

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FIRE FIGHTERS INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FIRE CHIEFS



Wellness-Fitness Initiative Task Force Meeting
December 12-13, 2022

WFI Best Practices Revisited

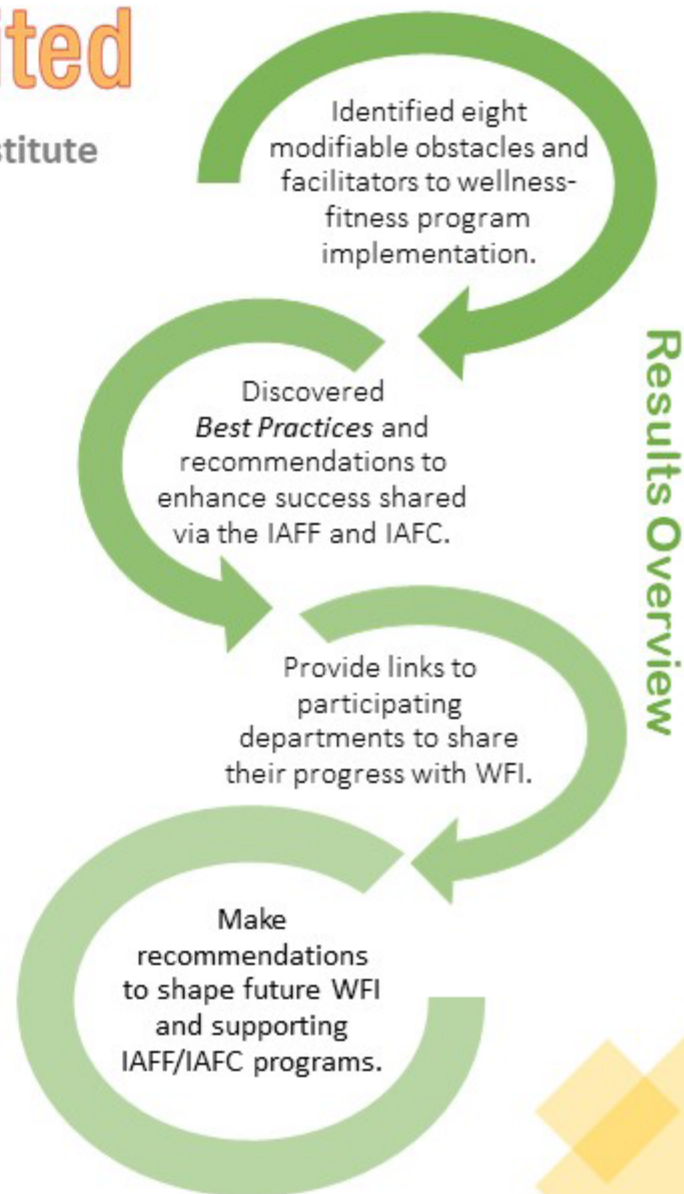
International Fire Service Research Center and Policy Institute

FEMA Funded Fire Prevention Safety Grant

Study Overview



Results Overview



1/1/2021
Awarded

Survey
development &
Beta testing

Outreach &
surveys
completed

Obstacles &
Facilitators data
review

Focus Group
interviews &
reviews

New Best
Practices
identified

Presentations,
Videos, &
Reports

9/28/2022
Completed



Best Practices Revisited

DEMOGRAPHICS

The study conducted a comprehensive joint labor/management review of the current Wellness-Fitness Initiative (WFI). Qualitative and quantitative methods were used to assess obstacles and facilitators to identify opportunities to improve the design and implementation of WFI associated programs via guidelines, webinars, and associated supportive documentation, to support the health and wellness of firefighters.

Qualitative Phase:

Departments were asked to complete three surveys:

1. Interest/Authorization – by both Labor and Management.
2. Department Demographics (DDI) – by Management and optional by Labor.
3. Obstacles & Facilitators (OFI – by Labor and Management.

196		Total Responses	
110	LABOR	87	MGMT
70	Depts - MGMT & Labor Responded		
	Large	Med	Small
	25	25	20
	Career	Comb	VOI
	59	9	2
	Urban	Suburban	Rural
	44	23	3
126	Of the 192 Invited Depts Completed At Least One Survey		
42	Depts completed All Surveys		
76	Depts completed DDI Survey		
81	Depts completed OFI Survey		
	44	Fire Chiefs	
	64	Local Officials	
	101	Other Positions	
29	Depts invited to joint Labor/MGMT Interviews		

Quantitative Phase:

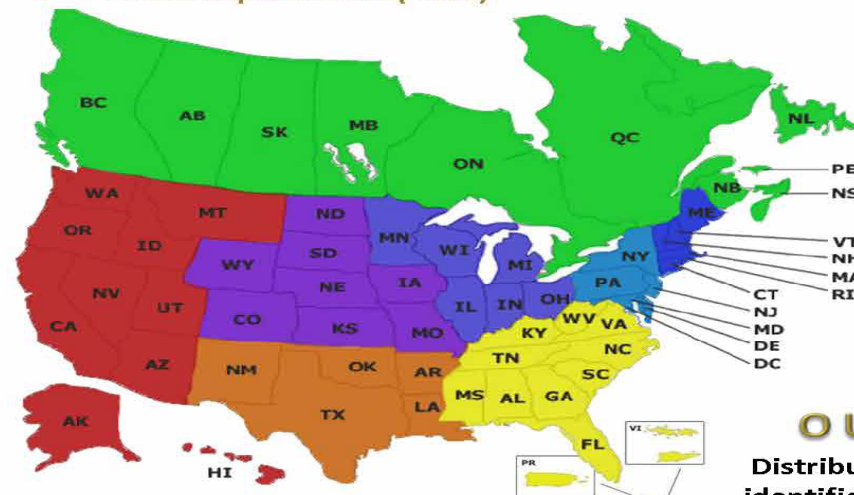
Departments participated in phone/Zoom interviews, which included Labor and Management with other health, wellness, & fitness stakeholders whenever possible.

Twenty-nine interviews were completed and reviewed.

- 11 large departments (>600)
- 9 medium departments (200-600)
- 9 small departments (<200)

IAFC Divisions

- Canadian
- Eastern
- Great Lakes:
- Missouri Valley
- New England
- Southeastern
- Southwestern
- Western



OUTCOMES

Distributed WFI Best Practices identified via the IAFF and IAFC





OBSTACLES AND FACILITATORS

To Wellness-Fitness Program Implementation

A Joint Labor/Management Wellness-Fitness Initiative



8 HIGHLY INFLUENTIAL FACTORS TO OVERCOME OR LEVERAGE

LEADERSHIP

MANAGEMENT's involvement in, commitment to, and/or support of...

UNION EXECUTIVE's involvement in, commitment to, and/or support of...

SYSTEMS

Involvement of **CHAMPIONS** to support and overcome resistance

Creation and execution of an **IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

MEMBERSHIP

Members' **WILLINGNESS TO ENGAGE** in any department led initiatives

Members' **ENTHUSIASM** towards wellness and fitness

DEPARTMENT

Way of thinking, ways things are done, values (**CULTURE**)

RELATIONSHIP between labor and management

12 IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS YOUR DEPARTMENT'S NEEDS

Enviro Restructuring
Education
Persuasion
Incentivization
Training
Enablement



Modelling
Champions
Planning
Knowledge Exchange
Policy
Funding



F2T | FIT TO THRIVE
PERFORMANCE REDEFINED

A NEW APPROACH

The FIT TO THRIVE (F2T) program is an innovative charge to improve fire fighter health and wellness. Born as an extension of the comprehensive IAFF/IAFC Wellness Fitness Initiative (WFI) and the IAFF/IAFC Peer Fitness Trainer (PFT) program, F2T is designed to help more fire fighters be more active more often so they can experience the benefits of regular exercise and physical activity.

WHY F2T?

Firefighting is one of the most dangerous jobs in North America. Beyond the many occupational hazards that can acutely affect a fire fighter's health and safety on any given shift, fire fighters are at an elevated risk of many adverse health outcomes that can affect the quality of their lives across their careers. High priority concerns are cardiovascular disease, cancer, and behavioral health issues.

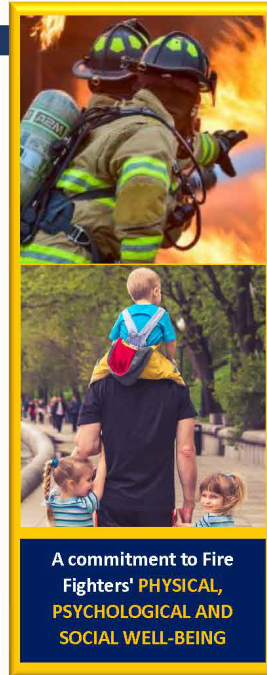
Exercise and Physical Activity Can Help

There is strong scientific evidence that exercise and physical activity are effective countermeasures against many of the common health risks in fire fighters. For example, exercise and physical activity is associated with a lower risk of 13 different cancers and a lower risk of cardiovascular disease. The benefits of becoming more active also extend beyond reducing the risk of adverse outcomes. For example, higher levels of self-reported happiness and improved sleep are linked with higher levels of exercise and physical activity.

WHAT IS F2T AND HOW DOES IT WORK?

What is F2T?
F2T is ACCESSIBLE Leverage in-person and online environments to understand members' needs, share resources and facilitate learning.
F2T is COMPREHENSIVE Provide solutions to leverage the physical, psychological and social benefits of exercise for work, life, and play.
F2T is INCLUSIVE Emphasize inclusivity via the provision of opportunities, activities and challenges for fire fighters with a range of interests.
F2T is BEHAVIOR FOCUSED Provide strategies to assess, accommodate and address the capabilities, opportunities and motivations that influence fire fighters' physical activity habits.

How does F2T work?
F2T EDUCATION Help inform fire fighters with knowledge, tactics and practical strategies to make exercise and physical activity suit their lives.
F2T TRAINING Provide a diverse range of exercise options to suit the barriers, motivation, abilities and interests of all fire fighters.
F2T MENTORSHIP Provide mentorship to local leaders to help create a positive environment and an organizational culture conducive to the pursuit of wellness.
F2T SUPPORT Provide support to members, program ambassadors and department leaders to accommodate all stakeholders.



F2T ENGAGEMENT



TAKEAWAYS

- F2T endeavors to get more fire fighters engaging in exercise and physical activity.
- The F2T program is:
 - Committed to fire fighters' physical, psychological and social well-being.
 - ACCESSIBLE, COMPREHENSIVE, INCLUSIVE, and BEHAVIOR FOCUSED.
 - Implemented via the provision of education, training, mentorship, and support.

STAY IN THE KNOW AND START THE DISCUSSION

- IAFF/IAFC Wellness Fitness Initiative - <https://www.iaff.org/wellness-fitness/>
- IAFC Wellness/Fitness Task Force - <https://www.iafc.org/topics-and-tools/safety-health/wellness-fitness-task-force>
- WFI Fit to Thrive (F2T) Training - info@fittothrive.ca





REVISITED

Finding Best Practices

Leading to a Roadmap for a
Comprehensive
Wellness-Fitness Initiative

SUMMARY

The study conducted a comprehensive joint labor/management review of the current Wellness-Fitness Initiative (WFI). Qualitative and quantitative methods were used to assess obstacles and facilitators to identify opportunities to improve the design and implementation of WFI associated programs via guidelines, webinars, and associated supportive documentation, to support the health and wellness of firefighters.

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Twenty-nine departments were then selected for the quantitative phase. In addition to the Original 10 WFI departments, a selection of small, medium, suburban, and rural departments were also selected, based on regional diversity across the US and Canada, for virtual interviews.

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

- Majority of the departments were working on implementing or improving wellness-fitness programs.
- Top three major obstacles:
 1. Perceived costs / access to funding
 2. Member engagement
 3. Culture
- Top three request for additional support/guidance:
 1. Updated Manuals, Guides, Videos on implementing the WFI.
 2. Accessing regional/national subject matter experts to overcome obstacles or facilitate innovative programs.
 3. Developing efficient data management/programs to support ROI, needs, outcomes, for budget proposals.
- History and/or guidance lost when Chief or Champions are lost.
- Departments with respectful labor/management communication have the strongest and sustainable programs.
- Can take up to 10 years to see final goals. Taking steps with obtainable goals keeps programs moving forward.
- New best practices being researched by study team:
 - Support for programs within the private and public sectors – Consultants, Universities, Gyms, Chaplains, etc.
 - Program guidelines/practices currently in place at departments with successful programs.
 - Creation of regional groups to share successful best practices while providing general support.

STUDY PARTICIPATION

The study engaged the original 10 WFI departments and invited both labor and management from an additional 170 departments, across the US and Canada, to participate in the initial qualitative phase of the study.

For the qualitative phase, departments were asked to complete three surveys:

1. **Interest/Authorization** – by both Labor and Management.
2. **Department Demographics (DDI)** – by Management and optional by Labor.
3. **Obstacles & Facilitators (OFI)** – by Labor and Management.

FACT SHEET

Study Team:

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Oregon Health & Science University: Carol DeFrancesco & Susanna Ek

Grant Funded Organization:



International Fire Service Research
Center and Policy Institute
<https://www.iafc.org/about-iafc/international-fire-service-research-center-and-policy-institute>

FACT SHEET

TAKEAWAYS

- Need to build next generation of champions.
- Creating respectful labor/management communications to move forward and put the members needs first.
- Find ways to break thing down into smaller steps. Start with what can bring success and build from there.
- Data, data, data. Departments need to better utilize data to highlight their successes and need for funding.

FIRE STATION TALK

- What are the obstacles that impact the success of better wellness-fitness support programs?
- What currently facilitates labor and management in being successful?
- What steps can we start right now that can be successful, and can be built on, to support wellness-fitness?
- Who are our Wellness-fitness champions? Are there ways to ensure successful personnel transitions so programs can continue to move forward?
- What techniques can be learned to initiate respectful labor/management communication?
- Is there department data that can guide us in what needs the most attention to be successful?

CONSIDERATIONS FOR CHIEFS

Department leaders should consider the following:

- Is there respectful labor/management communication? How can it be made stronger?
- What is the department's wellness-fitness priority for the next 6 months?
- What small steps can be started, or enhanced, for a wellness/fitness project to show forward progress?
- What are the benchmarks to look for that your programs are being successful?
- What data is needed, or can be developed, that can support future wellness-fitness programs?
- Who are the wellness/fitness champions? Is there a manual providing the history, guidelines which can be provided to future Chiefs or Champions?

TERMS

Quantitative - Quantitative research is the process of collecting and analyzing numerical data. It can be used to find patterns and averages, make predictions, test causal relationships, and generalize results to wider populations.

Qualitative - Qualitative research involves collecting and analyzing non-numerical data (e.g., text, video, or audio) to understand concepts, opinions, or experiences. It can be used to gather in-depth insights into a problem or generate innovative ideas for research.

INFOGRAPHICS



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- IAFC Wellness/Fitness Task Force - <https://www.iafc.org/topics-and-tools/safety-health/wellness-fitness-task-force>
- WFI Fit to Thrive (F2T) Training - <https://www.iaff.org/peer-fitness/>
- Science to the Stations A Health & Wellness Alliance - <https://science-alliance.org/>

