

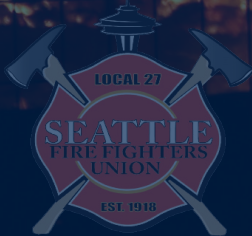
**INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FIRE FIGHTERS  
INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FIRE CHIEFS**



# **The Wellness-Fitness Initiative**

**Overview and Best-Practice Guidelines**

**2022**



# The Fire Service Joint **LABOR MANAGEMENT**

Wellness-Fitness Initiative

Est 1997

# A Historic Partnership

Indianapolis

Austin

Seattle

New York

Los Angeles County



Calgary

Miami Dade

Phoenix

Charlotte

Fairfax County

A Commitment to Improve the Wellness of All  
Uniformed Fire Department Personnel



# WHY the WFI?

## Objective 1

- Highlight the interdisciplinary nature of wellness and the need for a **COMPREHENSIVE** approach to promote fire fighter health and well-being



# WHY the WFI?

## Objective 2

- Establish the importance of **COLLABORATION** between labor and management during the implementation of any wellness-fitness program



# WHY the WFI?

## Objective 3

- Remove any punitive associations with health screening and physical fitness (promote **INCLUSIVITY**)



# WHY the WFI?

## Objective 4

- Shift the focus from performance and fitness standards to wellness and **BEHAVIOR CHANGE**



# WHAT is the WFI?

## A Comprehensive System

- 1. DEFINE** Wellness  
(Guidelines to assess physical and psychological well-being)
- 2. IMPROVE** Wellness  
(Programs to target physical and psychological behaviors)
- 3. SUPPORT** Wellness  
(Policies to support physical and psychological well-being)
- 4. RESTORE** Wellness  
(Standards to rehabilitate physical and psychological well-being)
- 5. PROMOTE** Wellness  
(Strategies to implement and evaluate programs)





# WHAT is the WFI?

## Complementary Components

### A. Medical Evaluations

Chapter 2 – Medical

### B. Physical Fitness

Chapter 3 – Fitness

### C. Medical/Fitness/Injury Rehabilitation

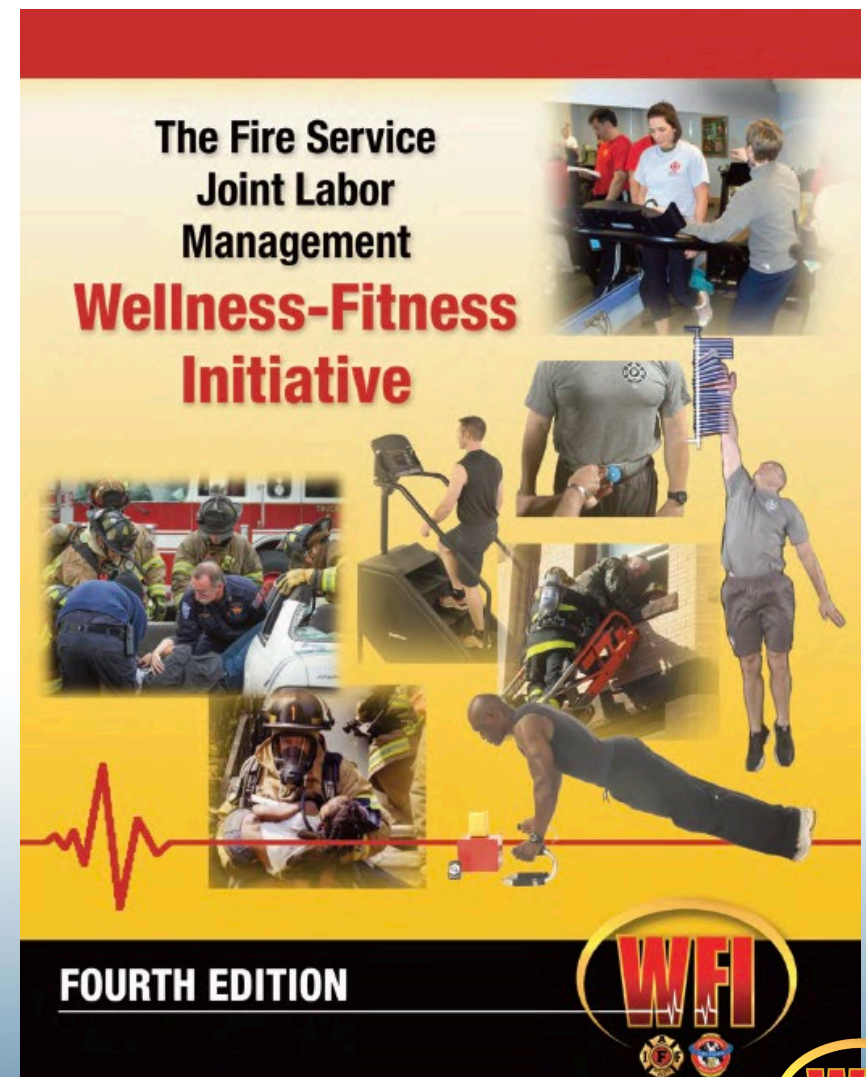
Chapter 4 – Injury and Medical Rehabilitation

### D. Behavioral Health

Chapter 5 – Behavioral Health

### E. Data Collection and Reporting

Chapter 6 – Cost Justification, Chapter 7 – Data Collection,  
Chapter 8 – Implementation



# HOW to Achieve Success?

## LEADERSHIP

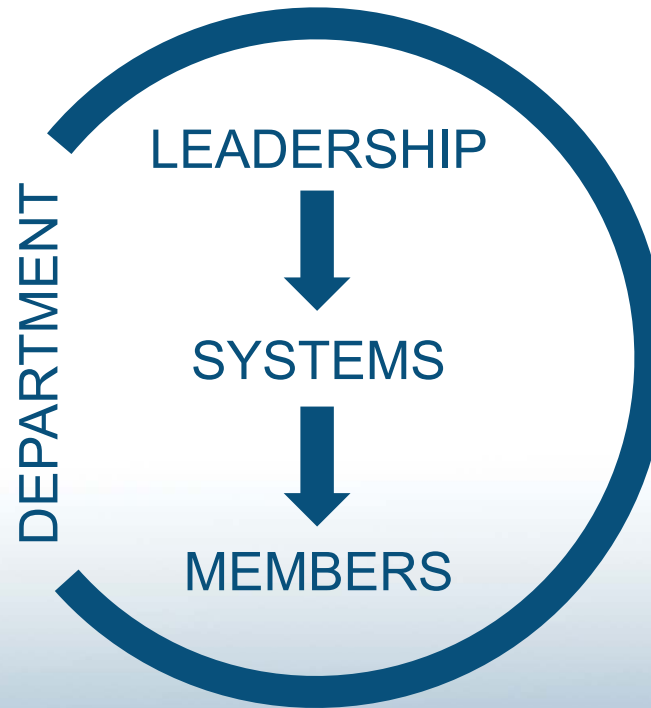
Confirm **MANAGEMENT**'s commitment to and support of...

Confirm **UNION EXECUTIVE**'s commitment to and/or support of...

## MEMBERSHIP

Reward members' **WILLINGNESS TO ENGAGE** in department initiatives

Increase members' **ENTHUSIASM** towards wellness and fitness



## SYSTEMS

Involve **CHAMPIONS** to support and overcome resistance

Create and execute a comprehensive **IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

## DEPARTMENT

Create a **CULTURE** to support physical and psychological well-being

Build a working **RELATIONSHIP** between labor and management

# 25 YEARS OF

WFI Implementation

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**The WFI continues to be the principal, most comprehensive and inclusive resource to support fire fighter wellness and fitness**

Grounded by a framework, supported with evidence, and continually updated by the world's leading subject matter experts, the WFI offers best-practice guidelines to inform the implementation of wellness-fitness programs by any department.



## NFPA 1582

# Standard on Comprehensive Occupational Medical Program for Fire Departments

Standard outlines an occupational medical program that will reduce risks and provide for the health, safety and effectiveness of fire fighters operating to protect civilian life and property. Informed by the WFI.

## NFPA 1583

# Standard on Health-Related Fitness Programs for Fire Department Members

Standard outlines a complete health-related fitness program designed for fire departments that is consistent with today's best practices. Reflects the guidelines outlined in the WFI.



## Chapter 2

Management and Labor shall support the provision of a comprehensive mandatory (and non-punitive) annual **MEDICAL EVALUATION**



# Why MEDICALS?

## 5 REASONS WHY YOUR DEPARTMENT SHOULD CONDUCT **ANNUAL MEDICALS**

1. To identify whether individuals are physically and mentally able to perform essential job duties without undue risk of harm.
2. To monitor the acute and long-term effects of the working environment on uniformed personnel, including the effects of physical and psychosocial stressors in the fire department.
3. To detect patterns of disease in the fire department that might indicate underlying work-related health concerns.
4. To provide quantifiable medical information on the entire fire department.
5. To inform uniformed personnel of their occupational hazards and health status.



# What's Included in MEDICALS?

The WFI Medical Committee has made recommendations for fire fighters beyond those outlined by organizations such as the American Heart Association and the American Cancer Society for the general population

- ✓ Physical Examination
  - ✓ Body Composition
  - ✓ Laboratory Analyses
  - ✓ Vision Evaluation
  - ✓ Hearing Evaluation
  - ✓ Pulmonary Evaluation
- ✓ Cardiovascular Evaluation
  - ✓ Cancer Screening
  - ✓ Sleep Disturbance
  - ✓ Immunizations
- ✓ Infectious Disease Screening
- ✓ Occupational Stress Awareness

# Best Practices for MEDICALS

## AGREE TO MANDATORY, NON-PUNITIVE

Require 'participation' by all uniformed personnel, but involvement will have no consequences on job status. Specific definition of 'participation' may also depend on departmental constraints.

## PRIORITIZE CONFIDENTIALITY

Specific information regarding the medical examination, evaluation, laboratory results and medical diagnosis shall not be released unless written permission is obtained from the individual.

### APPENDIX B

Dear Medical Provider,

The following medical examination is based on the unique risks and adverse working environments that fire fighters face daily. It allows for early detection of diseases and illnesses associated with the occupation of firefighting.



## Chapter 3

Management and Labor shall work together to provide a comprehensive (and non-punitive) **FITNESS** program that supports on-duty exercise to prepare members to meet their demands on and off the job



# Why FITNESS?

- The benefits of regular exercise and physical activity are well known
- **BUT**...Many fire fighters are not meeting the physical activity recommendations from the World Health Organization

(150 min /week of moderate to vigorous intensity)



# What's Included in FITNESS?

- Guidelines to **ASSESS**

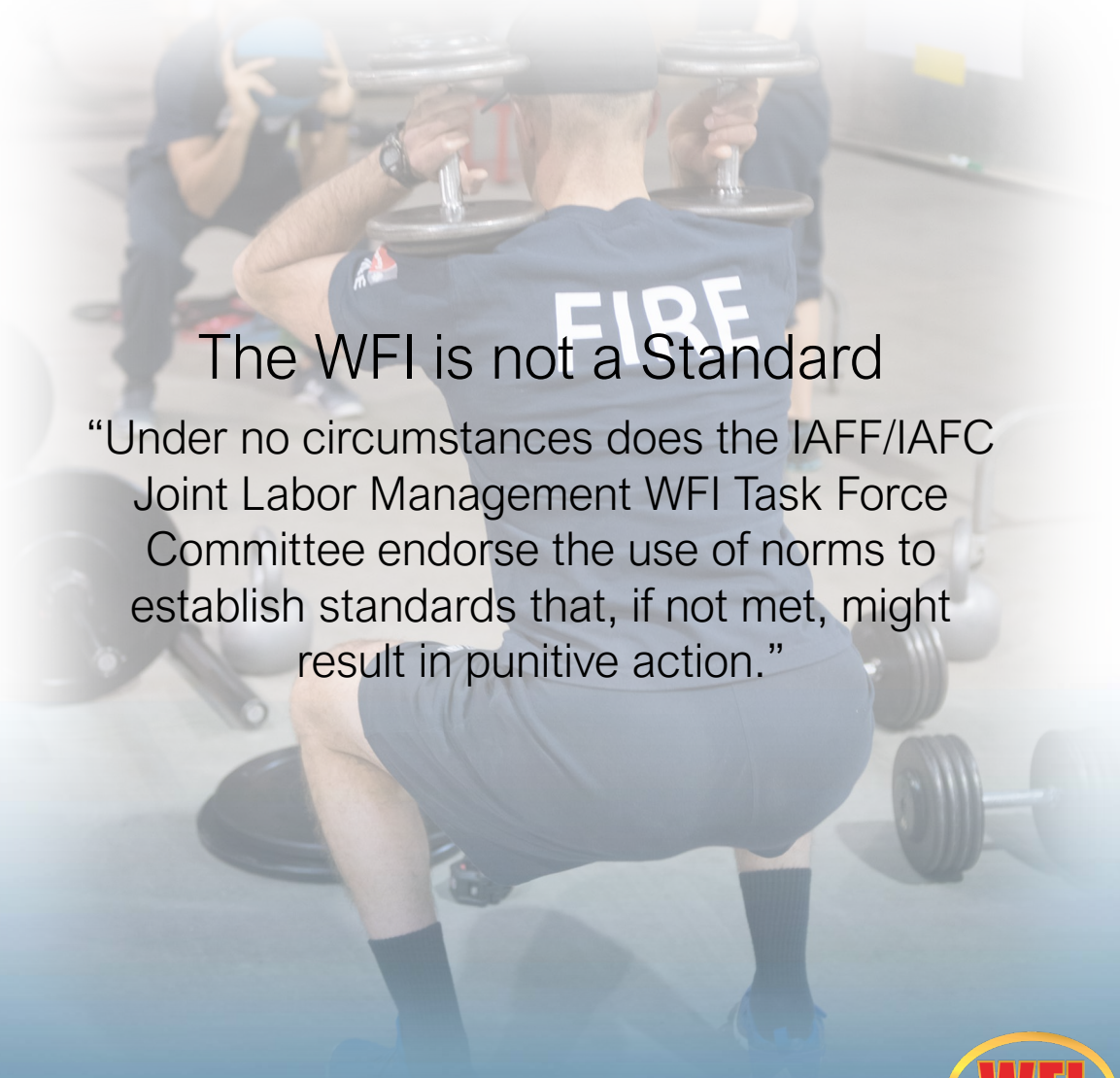
Body Composition, Aerobic Capacity and Recovery, Mobility, Strength and Endurance, Speed and Power

- Principles to **DESIGN**

Learning Objectives, Movement Patterns, FITT Parameters, Progression

- Strategies to **IMPLEMENT**

Accessibility, diversity, professional support (Peer Fitness Trainers))



The WFI is not a Standard  
“Under no circumstances does the IAFF/IAFC Joint Labor Management WFI Task Force Committee endorse the use of norms to establish standards that, if not met, might result in punitive action.”

# Best Practices for FITNESS

## PROVIDE ACCESS TO **ON-DUTY EXERCISE TIME**

While scheduling on-duty time may vary due to emergency calls, training, and other duties, the WFI recommends that 60-90 minutes per shift be dedicated to exercise and/or physical activity.

This includes time allocated to uniformed personnel working administrative shifts.

## ESTABLISH A **FITNESS COMMITTEE**

Create a fitness committee with representation from labor and management, a department physician (if applicable) and an exercise specialist such as a PFT. PFTs should reflect the demographics of the department and may assume one or more of many roles (e.g. ambassador, creator, mentor, manager).

## Chapter 4

Management and Labor shall work together to provide a comprehensive injury management, medical recovery and fitness program that ensures effective **REHABILITATION** of any affected uniformed personnel to full duty status



# Why REHABILITATION?

**Firefighting is one of the most dangerous and high-risk jobs in the world**

The incidence of musculoskeletal injuries, cardiovascular disease, cancer and mental health disorders is higher amongst fire fighters than the general population. The personal and economic costs can place substantial strain on a department, particularly without a rehabilitation program to restore fire fighters' wellness. A comprehensive rehabilitation program must be a priority.

# What's Included in REHABILITATION?

## A COMPREHENSIVE PROCESS

### “PREHAB”

PREVENTATIVE  
Measures



The **Prehab** stage aims to prepare fire fighters for the physical and psychological demands of the job

### REHABILITATION

Measures to MANAGE and TREAT condition  
Early healing and Functional/Performance Stages



The **Early Healing** stage aims to restore basic function and establish positive habits



The **Functional/Performance** stage aims to restore advanced level function so return to work is possible

### “POST REHAB”

PREVENTATIVE  
measures



The **Post Rehab** stage aims to maintain advanced level function for the demands of work and life

# Best Practices for REHABILITATION

## MINIMIZE TIME TO ONSET OF CARE

Establish policies, systems and a network of professionals to streamline the continuum of care. Minimizing the timing between the inciting event and first contact of care will significantly improve outcomes and minimize the personal and economic costs.

## PRIORITIZE CONTINUITY OF CARE

Establish open lines of communication amongst anyone who will be involved in the continuum of care (physicians, rehabilitation providers, peer fitness trainers). Clarify roles and expectations of everyone involved and establish a common language.



## Chapter 5

Management and Labor shall support the provision of a **BEHAVIORAL HEALTH** plan, which may be delivered either through internal or external sources, based on specific elements

# Why BEHAVIORAL HEALTH?

Wellness involves physical, psychological and social components.

Uniformed personnel who are mentally and emotionally fit form the foundation of the fire service.



# What's Included in BEHAVIORAL HEALTH?

- Information to raise **AWARENESS**

Behavioral health stressors in the fire service, common behavioral health conditions, and tips to alleviate stigma

- Strategies to effect **CHANGE**

Strategies to implement a comprehensive behavioral health program, including family support and education



# Best Practices for BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

## BUILD AWARENESS

Successful behavioral health initiatives are non-punitive and provide access to mental health services, build awareness about behavioral health issues, educate and work to dismantle the stigma associated with behavioral health and those who seek services.

## IDENTIFY CHAMPIONS

The most successful behavioral health programs are cooperative efforts between labor and management and involve one or more champions. These individuals collaborate with others to implement the program, evaluate effectiveness, provide leadership and ensure sustainability.

## Chapter 6

Management and labor shall work together to reduce the risk of injury and illness to uniformed personnel, and the associated **COSTS**, by fully implementing the WFI

# Why COST JUSTIFICATION?

Some parts of WFI can be implemented without spending money, but to create a sustainable program that maximizes value and impact, organizations will need to make a financial investment

## RETURN ON INVESTMENT (ROI)

In addition to the lives changed by investing in fire fighter wellness and fitness, organizations have typically seen a ROI of \$2 to \$6.

Invest \$1,000 to save 6x that amount!

# What's Included in COST JUSTIFICATION?

An iceberg floating in the ocean. The tip of the iceberg is above the water line, and the much larger, jagged base is submerged below the water line. The sky is blue with some clouds, and the water is a deep blue.

## DIRECT COSTS

(Compensation Claims)

## INDIRECT COSTS

(Insurance costs, time lost, replacement costs, presenteeism costs, productivity costs, overhead costs, etc)

- **WFI vs non-WFI Comparison (2007)**

WFI led to fewer claims, lost days and costs

Cost per claim reduced by ~\$1500 with WFI

Cost per claim increased by ~\$2400 without WFI

- **Economic Impact (2017)**

WFI reduced claims by 40% and resulted in annual cost savings of \$500,000+

Cost savings are only short term and do not include indirect cost savings – impact is even greater!

# Best Practices for COST JUSTIFICATION

## CONSIDER DIRECT + INDIRECT

While the direct cost savings that can be realized via a reduction in claims, cost per claim, and lost days will offer insight into the ROI, the impact will be much larger when consideration is given to the indirect costs, and open claims that persist over time.

**Indirect costs could be 10x as high!**

## MEASURE PERSONAL + ECONOMIC

While there are many ways to evaluate the success of a wellness-fitness program, the personal impact and economic costs should both be measured. The most valuable resource to a department is its members and therefore the impact of a WFI program in the short and long term must be considered.



## Chapter 7

Management and Labor shall support systems that confidentially **COLLECT DATA** (medical, health, fitness) and provide analysis to improve the wellness of all fire department members



# Why DATA COLLECTION?

## HOW WILL YOU DEFINE **SUCCESS?**

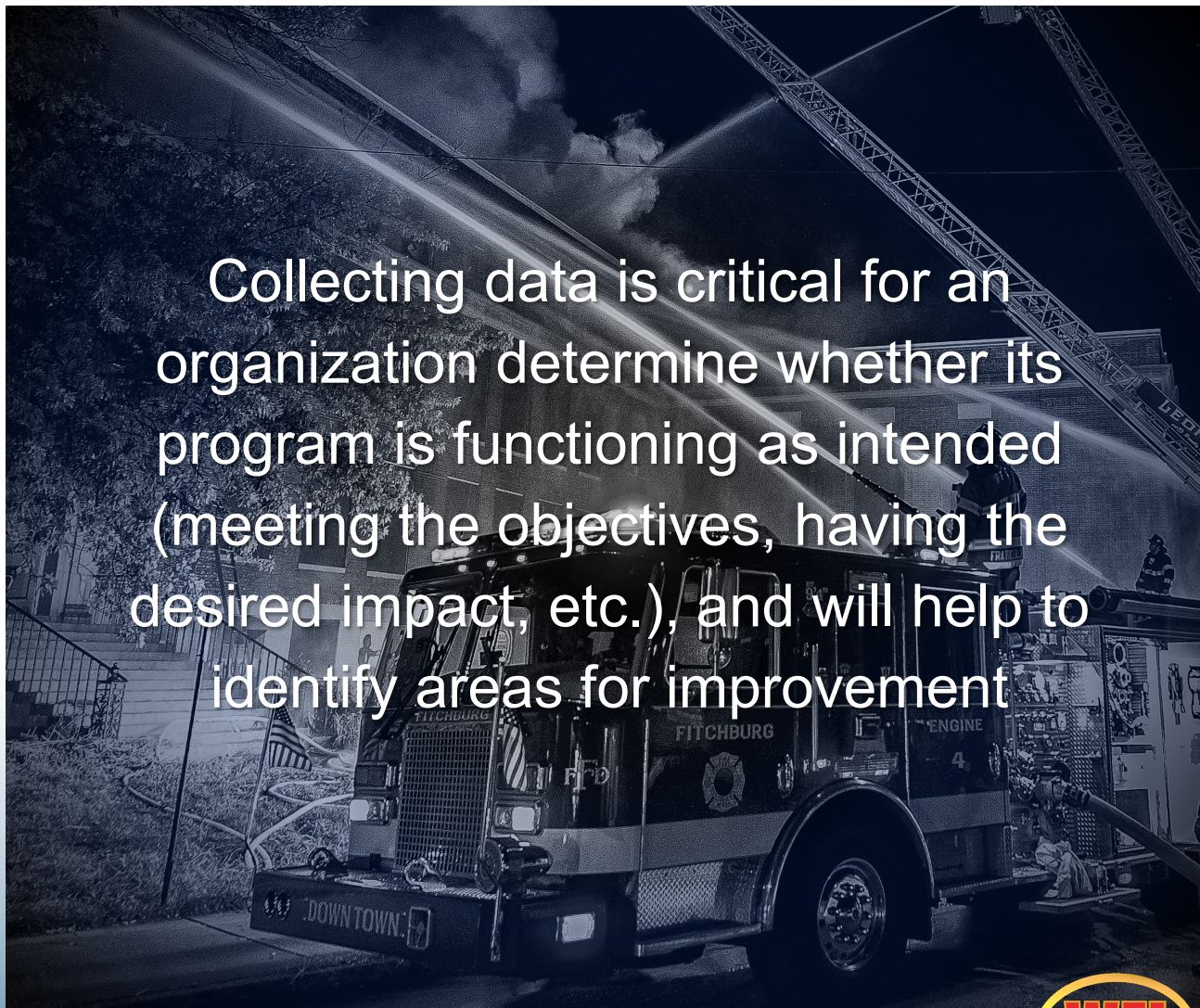
### FIRE FIGHTER

- Participation Rates  
(Utilization, Penetration, Depth)
- Satisfaction  
(Scope, Relevance, Quality, Accessibility)
- Capacity  
(Fitness, Movement, Mindset)

### ORGANIZATION

- Costs  
(Medical, Disability, Worker Compensation)
- Injuries  
(Number, Body Part, Activity)
- Workplace Culture  
(Satisfaction, Perceived Support)

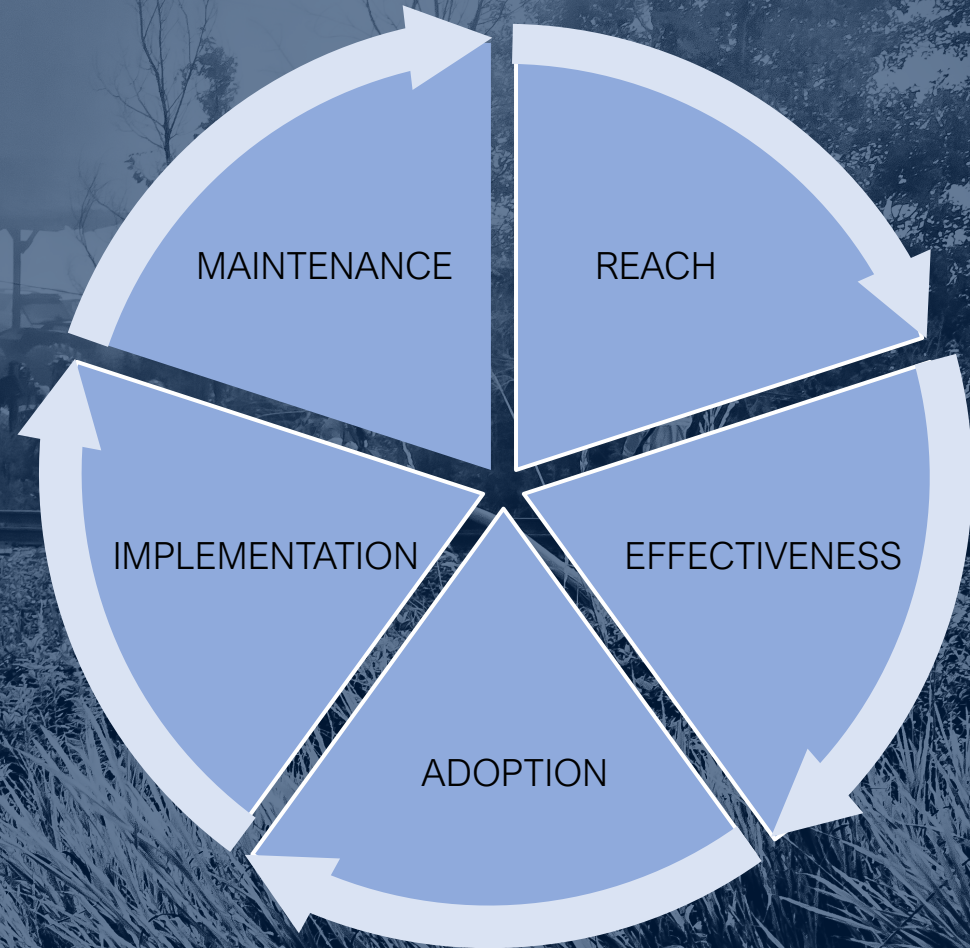
Collecting data is critical for an organization determine whether its program is functioning as intended (meeting the objectives, having the desired impact, etc.), and will help to identify areas for improvement



# What's Included in DATA COLLECTION?

## A FRAMEWORK TO EVALUATE SUCCESS

- **REACH** To what extent was the target population reached?
- **EFFECTIVENESS** To what extent can the intervention achieve the desired outcome?
- **ADOPTION** To what extent was I able to achieve organizational support?
- **IMPLEMENTATION** To what extent was the intervention delivered as intended?
- **MAINTENANCE** To what extent was the intervention maintained in the long term?



# Best Practices for DATA COLLECTION

## MEASURE OUTCOMES

There will be specific outcome measures that can provide insight into the value and impact that a wellness-fitness program has in the short- and long-term (fire fighters' motivation, injury claims, money spent, etc.). Measure these items to evaluate your return on investment.

## EVALUATE PROCESSES

To assess the extent to which any wellness-fitness program is successful will depend in large part on the processes and systems in place to guide the implementation. Evaluating the processes will allow for changes to be made in real-time thus increasing the likelihood of success.

## Chapter 8

Management and Labor shall work together to fully  
**IMPLEMENT** all components of the WFI



# Why IMPLEMENTATION?

**Implementation planning will determine  
program success**

It is the necessary step that transforms an organization's strategic plans into action to achieve their goals

# What's Included in IMPLEMENTATION?

## A Process

- 1. DEFINE** Objectives  
(Identify the aims and priorities of all stakeholders)
- 2. ASSESS** Needs  
(Identify the personal needs/wants and logistical constraints)
- 3. DESIGN** Program  
(Establish a comprehensive plan with input from all involved)
- 4. IMPLEMENT** Program  
(Address obstacles/leverage facilitators, put plan into practice)
- 5. EVALUATE** Program  
(Monitor progress and adapt as needed to improve impact )



# Best Practices for IMPLEMENTATION

## OVERCOME OBSTACLES

Every program will have obstacles – factors that limit or restrict implementation. Successful programs will have systems in place to identify obstacles and processes to overcome or accommodate them so that progress can continue to be made.

## LEVERAGE FACILITATORS

In every organization there will be facilitators – factors that promote or help implementation. Successful programs will have systems in place to identify facilitators and processes to leverage or amplify their benefits to maximize impact.







# FOR DUTY + FOR LIFE

Build the physical abilities,  
understanding and  
motivation to thrive

Establish the behaviors and  
routines to maintain a state  
of health and well-being

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