

RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE DIVERSITY IN THE LONG BEACH FIRE DEPARTMENT

MAY 2019



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INTRODUCTION



Diversity in the workforce is a pressing issue that persists well into the 21st century. Increasing diversity in the workforce is no longer just a social or moral imperative; it's an economic imperative. The benefits of diversity are widely documented including greater productivity, increased innovation and creative thought, and a better understanding of how to meet the needs of people from diverse perspectives. The latter is especially true for those in protective service sectors such as Police and Fire. When first responders reflect the community in which they serve, it fosters enhanced trust and an overall healthier community.

The issue of diversity among Public Safety professionals has been a topic of concern for several decades, yet lack of diversity in these professions is pervasive. In an effort to increase Firefighter diversity, in 2006 the International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF) published a comprehensive report that identified effective recruitment, selection, and retention practices to achieve a fire service workforce that reflects the community served. IAFF specifically aimed to address the underrepresentation of people of color, women, and LGBTQ-identifying individuals in the Fire Service (Fox, Hornick, & Harden, 2006). Achieving and retaining a diverse fire service workforce is the IAFF's top priority, yet more than a decade later, fire departments around the nation are still grappling with lack of diversity in their workforce.

INTRODUCTION CONT.

In Long Beach, California, home to half a million residents and a majority-minority city, there has been much excitement in recent months over the appointment of the City's first Latino Fire Chief, Xavier Espino, making Long Beach the only major metropolitan city in the nation with a Latino Mayor, Police Chief, and Fire Chief. While there is much to be celebrated as historically underrepresented communities make their way to positions of leadership, there is still a lot of work to be done.

According to the City of Long Beach's 2018 Workforce Demographic Report, the Long Beach Fire Department (LBFD) was identified as the department facing the greatest recruitment challenges in terms of ethnic and gender diversity. From 2017- 2018, LBFD ethnic minority applicants increased by 3%, but hiring of ethnic minorities decreased by 22% (City of Long Beach, 2018).

Currently, the LBFD consists of 40% people of color, a stark underrepresentation compared to the city's 72% people of color population (see Figure 1 and 2). Likewise, while women comprise 51% of the population, they make up just 10% of the Fire workforce (City of Long Beach, 2018).

Figure 1.
Long Beach Fire Dept by Ethnicity, 2018

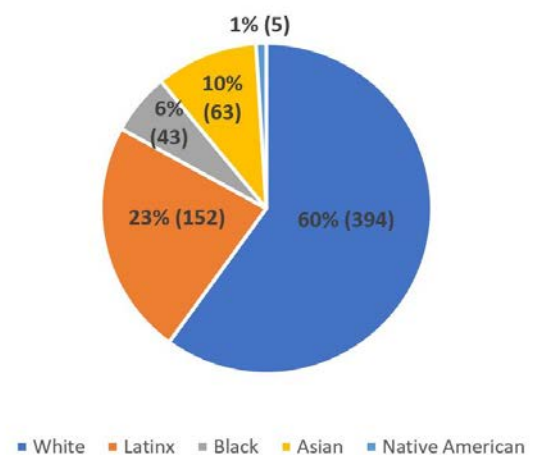
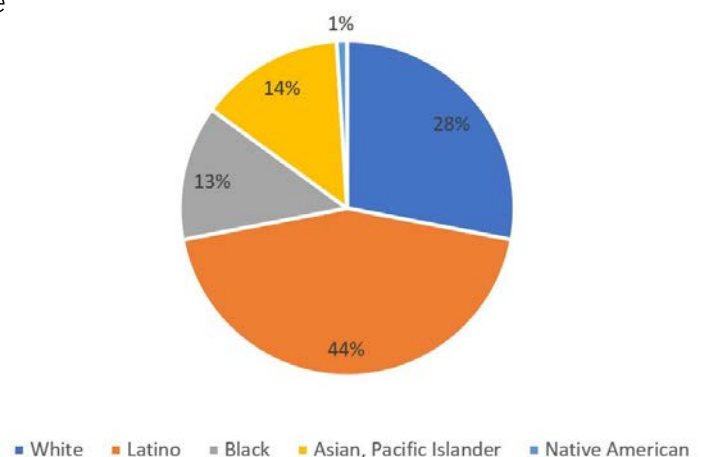


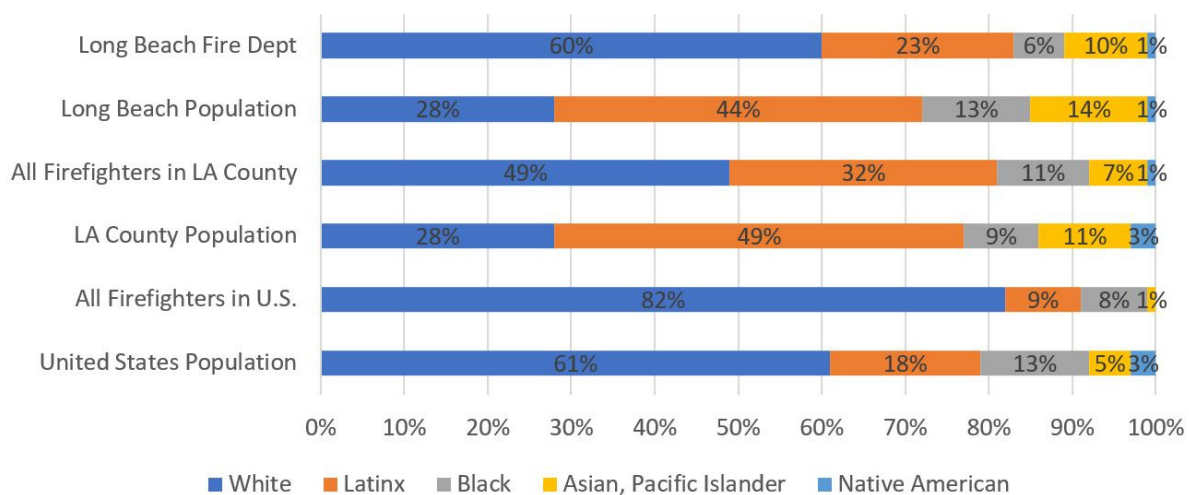
Figure 2.
Long Beach Residents by Ethnicity



INTRODUCTION CONT.

Lack of diversity in the Fire service is not unique to the LBFD. Nationwide, females make up just 4.6% of Fire personnel, and people of color make up just 18% of the Fire personnel, despite being 39% of the U.S. population (Haynes & Stein, 2017). Likewise, in all of Los Angeles County, White firefighters make up 48% of the fire force, but just 32% of the population, and while Latinos make up 49% of the population, they comprise just 32% of firefighters. (See Figure 3 for complete comparisons of local, county, and state fire department ethnic make up to the population served).

Figure 3.
Firefighter Ethnic Makeup
Compared to Population by Jurisdiction



While Long Beach is not alone in its underrepresentation of communities of color, the City has put far fewer resources and actions in place to improve these outcomes, compared to neighboring jurisdictions. There are steps the City can take immediately to improve representation of its diverse communities in the LBFD. This report aims to highlight the assets and areas for improvement in the City of Long Beach's Firefighter recruitment strategy, as well as lay out recommendations to enhance recruitment and retention efforts so that the LBFD reflects the diversity of the City it serves. Recommendations are informed by national best practices and IAFF diversity recommendations.

LONG BEACH ASSETS

Diversifying the Fire Department is one of the top priorities for both the Long Beach Firefighter Association Local 372 and Fire Chief Xavier Espino. While funding is often a barrier, there are many great programs in place that could be strengthened and leveraged in order to facilitate a level playing field for Long Beach's diverse communities.

LONG BEACH SEARCH AND RESCUE

Founded in 1962 as a specialist explorer post of the Boy Scouts of America, LBSR is a youth program designed to foster interest in public safety careers.

This award-winning, Learning for Life Explorer Post is co-sponsored by the Long Beach Police Motor Patrol Association and Long Beach Firefighters Association.

Participants are trained in urban search and rescue techniques, while surrounded by positive role models in a climate of leadership and responsibility. Members are encouraged to explore career possibilities in law enforcement, fire suppression, and emergency medical services.

The Unit is comprised of approximately 100 young adults between the ages of 15 and 21, senior staff instructors and adult advisers (police officers and firefighters).



LONG BEACH SEARCH AND RESCUE RECRUITMENT

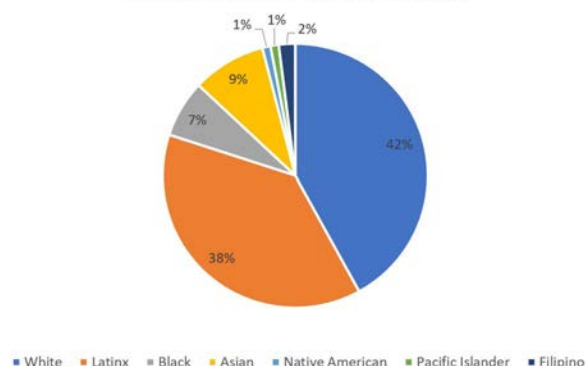


To join the Unit, participants must be between the ages of 15 and 18 at the time of the application, have no felony convictions, maintain a minimum 2.0 GPA while in school, be physically fit, and be willing to devote time to training, community events, and emergency callouts.

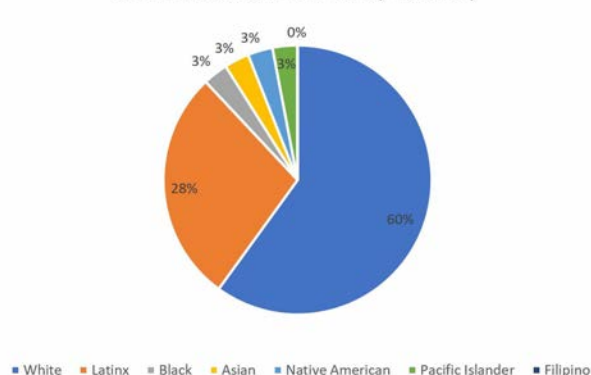
LBSR recruitment is done entirely through word-of-mouth. Decades ago, program coordinators would recruit at local high schools, but no longer feel the need to, due to the high volume of applications received on an annual basis.

Upon completion of the program many youth go on to serve a successful career in Police or Fire. In 2018, Long Beach Police Department hired 33 of youth LBSR members, LBFD hired 55 youth members, and 41 went on to serve in the United States Armed Forces.

LBSR 2019 Recruit Class by Ethnicity



LBSR 2019 Adult Leaders by Ethnicity



ASSETS

ROCKETT ACADEMY

Established in 2015, in honor of the late Darren Rockett- a local firefighter who dedicated his time mentoring at-risk youth, Rockett Academy is a mentoring program that pairs at-risk 7th and 8th graders with Firefighters, allowing the youth to visit various fire stations a few times a month for mentorship and guidance. Rockett Academy is a collaboration between the Long Beach Fire Department, Long Beach City Prosecutor's Office, and the Long Beach Unified School District.

Participants are referred to the program based off of academic and attendance concerns. The only firm eligibility requirements are that they must not have a criminal record and must maintain at least a "C" average during the duration of the program, in addition to attending the mentorship meetings.

As a part of the program, students get to go on ride-alongs, exposing them to both the positive and challenges of what firefighters deal with on a daily basis. Long Beach Firefighter Phil Gonsal and Rockett Academy Champion said, "They're not going into different buildings on fire, which is not really about learning the ropes of fire fighting at all. We take them on our rides, they see the good and bad sides of life—homelessness, shootings...it's definitely eye-opening for many of them." (Smith, 2015). In addition to exposing youth to the day-to-day of a fire fighter, they also go on outings to local attractions such as baseball games, beach days, and visits to the airport.

Rockett Academy has been credited with helping to improve student's GPA, decrease disciplinary issues, increase self-esteem and motivation, and overall increase their desire to be a positive part of their community.

Students are referred through word-of-mouth, school counselors, LBUSD personnel, and City Prosecutor's office. Demographic data is not currently collected for this program.

ASSETS

LBUSD PUBLIC SAFETY CAREER PATHWAY



In the Long Beach Unified School District, students have access to the California Career Technical Education (CCTE) model curriculum that expose students to a particular “career pathway”. A Career Pathway is a coherent, articulated sequence of rigorous academic and career/technical courses, commencing in the ninth grade and leading to an associate degree, baccalaureate degree and beyond, an industry recognized certificate, and/or licensure. The Career Pathway is developed, implemented, and maintained in partnership with secondary and post-secondary education, business,

and employers. Career Pathways are available to all students, including adult learners, and lead to rewarding careers.

Students engage in an instructional program that integrates academic and technical preparation and focuses on career awareness, career exploration, skill preparation in the industry, and preparation for postsecondary education and training. Knowledge and skills are learned and applied within a sequential, standards-based pathway program that integrates classroom, laboratory, and project- and work-based instruction. Standards in this sector are designed to prepare students for technical training, postsecondary education, and entry-level employment.

LBUSD currently offers career pathways in 15 different industry sectors, including a “Public Service” career pathway that includes Public Safety, Emergency Response, and Legal Practices. This pathway is not specifically linked with the LBFD or LBPD, rather it is a board overview of the basic elements of public service.

ASSETS

LONG BEACH CITY COLLEGE FIRE SCIENCE PROGRAM



Long Beach Community College offers a Fire Science Program that is designed to prepare students for a career in fire service. Courses prepare students for firefighter positions in both urban and rural areas.

Students are educated and trained in the technical fields relating to fire and safety practices. This program also provides partial lower-division preparation for the baccalaureate degree in this field. The Certificate of Achievement will prepare students for entry to a fire academy and for an entry-level position in private and public fire-related occupations. While the Associate Degree, will prepare students for entry into a fire academy and for career advancement for those already employed in a fire-related industry.

ASSETS

LONG BEACH OFFICE OF CIVIC INNOVATION



The Long Beach Office of Civic Innovation housed in the City Manager's Office, has delivered successful Economic Development and Public Safety Initiatives since 2015 that have tackled large local government challenges with innovative solutions. With funding from departments and foundations, the Office of Civic Innovation serves as in-house consultants to City departments and together co-create effective approaches that address the City's most pressing issues. Most recently, the Office of Civic Innovation undertook an initiative to enhance diversity among Long Beach Police Recruits. Due to these collaborative efforts, from 2017-2018, the LBPD increased total ethnic minority representation in Police Recruits from 60 percent to 70 percent, increased representation of female applicants for Police Recruits by 6 percent, and hires by 2 percent (City of Long Beach, 2018).

Learning from recent improvements in Police diversity efforts, the City Manager is coordinating with the Office for Civic Innovation and the Fire Department, to take a deep dive into the data and research best practices. We are optimistic that the City's efforts will enhance Fire recruitment diversity in the long-term. However, in the interim, we are recommending several steps that can be taken immediately to compliment the ongoing diversity efforts by the City of Long Beach.

CURRENT FIRE RECRUITMENT PRACTICES

In order to strengthen the City's recruitment practices, it is necessary to examine the current methods in which Long Beach Firefighters are recruited.

CIVIL SERVICE RECRUITING

All formal fire recruitment is conducted by the City of Long Beach Civil Service Department. This year civil service personnel enlisted several firefighters to be present to recruit at community events such as the Long Beach Gay & Lesbian Pride Festival, the Cambodian New Year Celebration, and more. In addition, Civil Service personnel attend local job fairs and occasionally outreach at neighborhood meetings.

A limited advertising budget allocated to Civil Service constrains the reach that recruitment efforts have in underrepresented communities. Many potential candidates may fall through the cracks if they are not exposed to the career before they have decided on another career path. Additionally, outdated recruitment material that lacks diverse photos have proven to contribute to the issue.

WORD OF MOUTH

Historically, the most utilized method of recruiting for the Long Beach Fire Department has been by word-of-mouth. While extremely useful in recruiting, word-of-mouth practices often maintain workplace homogeneity, in that people who are already in, recruit from within their social network and thus continue the current circle of exclusivity.

RECRUITMENT PRACTICES CONT.

FIRE PREPARATION PROGRAMS

Second to word-of-mouth is fire preparation programs. Fire preparation programs such as Long Beach Search and Rescue, and other fire academies across the state, are where many Long Beach firefighters learned about and prepared for open positions in the LBFD. Like word-of-mouth, if we examine who is most likely to know about and have access to these programs, it is predominantly male and white, maintaining a homogeneous recruitment pool.



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CASE STUDY

LOS ANGELES COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENT



Photo courtesy of LACoFD

The Los Angeles County Fire Department (LACoFD) is responsible for providing fire protection and life safety services to over four million residents residing in 59 cities and all unincorporated areas of Los Angeles County. LACoFD Fire Chief Daryl Osby, who made history in 2011 by becoming LACoFD's first African American Chief, has made fostering a culture of inclusivity a top priority in his department.

Chief Osby understands that diversifying the department improves the organization and helps them to better address the needs of the public. Since taking command of the LACoFD, the dept. has seen an increase in 15% new recruits of color, 8% women recruits, and have put programs in place to assist in retention and promotion pathways for women and minorities.

Rather than merely stressing diversity, Chief Osby's initiatives emphasize inclusion, which requires a fundamental culture shift for the department. For example, beginning in 2013, all new employees entering the Department are required to receive training about diversity and understanding generational differences (LACoFD Strategic Plan, 2017).

CASE STUDY CONT.

LOS ANGELES COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENT

Additionally, in the mid-1990s, the Stentorians (the recognized employee group for black firefighters) created a promotion preparation program for its members to offset the insufficient mentoring black firefighters received in the field. This program is credited with one reason why there is relatively equal representation of blacks throughout ranks of the LACoFD compared to the population of Los Angeles County. In 2018, 50 new candidates were introduced to the Mentorship Program, over 150 personnel were identified as Department mentors, and over 300 plan to receive mentorship.

Likewise, since 2015, the Los Angeles County Women's Fire League (WFL) has been leading the effort to advocate for and promote the development of women in the fire service through mentorship, training, and education (WFL, 2019). In partnership with the LACoFD, Women's Fire League designs and operates several women's programs intended to prepare candidates for the LACoFD's recruit academy. WFL programs include a one-day Girl's Fire Camp, a six-week Women's Fire Prep Academy, and an ongoing Mentorship Program. Programs are created and led by female firefighters. Much of the increased gender diversity in LACoFD has been the direct result of these targeted programs.

Organizations like Stentorians and WFL are also crucial in retention of underrepresented groups, because many of those who make it on to become firefighters, find a sense of community among members of their own underrepresented groups in these organizations.

Finally, in January 2018, the department began implementing the Community Outreach, Recruitment, Diversity, and Inclusion (CORDI) program to enhance recruitment, community outreach opportunities, and grow a diverse workforce to better represent the communities they serve (LACoFD, 2019). This implementation has had a huge impact on the success LACoFD has had in the area of diversity and inclusion.

CASE STUDY

HOWARD COUNTY, MARYLAND FIRE DEPARTMENT

Situated between Baltimore and Washington D.C., Howard County is home to nearly 400,000 residents from diverse ethnic backgrounds. In 2015, Fire Chief John S. Butler, the county's first African American Fire Chief set a goal for increasing diversity of his department. The following year, Howard County welcomed the most diverse firefighter/ paramedic trainee class in its history. Of the 36 applicants selected for the 16-week Emergency Medical Services and Fire Training Academy, 20 were women or other culturally diverse trainees, and eight were bilingual, speaking Chinese, French, Korean, Russian, and Spanish.

For Butler, the importance of diversity in the fire service and how to create top-to-bottom support for diversity recruitment and retention starts with answering the why. For Butler, "Diverse organizations are healthier, more functional, more innovative and creative with ideas. Different viewpoints are embraced and effective." After answering the questions of why diversity is important, and completing a community analysis, Butler recommends establishing an employee-led recruitment team. Inclusiveness is the key. Recruits must feel like their diverse viewpoints, cultures, religions, etc. will be welcomed. People do not want to come in as a token of diversity, but rather they want to be accepted as part of the larger fire family.

A few tips on increasing recruit diversity include working with local and national affinity groups, collaborate with law enforcement recruiters, networking at community, affinity group events, and veteran's job fairs. The department also begins its recruitment outreach early with a free, two-day summer camp called First Alarm Fire Camp for youth ages 9 to 14. High schools in Howard County offer EMT training and cover the cost of college tuition for Paramedic training.

Onward to 2018, Chief Butler's inclusion efforts have paved the way for his successor- Howard County's first Female Fire Chief, Christine Uhlhorn, a 27-year veteran, who took command of the department in July 2018.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1

Create a Full-Time, Sworn Diversity Recruitment Coordinator

position in the Long Beach Fire Dept. who can focus 40-hours per week on developing a firefighter recruitment strategy. This person would be responsible for seeing that best practices and recommendations laid out in this report are implemented. The position would be best suited for a sworn firefighter who identifies as an ethnic minority. It is important that communities and youth of color identify with the firefighter who is recruiting. People are more interested in pursuing a given profession when they see people who look like them already doing the job. Since firefighters have not historically mirrored communities of color, there have been less people of color who have considered career in Fire.

2

Establish a partnership with local education institutions to explore the following programs and initiatives:

- a. **Establish an LBUUSD Career Pathway in Fire.** Efforts should focus on expanding the current public safety pathway to specifically include Firefighting.
- b. **Dual-Enrollment at LBUUSD & LBCC** during senior year of High School. Dual-enrollment allows high school seniors to take a college course and earn college credit while in their final year of high school. Allowing students to enroll in Fire Science 1 at LBCC as high school seniors, will place them at an advantage. Dual-enrollment should prioritize low-income students and students with the greatest need.

RECOMMENDATIONS

c. **Ride-along field trips** that occur in elementary school, middle school, and high school- prioritizing schools in West, Central, and North Long Beach.

d. **Test preparation courses** at Long Beach City College, including pre-testing support, interview support, and life skills workshops. Diverse communities and first-generation firefighters often need additional preparation support to become a firefighter. A quality pathway program that is developed with an equity lens will include support and mentorship for aspiring fire fighters of color.

The most effective long-term strategies seek to reach young people well before the time of ordinary recruitment. Increasing interest in a career in Fire by communities of color and young girls at an early age, is key to diversifying the department.

3

Improve diversity recruitment in existing youth programs

such as the Long Beach Search & Rescue program. Currently, advertising is done by word-of-mouth, contributing to the homogenous nature of the Fire department. Additionally, for programs like Rockett Academy, there should be a more concerted effort to forge career paths into Fire upon completion of the program- this entails tracking students through high school and diverting them into another program that will harness the momentum created by the Rockett Academy. For instance, youth should be encouraged to enter the Search and Rescue program after completing the Rockett Academy. Likewise, if another program is developed such as a high school explorer or cadet program, participants from Rockett should be encouraged to join such a program.

RECOMMENDATIONS

4

Develop a targeted outreach and marketing strategy that incorporate the following:

- Neighborhood-specific outreach programs
- Pop-up events in low-income and diverse neighborhoods
- Targeted social media campaign
- Budget for formal advertising to target groups using mediums such as radio, billboards, bus shelters, Univision, Telemundo, etc.
- Marketing photos, text and messaging should reflect the diverse communities that they are targeting

There should be formal, targeted recruitment for those groups who disproportionately experience the representation gap. By improving formal targeted recruitment, we will eliminate missed opportunities to engage members of ethnically diverse, women, and LGBTQ communities into this career. Additionally, expanding the budget for formal advertising will allow for a larger reach in underrepresented communities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

5

Develop retention programs for new diverse recruits such as a “New Recruit Mentoring Program”

to improve retention of and provide support to minority and women recruits. Given the homogenous makeup of the current fire department, it is essential that new diverse recruits feel they belong and truly a part of the Fire family.

Throughout California, the departments that have most effectively leveraged these kinds of outreach efforts integrate recruitment and mentoring of women and people of color into subsequent stages of the hiring process. That means, for example, targeting qualified candidates from underrepresented groups to advance through the selection process. This differs from the more traditional method of relying on a random lottery from the general candidate pool, a place where women and people of color are underrepresented and thus have lower odds of being selected.

6

Establish more frequent sexual harassment prevention trainings.

Currently, the LBFD requires supervisors to attend a sexual harassment prevention training every two years, while all other positions receive a one-hour training during their academy. These trainings cover gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation harassment.

To foster a continuous gender-inclusive environment, it is necessary to have more frequent trainings. Setting such a standard will encourage more women and LGBTQ individuals to join the Long Beach Fire Department.

CONCLUSION



As our economy continues to put pressure on public safety departments to reduce their budgets, recruiting may not always be top priority. However, given that 86% of youth living in Long Beach today are youth of color, it is crucial that we take appropriate steps to ensure young generations of our city, see “American Heroes” who look like them, while also providing pathways to ensure these youth are included in the opportunities that a career in Fire provides.

Diversity in the workforce will not occur simply because the department is located in a diverse metropolitan area. To achieve diversity, there must be a strong commitment to new and innovative recruiting methods that intentionally and appropriately target diverse communities.

Due to the historic homogeneity of Fire Departments, it is important to acknowledge there simply isn’t a level playing field for women and communities of color entering the fire service. In addition to intradepartmental racism and a culture of exclusion, people of color and women are more likely to be first- generation firefighters and less likely

CONCLUSION CONT.

to know someone in their network who is a firefighter, leaving them to navigate a tedious hiring process with little-to-no support. In contrast, for first-generation white fire recruits, 84% say that although they did not have a family member in the Fire Dept., they had access to a close friend who was a firefighter who helped prepare them for the hiring process (Hulett, et al., 2008). Integrating pre-testing support and establishing Fire mentor programs that specifically target women and communities of color, are key in improving the racial and gender recruitment gap.

Additionally, while diversity is the goal, a diverse force is meaningless without true inclusion. Changing the homogenous culture requires a long-term commitment to integrate it into the DNA of the department. Thus, leadership training around diversity, inclusion, and implicit bias is a great first step; real change starts when leaders employ what they learned every single day. This can be accomplished with diversity goal messaging from the fire chief, consistent training, engagement of key department stakeholder groups, and the use of ongoing measurements of progress. These efforts will help develop the “inclusive firefighter prototype” through the ranks.

Finally, while putting measures in place to foster inclusivity, retention, and promotion are crucial, the absolute first place to start is by increasing representation of women, people of color, and LGBTQ individuals in the fire service. These efforts will be most successful when there are dedicated resources and personnel working full-time to attract and retain diverse communities.

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