



Connecticut Volunteer Workforce Solutions Phase 2 Final Report

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	Executive Summary.....	3
2	Background	5
2.1	Statewide Need.....	5
2.2	Phase 1 of Volunteer Workforce Solutions.....	5
2.3	What is GIS and How is it Used in the Program?	6
3	Process	7
4	Results.....	9
4.1	Recruitment Results.....	9
4.2	Online Survey	10
4.3	Recruitment, Retention, and Leadership Trainings	11
4.4	Media Campaign.....	12
5	Conclusions and Moving Forward.....	14

List of Appendices

Appendix A: CFCA Recruitment Activity Analysis Report – Phase II by GMU

Appendix B: Survey Review and Analysis Report – Phase II by GMU

Appendix C: Everyday Hero CT Public Relations Report – by Laura Ward

Appendix D: CFCA VWS Volunteer Firefighter Recruitment and Retention Analysis Report

Appendix E: CFCA VWS Best Practices Report

Appendix F: VWS Online Data System

Appendix G: Sample Agenda and Fliers

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Building on the success of Phase 1 of the Volunteer Workforce Solutions (VWS) program, the Connecticut Fire Chiefs Association (CFCA), in partnership with the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC), implemented Phase 2 of the program throughout the state of Connecticut from August 1, 2014 through January 31, 2017. This was funded through a Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response Grant through the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency. The CFCA and the IAFC also worked with George Mason University (GMU), and WardComm Public Relations company to execute this program.

The goal of the VWS program was to provide recruitment, retention, and leadership support statewide in order to increase the number of volunteer firefighters to improve community preparedness. A multi-faceted approach was taken to achieve this goal:

- Recruitment and retention resources were made available on the www.everydayheroct.org website. This included a toolkit created by the VWS program of templates and guidance for the on-boarding process of new volunteers. Sample recruitment campaign marketing materials and videos were also posted. Helpful links to other websites and their resources were also on the VWS website. The website has had over 3,000 visits.
- The VWS program conducted 7 training workshops/conferences with over 400 attendees throughout Connecticut. Topics focused on leadership, recruitment, and retention. See section 4.3 for more information on the trainings conducted.
- An online statewide survey was distributed to capture more data on the issues surrounding recruitment, retention, training, and leadership. The survey had 357 respondents. See section 4.2 for a summary of results.
- While much of the VWS program benefited the entire state, there were also fifteen departments selected to receive additional assistance. These departments were given Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Tapestry reports full of community lifestyle and marketing data to help them better tailor and target their volunteer recruitment campaigns. In addition, these departments received customized recruitment materials such as banners, posters, and brochures to advertise the need for volunteer firefighters in their communities. Scholarships were given to the VWS departments to attend the excellent educational classes at the Symposium in the Sun conference in Florida.

Key results and findings from Phase 2 of the VWS program are listed below.

- The participating 15 departments reported the following results through the online Volunteer Management System reporting tool. (Note: These numbers differ slightly than the ones in GMU's final analytical report because some departments submitted additional data after the close of the data collection period.)
 - 587 membership applications were received
 - 401 new members joined the participating departments, exceeding the program's goal of adding 150 new members
 - 900 recruitment and retention events were conducted including public safety days, fundraising, school visits, open houses, fire station events, classes, etc.
 - Approximately 550 media contacts were made throughout the state during the program
 - Over 68,000 campaign marketing materials were distributed
 - 3,200 social media updates were done by departments

- Fall had the highest recruitment activities during Phase 2 followed by Spring.
- The top three motivations to join, according to the interest forms received, were service to the community, career experience and personal fulfillment.
- The top three primary occupations listed on the interest forms were student, construction and other.
- The interest forms collected showed majority of recruits volunteer with the fire service for “passive” reasons (52%). Passive includes word of mouth, referrals, reputation, proximity to station, etc. 36% cite active reasons which include events, media, website and social media activity, etc.
- Per the online survey conducted during Phase 2, the top five perceived reasons why others left the fire service were: life change, time commitment, station/department politics, lack of leadership, and retirement.
- Leadership was identified as the most in need of training according to the online survey.
- Communication was the leading area in need of improvement according to the survey.
- Based on Phases 1 and 2, it was found that GIS is a helpful tool for volunteer firefighter recruitment. It helps departments to customize and better target their recruitment efforts. However, the key is still to “make the ask” and talk to people about becoming volunteers. GIS Tapestry data can help identify what type of people departments should target and the best places to have events.
- Current volunteer members can be a department’s biggest asset for recruiting. Departments should ensure all members know how to talk about the benefits of volunteering and that they properly represent the department at all times.
- Recruitment is an ongoing process and steady recruitment efforts will lead to the best results. Departments don’t need to execute big events each month, but doing a little each month makes a difference. There are several smaller ways to recruit volunteers including speaking at schools or other civic organization meetings, partnering with local businesses to hand out recruitment brochures, talking to the media about recruitment needs, offering ride-alongs, inviting people to open houses, etc.
- Creating a recruitment plan and referencing it periodically is important.
- Having a person or committee that takes the lead on recruitment activities is imperative.
- Partnering with a local PR company is beneficial to getting the message out about the need for volunteers. Internet ads are a brilliant way to recruit the younger demographic.
- The program partnered with a local Public Relations company to assist with public relations activities. The scope of work included monthly themed press releases, social media editorial calendar development, media list development and a first ever statewide volunteer firefighter recruitment event (Volunteer Firefighter Day) on April 9, 2016. 68 fire departments held open houses at 90 different fire stations. This garnered a lot of free publicity on radio, TV and print. Connecticut Governor Dannel P. Malloy proclaimed the day as Volunteer Firefighter Day in Connecticut. Through this partnership, the program received publicity valued at approximately \$4 million with a reach of over 300 million.
- The University of New Haven surveyed some of their students and found that most would be willing to drive up to 30 minutes to volunteer at a fire station. An informal survey of fire departments in CT was conducted to gauge their interest in the possibility of partnering with local universities and using college students as volunteers. A roundtable discussion on best

practices for implementing such programs was held at the University of New Haven. This discussion provided great tips on live-in programs where students live at the station and provide shift coverage. The Trumbull fire department was provided with extra support to expand their college live-program.

- The program sponsored a Fire Chief 101 class at the Connecticut Fire Academy in June 2016. This was a full day course designed to familiarize the newly installed volunteer Fire Chief with the duties and responsibilities that are connected to the position. With the aim of recruiting and retaining the firefighter of the future, a Cadet Program introduced fourteen and fifteen years old into the fire service through a six-day camp. During this time, cadets participated in training and drills and received graduation certificates at the end of the program and an enthusiasm to become firefighters. [Cadet program video](#)
- The program raised awareness to the need for the recruitment and retention of mothers who are also volunteer firefighters. The program tapped into this unique demographic by interviewing two volunteer mothers who shared their experiences of juggling their parental and firefighting duties. The story was aired four times on television and received an estimate of 65,000 media impressions. A newspaper article on this had an estimate of 250,000 media impressions. The story was posted on Facebook and reached over 13,000 people and was shared over 45 times. With the interest that this story received, a half-day seminar was held in Connecticut and the two mothers as speakers to enlighten and encourage departments to break the norm and recruit mothers as volunteers. [Mommy minute video](#)
- Twenty billboards were put up throughout the state advertising the need for volunteers. Radio ads were run on Pandora and iHeart radio to specifically target recruitment of the youth. This proved to be very successful in reaching the younger demographic. Television and radio interviews were also conducted to help with the recruitment efforts.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 STATEWIDE NEED

In Connecticut, about 83% of firefighters are volunteers. Connecticut fire departments, like much of America, are experiencing a declining volunteer base and membership. Changing demographics, training requirements, and economic conditions all impact the declining number of volunteer firefighters across the nation. The Connecticut Fire Chiefs Association identified the need to address the difficulties with finding, recruiting, training, and retaining qualified volunteer firefighter recruits to boost the overall numbers of volunteer firefighters. Hence, the Connecticut Fire Chiefs Association decided to help solve these issues by implementing the Volunteer Workforce Solutions program with the goal of improving volunteer recruitment and retention while also providing useful training.

2.2 PHASE 1 OF VOLUNTEER WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS

Initially, the Connecticut Fire Chiefs Association was awarded a 2011 SAFER recruitment and retention grant to study traditional recruiting methodologies as compared to Geographic Information systems (GIS) based methodologies. The GIS-based community-level profile is an analysis of existing firefighters

that identifies the types of people who are more likely to be future firefighter candidates, and discusses the methods to best communicate with and recruit them. Thirty departments participated in Phase 1 of the VWS program which lasted from December 2010 through May 2013. During this time, several leadership workshops were delivered throughout Connecticut and received very positive feedback. Overall, Phase 1 saw great results and the final Phase 1 report is available at www.everydayheroct.org. During Phase 1, GIS was found to be a useful tool for volunteer recruitment, therefore, the CFCA applied for and was awarded a SAFER recruitment and retention grant to complete Phase 2 and help more communities throughout Connecticut by using GIS data and by conducting leadership, recruitment, and retention training workshops statewide. Phase 2 lasted from August 1, 2014 until January 31, 2017.

2.3 WHAT IS GIS AND HOW IS IT USED IN THE PROGRAM?

As the number of prospective volunteer firefighters decreases, the fire service is forced to identify and implement new recruitment and retention tools. The CFCA and the IAFC identified that new methods were needed to better recruit and retain volunteer firefighters. The CFCA and the IAFC hypothesized that using GIS technology and applications could be one avenue to more effectively locate and recruit future firefighters. The basic theory was to use intelligent demographic and geographic data to recruit firefighters by:

- Holding recruitment functions in locations where desired candidates congregate
- Highlighting the aspects of service that appeal directly to potential firefighters in a specific area
- Directing advertising with the right message to the right audience at the right location
- Targeting direct mail or door-to-door canvassing in the areas where the most responsive recipients live
- Understanding the characteristics of a community's target (ideal) firefighters
- Analyzing the lifestyle characteristics of firefighters
- Determining where ideal and desired firefighters live
- Discovering the untapped potential recruits in specific areas
- Developing strategies to encourage firefighter candidates to enlist

To determine if GIS would enhance recruitment, an experiment needed to be conducted to compare GIS recruitment activities against more traditional recruitment activities. GIS is defined as a system of hardware, software, and procedures designed to support the capture, management, manipulation, analysis, modeling and display of spatially-referenced data for solving complex planning and management problems. Traditionally, most GIS systems have processed geographic and demographic data. In addition to geographic and demographic information, Esri's systems utilize business data, consumer expenditure surveys, retail market place data, and consumer survey data.

As part of the VWS Program, the IAFC geocoded the addresses of all active firefighters for each department into their software programs in order to identify the specific Tapestry segments in which the firefighters reside. Esri's Tapestry Segmentation model provides its users a tool to understand the lifestyles and life stages of consumers within a market or region. Tapestry segmentation classifies U.S. residential neighborhoods into 68 unique market segments (Esri has recently updated their system from the previous 65) based on socioeconomic and demographic characteristics. Tapestry Segmentation uses the notion that most volunteer firefighters have similar backgrounds and that people are attracted by similar tastes, need for security, peer identify, and a sense of place. After researching a volunteer's demographic and personal composition, they are placed within one of the 68 tapestry segments. Once

the target audience and tapestry segmentation is understood, recruitment activities can be performed within the identified segments.

A “core segment” consists of a segment that makes up a large percentage of a community’s current firefighters. In a core segment, firefighters make up a larger percentage of the workforce than the percentage of firefighters making up the community. Core segments represent a good opportunity to recruit more of the same types of firefighters that currently make up the workforce. A “developmental segment” not only represents a significant portion of the current workforce, but also represents areas with households that have not yet been reached to volunteer. They represent potential for recruiting new types of firefighters.

Esri Tapestry Segmentation also provides its users with information related to market trends or market potential characteristics. Market potential characteristics help departments create a unique recruitment strategy and gives them the knowledge needed to craft successful marketing messages. In addition, media preferences are included in the Tapestry Reports which provides information on the best way for departments to reach their target segments.

3 PROCESS

After being notified of this award, the CFCA advertised the availability of additional recruitment and retention assistance to all Connecticut fire departments. This was done through e-blasts, press releases, social media, and presentations at meetings/conferences. Expectations and benefits of the program were clearly outlined and communicated from the start. The CFCA and IAFC program coordinators conducted informational meetings across the state and invited local fire departments to participate in the VWS program. An official application process and selection criteria was developed to represent a cross section of communities and departments using the following characteristics:

- Geographic location
- Population
- Size of department (number of stations and personnel)
- Department need including recent recruiting grant status
- Fiscal/Economic conditions
- Past recruitment activities

Since the CFCA wanted to include as many interested departments as possible, some small, similar sized departments agreed to submit joint reports for data collection purposes. 15 applications to participate in Phase II were received from departments in Connecticut. Two of the applications involved several departments that wanted to participate as one group. The departments included:

- Broad Brook Fire Department
- Cromwell Fire Department
- Gales Ferry Volunteer Fire Department
- Gardner Lake Volunteer Fire Company
- Greenwich Fire Department
- Killingworth Volunteer Fire Company
- Middlefield Volunteer Fire Company
- Old Mystic Fire Department

- Rocky Hill Fire Department
- Somers Fire Department
- Stamford (4 out of 5 departments participated including Belltown)
- Trumbull (made up of Trumbull, Nichols and Long Hill Fire departments reporting as 1)
- Westfield Fire Department
- Windsor Volunteer Fire Department
- Wolcott Volunteer Fire Department

The departments were then required to sign memorandums of understanding agreeing to fully participate in the program. An orientation webinar was conducted with all of the VWS departments to review the program timeline, goals, tasks, and deliverables. Approximately 40 people were on the webinar. Departments provided their contact information and logos for the recruitment campaign marketing materials. They also compiled the addresses of their current firefighters for the GIS analysis and Tapestry Reports.

A data kick-off meeting was held on February 28, 2015 to bring all participants and departments together. Both Connecticut US Senators attended. All participating departments received a “Recruitment and Retention Toolkit” in a binder and electronic form. This toolkit included templates for the onboarding process such as welcome letters, interview forms, orientation tips, checklists and more. It also had a retention section with guidance for mentoring programs and ways to keep volunteers motivated. The toolkit is available on the everydayheroct.org website. Departments learned how to use the online data collection system to track their recruitment and retention results. At the meeting, departments were also presented with their customized campaign marketing materials which included:

- Tri-fold brochures and holders
- Postcards with magnets
- Banners
- Banner stands
- Buckslips
- Posters
- Table top sign with easel back
- Full and half page ads
- Website banners

Departments were required to submit recruitment and retention data regularly by utilizing the online Volunteer Management System. See Appendix F for the How-To Guide that outlines how the system worked and what data was collected. On a monthly basis, departments reported how many recruitment/retention events they conducted, how many marketing materials they distributed, the number of media interactions, social media updates and website visits, new applications and interest forms, new members, etc. They also submitted details on special events and media activities as they occurred throughout the program. This data was then compiled and analyzed by program staff and George Mason University to measure the program’s effectiveness. This information is included in section 4.1 of this report.

Departments were given a press release they could customize to announce the official start of their new volunteer recruitment campaigns. Most departments distributed it to their local media outlets. As departments implemented the campaign, the VWS staff worked to assist them and provide guidance and support. Through conversations with departments, VWS decided to conduct several recruitment, retention, and leadership workshops. These are outlined in section 4.3 of this report.

4 RESULTS

This section of the report covers programmatic results related to online recruitment data captured through the Volunteer Management System, the online survey, as well as the trainings conducted throughout Connecticut.

4.1 RECRUITMENT RESULTS

The participating 15 departments reported the following results through the online Volunteer Management System reporting tool. (Note: These numbers differ slightly than the ones in GMU's report because some departments submitted additional data after the close of the data collection period.)

- 595 membership applications were received
- 490 volunteer interest forms were received
- 401 new members joined the departments
- 960 recruitment and retention events were conducted including public safety days, fundraising, school visits, open houses, fire station events, classes, etc.
- 555 media contacts were made throughout the state during the program
- Over 69,000 campaign marketing materials were distributed
- 3,629 social media updates were done by departments

George Mason University was contracted to do a thorough analysis of all of the recruitment data. They compiled a very detailed analytical report which is found in Appendix A. Below are some of the most important parts from the executive summary of GMU's report. Again, it is important to note that some departments submitted additional data after the close of the data collection period so GMU's numbers vary slightly.

- The study included 374,999 activities, 483 applications, and 309 new members.
- Even with 101 resignations during the study, the Phase 2 net gain is 208 new volunteers. All of the departments, with the exception of one, had net gains of new members.
- At the group level, the activity breakdown included 773 events, 494 media contacts, 51,533 promotional materials, and 322,199 social media contacts.
- With a higher response rate on a monthly basis, the relationship between the reported online interest activity and seven variables (recruitment events, safety events, media BY the department, banners, brochures/buckslips, magnets/pens, and posters) tested to be significant. On a departmental basis, 3 different variables (courses/classes, fundraising, and leadership/retention), along with safety events, had statistically significant relationships.
- Within the study, Facebook has the greatest activity with 221,902 Fans/Likes. In Phase 1, website visits had the greatest activity.
- On a departmental basis - 53% of the departments favored school visits and recruitment events. Within the promotional materials group, 100% of the departments concentrated their efforts on the distribution of brochures/buckslips and direct mail. With social media TO the department, 100% of the departments prefer Facebook – fans/likes and websites – new visits.
- On a monthly basis, the leading activities included courses, fire station, recruitment, media BY the department, brochures/buckslips, Facebook – Fans/Likes, and Facebook - updates

- Seasonally, Fall had the highest recruitment totals (36%) with Spring (33%) in second - which is comparable to the 59% combined total for Phase 1. In Phase II, Winter had the lowest recruitment monthly total (19%).
- Service to the Community (37%), Career Experience (18%), and Personal Fulfillment (9%) are the top-three motivators in the Interest Database. Overall, the top-five responses accounted for 79% of the listed motivating factors (Other (8%) and Fire Response (7%).
- The top-three primary occupations on the Interest Forms, which accounted for 47% of the responses included include Student, Other, and Construction. (Self-employed is common throughout departmental responses).
- With social media usage, the findings in Phase II indicated that 26% of respondents use Twitter but 61% thought it is a good idea to use it as a recruiting tool.
- Overall, “passive” reasons such as referrals, proximity, reputation, memberships, and word of mouth (WOM) accounted for 52% of the responses for Learning about the Fire Service. “Active” reasons such as events, displays, banners, media, and website (social media) activities accounted for a slightly smaller percentage of responses (36%).
- Overall, due to the increase in reporting between the phases, it appeared that the departments prefer to report activity through the online Volunteer Management System.

4.2 ONLINE SURVEY

An online survey was conducted in Phase 1 of the VWS program, and the goal of the Phase 2 survey was to gather more specific information based on the results from the initial survey. George Mason University assisted with the survey development to ensure it incorporated proper survey methodologies. After the survey was closed, George Mason University analyzed all of the survey data and produced a detailed report. A summary of survey results from Phase 2 is below and the full survey analysis conducted by George Mason University is included in Appendix.

- 357 firefighters took the survey. Of that total, 256 were volunteer, 43 were career, and 58 indicated they were both volunteer and career.
- Referrals accounted for 73% of the “Reasons for Joining” the fire service.
- 29% of the “Initial Motivations” continued to motivate firefighters into their careers.
- The top-three choices for effective recruitment tools by all respondent groups were “Firefighter Referral,” “Word of Mouth” and “Being asked by a Firefighter.
- Firefighter opinions regarding effective retention strategies varied significantly by firefighter type. Career firefighters considered “Retirement/Pension,” “Training,” “Healthcare,” and “Continuing Education” to be of primary importance. Volunteer firefighters were more concerned with “Training,” “Annual Banquet,” “Awards,” “Tax Credit,” and similar shorter-term perks.
- The top-five perceived reasons why others left the service were “Life Change,” “Time Commitment,” “Station/Department Politics,” “Could not meet training,” and “Lack of Leadership.”
- All firefighter groups listed “Communication” as the leading area in need of improvement. Volunteer firefighters noted that “Recruitment” and “Retention” are areas in need of improvement, whereas career firefighters identified “Leadership” and “Motivating Personnel” as concerns.

- “Leadership” was the area identified as the most in need of training.
- Firefighters with fewer years in service learned about the fire service more frequently than expected via Websites/Email/Internet/Brochures/Flyers and less frequently via Family/Friends/Word of Mouth/Community Events compared to counterparts who have more tenure.
- Although the findings indicated a wide variety of associations between “Years in Service” and “Areas in Need of Improvement,” a few significant trends emerged.
 - Firefighters with fewer service years were more likely to state that no areas need improvement.
 - As tenure increases, “Succession Planning,” “Motivating Personnel,” “Leadership,” and “Retention” became important areas in need of improvement.
 - Those with the most tenure did not identify a need to improve “Communication,” while all of the other cohorts with fewer years in service saw this as a consideration.
- For “Primary Occupation,” firefighters with fewer than 10 years of experience had fewer than expected numbers of firefighters in the fire service, and higher than expected numbers in the “Student,” “Maintenance, Repair and Installation,” categories.
- Overall, the “Reasons for Others Leaving the Fire Service” had the most disparity between “Years in Service” cohort groups.
- Firefighters with fewer years in service considered “Station Politics” and “Fitting In” as reasons why others left the service. Firefighters with more years in service believed that others left due to “Time Commitment” and “Couldn’t Meet Training.”
- Among the ranks of firefighters, “Chiefs” and “Other” did not have concerns with leadership, but “Chief Officer,” “Company Officer,” “Firefighters” had higher than expected numbers of firefighters with “Leadership Issues.”

4.3 RECRUITMENT, RETENTION, AND LEADERSHIP TRAININGS

Based on the results from the online statewide survey and feedback from the fifteen VWS departments, the CFCA sought out expert instructors in the desired training topics focused on recruitment, retention, leadership, and more. The CFCA ensured to deliver the trainings in different parts of Connecticut to have the maximum statewide impact. Most of the trainings took place on a Friday or Saturday to better accommodate the schedules of volunteers. Participants had the opportunity to network and build their leadership capacity on topics such as mentoring, law and legal issues, public relations, social networking and media. Approximately 350 fire service members participated in the leadership workshops. Attendees received certificates of attendance, for some of the programs. (See Sample Agenda Appendix G)

During the program, several “special events” took place that not only benefited the participating departments but all of the fire service in CT. Although it is difficult to know the full impacts on department membership, we have some first-hand information based on communications received from department officers. The CFCA VWS project was led by a 3-member steering committee that helped coordinate the project from beginning to end. This group was instrumental to the success of the program. Each a chief, they maintained excellent communications with the departments and kept the importance of the volunteer firefighter and needs of the CT fire service at the forefront. The CFCA participated in TV and radio interviews during the project and discussed the importance of volunteers to the CT Fire Service and

provided information on becoming a volunteer. They were also proactive in seeking out activities, venues and opportunities to discuss volunteer needs.

The University of New Haven surveyed some of their students and found that most would be willing to drive up to 30 minutes to volunteer at a fire station. An informal survey of fire departments in CT was conducted to gauge their interest in the possibility of partnering with local universities and using college students as volunteers. A roundtable discussion on best practices for implementing such programs was held at the University of New Haven. This discussion provided great tips on live-in programs where students live at the station and provide shift coverage. The Trumbull fire department was provided with extra support to expand their college live-program. In the words of Brian O'Connor, president of Trumbull Volunteer Fire Company;

“The three live-in students that were recruited through the program were part of our top ten responders for the year, averaging over two hundred alarms each and helped the department respond to 700 fire calls.”

A recruitment training class was conducted in Gardner Lake called “The First Five Minutes of a Recruitment Interaction.” The training used proven sales techniques to describe what should be done in the first five minutes of a recruitment interaction with potential volunteers. This class was very well received and departments asked for a repeat which was held in Trumbull. All leadership workshops were available to anyone in the CT Fire Service. All workshop participants received information on the VWS program and had the opportunity to network with other departments and discuss recruitment and retention issues with their peers. Lessons learned and topics were relevant and applicable to their own departments recruitment needs.

Identified by the Tapestry Report as a recommended recruiting strategy, the CFCFA partnered with a local stock car race track. With the program being advertised on the racecar, approximately 285,000 people were reached, 1925 posters advertising the need for volunteers were autographed and Television appearances and radio interviews were also held. A 20-foot banner was posted at 18 race tracks encouraging people to become volunteers.

All participating departments received a “Recruitment and Retention Toolkit” in a binder and electronic form. This toolkit included templates for the onboarding process such as welcome letters, interview forms, orientation tips, checklists and more. It also had a retention section with guidance for mentoring programs and ways to keep volunteers motivated. The toolkit is available on the everydayheroct.org website.

One of the best national conferences focusing on volunteer and combination fire departments, Symposium in the Sun, was held in November 2015 in Florida. The program offered one scholarship per participating VWS department to attend the conference and bring key takeaways back to their respective departments. The scholarship recipients were presented with templates to share their ‘best practices and successes’ prior to the conference. A report captured all the responses which was made available to all departments and on the everydayheroct website. (See Appendix E)

A ‘Beyond Hoses and Helmets’ class was held in Cheshire on March 5 and 6, 2016 to help improve retention. The class focused on leadership, recruitment and retention. This class was very well attended and a post-survey analysis indicated participants found the class to be very beneficial. The program sponsored a Fire Chief 101 class at the Connecticut Fire Academy in June 2016. This was a full day course designed to familiarize the newly installed volunteer Fire Chief with the duties and

responsibilities that are connected to the position. In addition to this, 'An Introduction to the Fire Service' class dedicated to junior firefighters was also sponsored. This program engaged and energized junior firefighters with a series of proven, applicable and easy-to-reproduce hands-on drills.

To address the leadership issues identified, a Fire Rescue Organizational Guidance for Volunteer Leaders (FROG) class was held in June 2016. A hands-on workshop, participants in the class worked together to develop solutions to common leadership challenges through scenario and facilitated-based discussions. Some of the topics discussed included analyzing and understanding the fire department's people, processes and culture.

A two-day repeat summit, "Solutions to the Burning Issues in the Connecticut Fire Service," was held in April of 2016. This summit brought together Connecticut fire service officials, town managers and elected officials to discuss and help resolve important issues facing the Connecticut fire and emergency service. Among the topics addressed were leadership, utilizing the advantages and avoiding the pitfalls of social media, welcoming millennials into the fire and emergency service and building relations between the fire/EMS chief and town manager. A FEMA representative also attended and gave a presentation on grants. This event was well attended by over a hundred people and received free press coverage. See Appendix G. A half day recruitment and retention 'Lessons Learned' seminar was also held to discuss the lessons learned from Phase II. This seminar highlighted some recruitment and retention success stories that departments experienced and some social media tips. Per Chief Garrahy from the Rocky Hill Department;

"We found that there is no magic bullet, but once we started information sharing with the other departments and incorporated best practices, the number of new volunteers began to increase well beyond our expectations."

4.4 MEDIA CAMPAIGN

A wide variety of recruitment print materials were made available and departments could select materials to provide the most impact for the department. Many of the materials were printed with generic contact information so any volunteer department within the state could use them to help recruit. A statewide billboard campaign featured the Everyday Hero website link and was distributed in 36 locations across the state having impact beyond the 15 participating departments. This statewide "look" provided a consistent message for the program duration. As a means of targeting the younger demographic, ads were run on Pandora and iHeart radio, encouraging residents to become volunteer firefighters.

- The program partnered with a local Public Relations company to assist with public relations activities. The scope of work included monthly themed press releases, social media editorial calendar development, media list development and a first ever statewide volunteer firefighter recruitment event (Volunteer Firefighter Day) on April 9, 2016. 68 fire departments held open houses at 90 different fire stations. This garnered a lot of free publicity on radio, TV and print. Connecticut Governor Dannel P. Malloy proclaimed the day as Volunteer Firefighter Day in Connecticut. Through this partnership, the program received publicity valued at approximately \$4 million with a reach of over 300 million. (See Appendix C)
- The program sponsored a Fire Chief 101 class at the Connecticut Fire Academy in June 2016. This was a full day course designed to familiarize the newly installed volunteer Fire Chief with the duties and responsibilities that are connected to the position. With the aim of recruiting and

retaining the firefighter of the future, a Cadet Program introduced fourteen and fifteen years old into the fire service through a six-day camp. During this time, cadets participated in training and drills and received graduation certificates at the end of the program and an enthusiasm to become firefighters. [Cadet program video](#)

- The program raised awareness to the need for the recruitment and retention of mothers who are also volunteer firefighters. The program tapped into this unique demographic by interviewing two volunteer mothers who shared their experiences of juggling their parental and firefighting duties. The story was aired four times on television and received an estimate of 65,000 media impressions. A newspaper article on this had an estimate of 250,000 media impressions. The story was posted on Facebook and reached over 13,000 people and was shared over 45 times. With the interest that this story received, a half-day seminar was held in Connecticut and the two mothers as speakers to enlighten and encourage departments to break the norm and recruit mothers as volunteers. [Mommy minute video](#)
- Twenty billboards were put up throughout the state advertising the need for volunteers. Radio ads were run on Pandora and iHeart radio to specifically target recruitment of the youth. This proved to be very successful in reaching the younger demographic. Television and radio interviews were also conducted to help with the recruitment efforts.

5 CONCLUSIONS AND MOVING FORWARD

Overall, Phase 2 of the Connecticut Volunteer Workforce Solutions program was successful and brought in 401 new members to the fifteen participating departments and collected useful data through the online survey and the online Volunteer Management System.

Using GIS Tapestry data allowed departments to better tailor their recruitment plans to people that would be more likely to become volunteer firefighters. The departments that used the data, stuck to their recruitment plans, and conducted some form of recruitment activity each month saw results. While GIS Tapestry data is not the answer to solve all recruitment issues, it is definitely a helpful tool. In the end, current firefighters having strong conversations with interested recruits is what brings new volunteers in the door. Departments should focus on training their current volunteers on the best way to represent the department to encourage others to join. With a new generation of volunteers entering the ranks, it is important to show how joining the fire department will benefit the interested individual. What will they get out of being a volunteer? How will becoming a volunteer benefit them?

While volunteer recruitment is important, retention is equally (if not more) important. The VWS program recognized this and identified that having effective leadership within an organization is imperative to retain volunteers. Throughout the program, leadership classes were delivered throughout Connecticut with the aim of improving retention.

VWS staff followed up with the fifteen participating departments at the end of the grant to gather feedback on the program. All departments that responded said the program expectations were clearly outlined at the beginning of the program. The majority found the information in the GIS Tapestry Reports to be “very beneficial.” When asked what elements of the program led to improvement in recruitment efforts, participants stated the following: “media and print materials, leadership training and networking, and having a better understanding of the motivators allowed for more focused

marketing efforts thus saving time and effort.” The majority of respondents stated that the program helped to improve operational capabilities. They indicated that the online data collection system was very user-friendly, but expressed the need for an online forum for information sharing. Respondents commented that the VWS staff was outstanding and great to work with. One department commented that the program helped to improve their recruitment practices and brought in six new members.

Now that the Connecticut Fire Chiefs Association has successfully recruited new volunteers, the next step is to ensure they are trained properly, receive NFPA 1582 compliant physicals, develop leadership skills, and become productive members of their departments to improve community safety. In addition, it will be important to keep the momentum going and continue to push volunteer firefighter recruitment efforts throughout the state. The CFCA was recently awarded a SAFER grant to execute Phase 3 of the Volunteer Workforce Solutions program which will focus on all of those areas.

The Connecticut Volunteer Workforce Solutions website located at www.everydayheroct.org will be kept up-to-date with program information. This report and the other reports mentioned earlier will be available there as well.

The CFCA and the IAFC appreciate the support from FEMA. The program had a very positive impact on volunteer and combination departments all throughout Connecticut and will allow for safer and more prepared communities when emergencies and disasters occur.