included 11 current BTFD lieutenants, 10 eligible OIC's (officers-in-charge), three battalion chiefs, two deputy chiefs, and the chief. The internal questionnaire was emailed to the aforementioned population in a Google Form/Questionnaire that directly input the results into a spreadsheet. A letter of explanation (Appendix 1) accompanied the questionnaire. The questionnaire was emailed to the participants in January with a two-week deadline. The internal questionnaire gathered information to determine the top 10 ranked KSA's in the BTFD and the value, if any, of implementing an officer development or mentoring program for the BTFD and for each individual. The results were evaluated and utilized to gain valuable information and insight to help determine and answer the questions developed for this research.

The second questionnaire was an External Questionnaire (Appendix 2) distributed to 20 fire chiefs with departments located in Ohio with similar characteristics to the BTFD. The 20 participants were randomly chosen from the Ohio Firefighters Website database by selecting random counties and random fire departments that appeared to have a similar makeup to the BTFD. The external questionnaire was emailed to the aforementioned sample in a Google Form/Questionnaire that directly input the results into a spreadsheet. A letter of explanation (Appendix 2) accompanied the questionnaire. The questionnaire was emailed to the participants in January with a two-week deadline. The external questionnaire gathered information to determine what type, if any, officer development or mentoring programs are in place, what the top 10 ranked KSA's are for those departments, and if the programs are successful. The information and knowledge gained from the questionnaire provided helpful insight into determining the need to better prepare personnel for higher levels of responsibility, job performance, and leadership within the BTFD.

Once the information was gathered, reviewed, and studied the results were explained in detail, compared to information already gathered and discussed in the literature review, and documented in the Results section of this research paper.

### **Definition of Terms**

#### **BTFD Safety Committee**

A six-member committee that meets monthly to address all safety and health issues involving the BTFD. This committee reports directly to the fire chief.

#### **EBSCO Host**

Online resource that offers a broad range of full text and bibliographic databases designed for research.

## NFPA

National Fire Protection Association

## Ranked Officers-in-Charge (OIC)

A ranked OIC is a firefighter currently ranked on the lieutenant's promotional list.

## Senior Staff

The upper management staff of the BTFD consists of the chief, two deputy chiefs, and three battalion chiefs.

## **Limitations of the Study**

Limitations experienced during this research mainly involved the researcher and the lack of experience in producing a research project of this magnitude. Time and access to limited resources did not allow this researcher to go further in depth on the research topic.

A limitation discovered during the external questionnaire was brought about by the lack of response from the external participants. The researcher originally selected a smaller amount of external questionnaire participants with the thought process of attempting to keep the survey manageable. This was definitely a limitation due to the lack of returned questionnaires.

A limitation also recognized with the external questionnaire was the lack of personal communication with the participants. The lack of communication did not allow for the researcher to acknowledge any possible difficulties the participant may have discovered with receiving, understanding, and completing the questionnaire.

The internal questionnaire developed a limitation in that the eligible OIC's have a large diversity of experience in the officer position. This may or may not have hindered the ability of the OIC's to answer the questionnaire with appropriate knowledge base of the position.

A limitation that arose during both the external and internal questionnaire was the ability of the participants to answer question number three in the correct manner. A portion of the results from question number three were discarded due to possible conflicting results.

A final limitation discovered during this research is the possible limited ability to answer several questions contained in the external questionnaire due to the lack of current officer development programs in place with outside agencies.

## **RESULTS**

The results for this descriptive research were gathered from the literature review and completed questionnaires to address the four research questions in the introduction. Question one acknowledged the topic of public and private sectors and the avenues in which less experienced employees are being developed for advanced levels of responsibility.

Development Dimensions International, Inc. (n.d.) addressed question one and the public sectors by having 500 managers participate in a managing program designed around the Dell Leadership Profile with a main concentration on performance management and people management skills. The leadership program became extremely important to Dell's attempts to increase managers' ability to manage performance (Development Dimensions International, Inc., n.d.). The leadership program benefited Dell by giving them the options to connect to other critical systems, such as selection, performance management, and succession planning (Development Dimensions International, Inc., n.d.).

Results found from the literature review of Fragoulis, Valkanos, and Voula (2011) supported question number one of the research by acknowledging the results of a 68 individual study dealing with the perception executives in companies and organizations have considering

mentoring within the company or organization. The author went on to report results of the mentoring program to be a success in supporting that mentoring and leadership development programs help guide and improve the employee, the organization or company, and the overall mission of the organization.

Merchant (1996) supported research question one by revealing that both the private and public sectors were utilizing Career Development Programs as more companies strive to meet the needs and expectations of their employees. Merchant (1996) also detailed the company's use of various methods to enhance their employees' opportunity for growth and development. The research further revealed the public sectors have fewer opportunities for incorporating Career Development Programs of any type, and program development is hampered by economic battles. Merchant (1996) backed the research by stating employees are given limited guidance in professional development and little, if any, guidance in areas pertaining to personal growth. Furthermore, Merchant (1996) believed Career Development Programs have advanced due to workplace changes, advances in employee motivation, changes in managerial styles, and continuous technological advances.

Hernez-Broome (2004) assisted in addressing question one of this research by revealing results of leadership trends from companies of all industries including fostering mentoring practices into leadership development programs. The author stated the results were positive by showing mentoring has been of value and success in the past and could be an asset if incorporated into a formalized leadership development program.

Murphy (2006) reported results of an executive development program utilized in research of a large Canadian police force. The results uncovered various negative responses to the executive development program. The result stated leadership development programs can have

significant flaws and that programs need to be designed to implement the goals and overall mission of the organization (Murphy, 2006).

Wilkerson (2007) evaluated two public leadership programs that were successful. The Oklahoma Department of Corrections focused on the systematic approach that ensured talent was always available and prepared to assume management roles (Wilkerson, 2007). Further results from Wilkerson (2007) focused on the Department of Juvenile Justice leadership program and on sustaining innovations and programs initiated by a previous administration. Wilkerson (2007) concluded that even though public sectors lag behind private sectors, public sectors could benefit by implementing private sector concepts and strategies. The private sector leadership development programs focus on creating programs that align with their changing business needs (Wilkerson, 2007). Finally, Wilkerson (2007) determined leadership programs in the public sector have been successfully implemented at various levels.

Research question two utilized literature review from previously published research found in the archives of the Ohio Fire Executive Program and the National Fire Academy Executive Officer Program and the External Questionnaire to provide results for this research. The literature review and external questionnaire addressed area fire departments similar to BTFD and how they are preparing firefighters for advancement and leadership responsibilities.

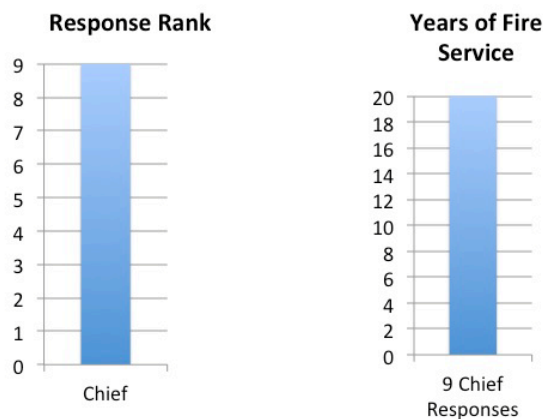
Baber (2011) relies heavily on individual knowledge base and experience and has provided minimal department officer development training or planning to prepare future and current officers for the position. The Ravenna Fire Department discovered Fire Officer I, Fire Officer II, Ohio Fire Executive, Fire Safety Inspector, MCTO series and Fire Instructor were the classes utilized by participating departments that provided officer training prior and after promotion (Bosso, 2007). The Willoughby Fire Department reported offering officer



certifications and the Ohio Fire Chiefs Executive Officer Program (Anderson, 2010). The department also reported they have training and education opportunities and policies for newly promoted officers, but nothing for future advancement into administration positions (Anderson, 2010). Abbott (2012) stated that the Mt. Lebanon Fire Department had no formalized officer development program in place, but had a significant need for a program to follow the philosophy of fire service accreditation.

Abbott (2012) reported results that assisted in addressing questions one, two, and three of this research. Abbott (2012) found through a study of 124 individuals from the Executive Fire Officer Program that roughly 40% reported that they do not have an established officer development program. The author continued to discuss findings of the reported development programs to include the following topics: leadership, management, emergency services delivery, mentoring, and strategic thinking (Abbott, 2012). Abbott (2012) also provided results from an internal survey of 12 officers from the Mt. Lebanon Fire Department with all 12 officers citing a need for an officer development program.

The external questionnaire produced results to answer research questions two and four of this research. The questionnaire was sent to 20 area fire department chiefs with a return rate of 45%. The results showed that 100% of the responding chiefs had greater than 20 years of experience in the fire service.



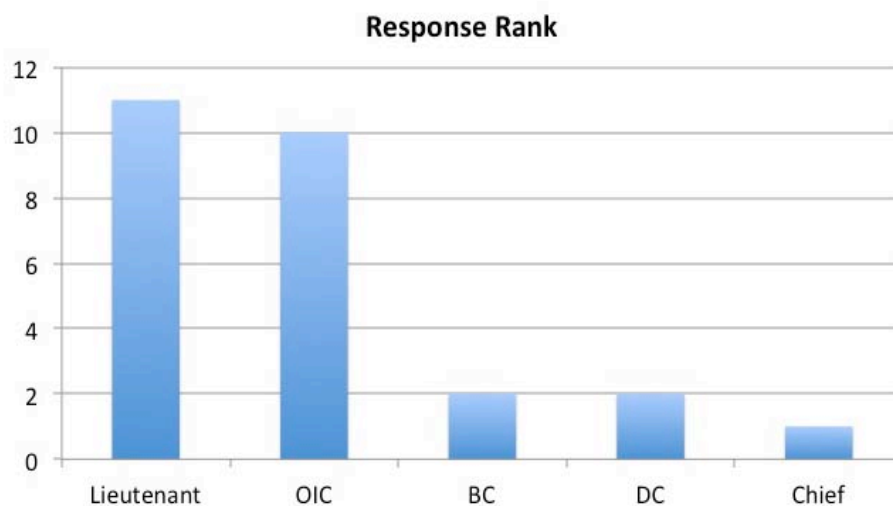
In response to the question, “Does your department currently utilize an officer development/mentoring program?”, 22% responded yes and 78% responded no. Of the 22% who responded yes, 100% indicated they believe the program has been successful in preparing their members for future and/or continual development.

The external questionnaire question number three assisted in answering the research question, “What, if any, KSA’s are widely thought to be necessary to serve as a qualified officer?” The KSA’s receiving a number one vote for the top priority in an officer development program were human resources, emergency services, administration, customer service and policies and procedures. The KSA’s that received the most responses were policies and procedures and strategy and tactics at five each. The only KSA area that did not receive any responses was organization structure.

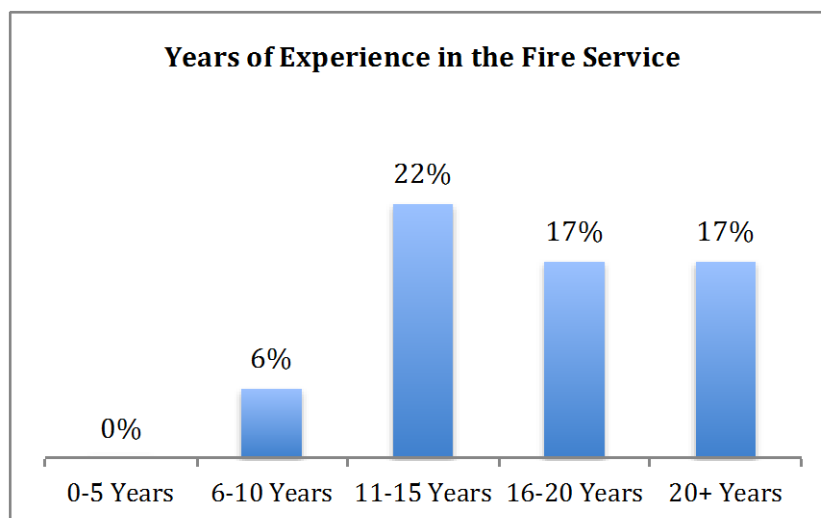
External questionnaire question number four provided space to record additional KSA’s the responders felt were of value for an officer in their organization but not mentioned in question number three. Responses the external questionnaire identified included: command presence, transition from buddy to boss, transition from primarily a fire delivery service to an EMS delivery service and balancing the needs of the community verses meeting out dated national standards, and the ability to work harmoniously between and among shifts and stations

specifying arrogance being treated as a felony.

The internal questionnaire also produced results to assist in answering research question four of this research. The questionnaire was sent to 27 BTFD OIC's, lieutenants, battalion chiefs, deputy chiefs, and chief with a return of 18 questionnaires. Responses were received from five OIC's, seven lieutenants, three battalion chiefs, two deputy chiefs, and the chief.



The results showed a wide range of years of experience in the fire service with 0% having 0-5 years, 6% having 6-10 years, 22% having 11-15 years, 17% having 16-20 years, and 50% having greater than 20 years.



Response to the question, “Do you feel an officer development/mentoring program would or would have been of value to you as an upcoming officer within the BTFD?”, 17 out of 18 responded yes. Responses to the question, “Do you feel an officer development/mentoring program would be of value for the BTFD?”, 18 out of 18 responded yes.

The internal questionnaire question number three assisted in answering the research question, “What KSA’s do current BTFD officers believe are needed to serve as a BTFD fire officer?” The KSA’s that received a number one vote for the top priority in an officer development program were human resources, government structure, emergency services, administration, strategy and tactics, customer service, health and wellness, communication, and policies and procedures. The KSA’s that received the most responses were strategy and tactics and customer service at 12 each.

Internal questionnaire question number seven provided space to record additional KSA’s the responders felt were of value for an officer in the BTFD but not mentioned in question number three. Responses identified by the internal questionnaire included: emotional intelligence and situational awareness, knowledge of how to treat personnel and keeping them involved, leading by example, fire officer I and II leadership concepts, training and mentoring program to meet the next level, budgeting for outside training, develop relations with area educational institutions, fundamental skills for basic leadership, leadership and mentoring programs from the day hired, objectives and expectations for officers while providing feedback such as a performance evaluation, critical thinking, special responses, ethics, and conflict management.

The results for this descriptive research were gathered from the literature review and completed questionnaires and assisted in addressing the four questions previously mentioned in

the introduction. The research provided a wealth of knowledge and interesting findings both positive and negative. The results provided have been of great value for further research on this topic and for the BTFD in determining the need to better prepare personnel for higher levels of responsibility, job performance, and leadership within the BTFD.

## **DISCUSSION**

The results of this research have identified a variety of interesting findings to assist the BTFD in determining the need to better prepare personnel by incorporating a leadership development/mentoring program.

The results from the internal questionnaire verify that the current officers and OIC's believe an officer development/mentoring program would be of tremendous value for the department and for the individual, as well as, would assist in developing the KSA's felt needed to serve as a BTFD officer. The information assisted in bringing to the forefront the KSA's current officers and OIC's feel are important focus areas within the BTFD and area departments similar to the BTFD. The results also assisted in narrowing down the KSA's the BTFD current officers and OIC's feel are important concentration areas for a leadership development/mentoring program.

An interesting result from the internal questionnaire and external questionnaire were the additional KSA's and comments added by various responders. This information provided additional thoughts and concerns from current leadership within the BTFD and outside area departments that may not have been considered otherwise by the administration in the process of developing leadership development/mentoring program within the BTFD. The results from the internal questionnaire and external questionnaire were of special interest due to the fact that the majority of the KSA's would need to be individualized for each department and tailored to meet

the standards, mission, and vision of the department as well as benefit the community. This is further supported by Abbott (2012) stating departments must embrace the concept of officer development and to provide a successful program it must address the needs of the individual, the organization, and the community. Fragoulis, Valkanos, and Voula (2011) also support this concept by stating the results showed a large percentage of the participants found mentoring to be a success and that mentoring provided direction, skills, and competencies that related to the organization. Additional support was stated by Hernez-Bromme (2004) that Chief Executive Officers are making investments into leaders and leadership development and becoming role models for the organizations upcoming leaders.

This study revealed a majority of the departments similar to the BTFD do not have a leadership development/mentoring program in place currently or the program is not specifically designed for that department. Abbott (2012) stated the Mt. Lebanon Fire Department revealed having an absence of any formal program specifically designed for the organization and no succession planning or officer development process in place. The Miami Township Fire Department has provided minimal officer development training and planning to prepare future and current officers for the position (Baber, 2011). While Anderson (2010) stated having training and education policies in place for newly promoted officers, nothing is in place for future advancement within the department to administrative positions. This study highlighted the need to take into account development of a leadership/mentoring program that is customized to the department or organization in order to reap the benefits of the program and get the most out of the individuals within the program (Anderson, 2010).

This research revealed positive and negative findings for the public and private sectors with a variety of styles used to provide leadership development/mentoring programs. Styles

varied from utilizing internally developed programs such as the Managing@Dell programme, the Career Development Program of the Altamore Springs Police Department, and Executive Development Programs to utilizing outside programs such as the Ohio Fire Executive Program and the National Fire Academy Executive Fire Officer Program. All the styles discovered during this research provided positive and negative results but highlighted the need to develop a program that fit the organization and individuals pursuing the leadership development to provide the most benefits for the organization. Hernez-Broome (2004) supported the findings by expressing the need for expanding leadership development programs to encompass all needs of the organization to benefit the overall mission or goals while still maintaining the foundation of KSA's.

DDI and Dell discovered both positive and negative findings. Development Dimensions International, Inc. (n.d.) cited overall results were positive for Dell and continued training has proven to be beneficial in accomplishing Dell's goals and objectives. Dell unveiled some negative findings including leadership development was a lower priority, more time was needed for personal development, and a lack of opportunities.

Fragoulis, Valkanos, and Vouls (2011) reported a positive research finding that individuals involved acknowledging the mentoring process helped the companies and organizations, improve operations and achieve goals, develop better relationships within, and contribute to company growth. Merchant (1996) found that, overall, career development programs were a success and benefit to the employee and the organization.

Additional negative findings were discovered by Murphy (2006) including the right employee for the available position was passed over a majority of the time, the program was restrictive in nature, the organization is not utilizing the current knowledge base of the

employees, and no mentoring program to assist those employees that struggled with the program. Murphy (2006) was also able to identify key themes during the study of the succession planning process of the Canadian police force. Key themes identified included: a lack of confidence in the executive development programme; a desire for executive development to be more developmental in nature; person-organisation constraints; a negative image of executives; a desire for experience to play a more pivotal role; and lack of information on the executive development process. These negative findings are valuable for this research because it provides additional information for the BTFD administration to consider and discuss when considering a leadership development/mentoring program for the department. This allows the BTFD administration to see what has previously been successful, or not successful, with a variety of other programs and organizations.

Overall the research completed has been of tremendous value in providing information for all of the questions and identifying a definite need for a leadership development/mentoring program within the BTFD. The negative findings expressed by the various authors and programs identified flaws in selected programs but could all be addressed during the development of a program to further customize a program for that particular organization, department, or company.

KSA's not identified in the internal and external questionnaire that outside departments and current officers and OIC's of the BTFD felt were of importance will need to be taken into consideration by the BTFD administration. This will assist in development of a program that will be more on target with the goals, mission statement, and vision of the organization. Development of such a program will then benefit the individual, organization, and the community.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

The overall recommendation supported by the research performed is to develop and implement an officer development/mentoring program for all levels of eligible promotion within the BTFD. This recommendation needs to begin from the ground up by performing additional research, questionnaires, and literature reviews to determine what type of leadership development program will benefit and accomplish the goals of the individual and the department. A strong emphasis will need to be placed on continued communication with the current and future officers to assist in the overall development of the program. A focus in this area will help to institute buy-in with current officers and allow them to have input in the development of the program that will better the entire department. A strong emphasis will also need to be placed on evaluating the negative findings in the research to eliminate areas already identified as problems or weaknesses in various leadership development/mentoring programs.

This research also recommends beginning this process and implementing the officer development/mentoring program as soon as feasible for the BTFD. By implementing as soon as feasible, the BTFD will allow the officers and the department to develop to the fullest potential and align the officers with the mission, goals, and vision of the department. The research suggests that by implementing a leadership development/mentoring program within the BTFD it will allow the individual, the department, and the community to gain the greatest benefit.

The next recommendation is to develop a timeline for implementation as well as identify the goals and objectives for a leadership development/mentoring program for the BTFD. This leads into the final recommendation to identify the direction of the program by deciding on the levels of the organization that will be involved and to what extent each level will be involved.

Identifying KSA's for areas of focus within the program will also be necessary to include in the initial timeline. These recommendations will ensure development from the ground up that are specific to the BTFD organization to benefit all current and future officers, the department, and the community.

Based off the research completed, the need to better prepare personnel for higher levels of responsibility, job performance, and leadership within the BTFD is definitely a valid concern and will only benefit the entire organization once evaluated, developed, and implemented.

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**APPENDIX 1 – INTERNAL QUESTIONNAIRE LETTER AND INTERNAL  
QUESTIONNAIRE**

January 7<sup>th</sup>, 2014

To all Officers and OIC's-

I am currently enrolled in the Ohio Fire Chief's Executive Program and required to complete an applied research project. The topic of my research is "assessing the need, if any, for an officer development / mentoring program for the Beavercreek Township Fire Department".

I am requesting your assistance by completing a questionnaire attached in this email.

When you are ready to take the short questionnaire, please click on the link below, complete the form, and submit. Your submission will automatically download into a Google spreadsheet that I will be able to access and evaluate the findings.

I would appreciate if you could complete the questionnaire ASAP, but no later than January 21<sup>st</sup>, 2014.

The results of this questionnaire and the completed applied research paper will be made available for your review when released by the Ohio Fire Executive Program upon completion.

<http://goo.gl/a39H8I>

Thank you for your assistance-  
Lt. Christine Hawker

## INTERNAL QUESTIONNAIRE

### Beavercreek Township Fire Department Officer Development Questionnaire

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1. Do you feel an officer development/mentoring program would or would have been of value to you as an upcoming officer within the BTFD?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  
2. Do you feel an officer development/mentoring program would be of value for the BTFD?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  
3. Below is a list of various competencies of an officer. Based on your current experience please rank the top 10 priorities you feel are needed to serve as a BTFD Officer. (Rank #1-#10 and DO NOT pick more than 10 competencies. You will have competencies without a rank).

Human Resource Management	_____
Community/Public Relations	_____
College Education	_____
Government Structure	_____
Emergency Service Delivery	_____
Administration	_____
Strategy and Tactics	_____
Customer Service	_____
Budget Management	_____
Planning	_____
Organizational Structure	_____
Fire Safety Officer	_____
Inspection, Investigation, Public Ed	_____
Firefighter Health and Safety	_____
Labor Relations	_____
Communications	_____
Legal/Liability Responsibilities	_____
Organizational Policies/Procedures	_____
Fire Officer I-IV Classes	_____

4. What is your current rank?
  - a. Firefighter/OIC
  - b. Lieutenant
  - c. Battalion Chief
  - d. Deputy Chief
  - e. Chief

- 5. How many years experience do you have in the fire service?
  - a. 0-5
  - b. 6-10
  - c. 11-15
  - d. 16-20
  - e. >20
  
- 6. How many years experience do you have with the BTFD?
  - a. 0-5
  - b. 6-10
  - c. 11-15
  - d. 16-20
  - e. >20
  
- 7. Please list any knowledge, skills, or abilities that were not mentioned above that you feel would be of value for an officer in the BTFD.

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**APPENDIX 2 – EXTERNAL QUESTIONNAIRE LETTER AND QUESTIONNAIRE**

January 10<sup>th</sup>, 2014

Dear Chief or Participant-

I am currently enrolled in the Ohio Fire Chief's Executive Program and required to complete an applied research project. The topic of my research is "Assessing the need, if any, for an Officer Development / Mentoring Program in the Beavercreek Township Fire Department".

I am requesting your assistance by completing a questionnaire attached in this email. When you are ready to take the short questionnaire, please click on the link below, complete the form, and submit. Your submission will automatically download into a Google spreadsheet that I will be able to access and evaluate the findings.

I would appreciate if you could complete the questionnaire ASAP, but no later than January 31<sup>st</sup>, 2014. This information will be very valuable to my project and I Thank You for your effort in completing the questionnaire.

The results of this questionnaire and the completed applied research paper will be made available for your review when released by the Ohio Fire Executive Program upon completion.

<http://goo.gl/j6Ud0v>

Thank you for your time and assistance-

Lieutenant Christine Hawker  
Beavercreek Township Fire Department  
851 Orchard Lane  
Beavercreek, Ohio 45432  
(937) 426-0642  
OFE Class 13

## EXTERNAL QUESTIONNAIRE

### Fire Officer Development/Mentoring Program Questionnaire-External

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1. Does your department currently utilize an officer development/mentoring program?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  
2. If yes, do you feel the officer development/mentoring program is successful in preparing your members for future and/or continual development?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  
3. Below is a list of various competencies of an officer. Based on your current experience please rank the top 10 priorities you feel are needed to serve as an officer. (Rank #1-#10 and DO NOT pick more than 10 competencies. You will have competencies without a rank).

Human Resource Management	_____
Community/Public Relations	_____
College Education	_____
Government Structure	_____
Emergency Service Delivery	_____
Administration	_____
Strategy and Tactics	_____
Customer Service	_____
Budget Management	_____
Planning	_____
Organizational Structure	_____
Fire Safety Officer	_____
Inspection, Investigation, Public Ed	_____
Firefighter Health and Safety	_____
Labor Relations	_____
Communications	_____
Legal/Liability Responsibilities	_____
Organizational Policies/Procedures	_____
Fire Officer I-IV Classes	_____

4. Please list any knowledge, skills, or abilities that were not mentioned above that you feel would be of value for an officer in your organization.

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5. What is your current rank?
  - a. Lieutenant
  - b. Captain
  - c. Battalion Chief
  - d. Deputy Chief
  - e. Chief
  
6. How many years experience do you have in the fire service?
  - a. 0-5
  - b. 6-10
  - c. 11-15
  - d. 16-20
  - e. >20
  
7. How many years experience do you have with current department?
  - a. 0-5
  - b. 6-10
  - c. 11-15
  - d. 16-20
  - e. >20