

Volunteer Firefighter Recruitment and Retention Formative Research Results

Prepared for National Volunteer Fire Council

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Report | SalterMitchell Inc.

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CHALLENGE

The number of volunteer firefighters and emergency responders in the United States is declining – about 12 percent in just the past three decades – leaving nearly half of U.S. communities at increased risk during emergencies. This declining number of volunteers coincides with an increased call volume that has tripled in that time, and an increased public expectation for more and better quality fire and rescue services.

The National Volunteer Fire Council is seeking a nationwide strategy for improving volunteer firefighter recruitment and retention. The obvious starting point is to get more *interested* individuals in the door. The key questions are: who are these interested individuals, why are they interested in this opportunity, and what will lead them to actively volunteer with their local volunteer fire and rescue departments?

RESEARCH GOALS

In 2013 and 2014, NVFC conducted department surveys examining recruitment and retention challenges and successes across the nation. In the Fall of 2014, NVFC expanded upon this by conducting target audience research with Salter>Mitchell to better understand the key attitudes and motivators of current volunteers, and of those who are interested in volunteering with the volunteer fire and rescue service. To understand the key attitudes and motivating factors that lead an individual from being interested in volunteering to actively volunteering, we must examine:

- **People's interest in volunteering**
 - What proportion of the population is interested in pursuing volunteer opportunities? Who are they – demographically and psycho-graphically? Where are these people located?
- **People's awareness of local needs and opportunities**
 - Are people aware of their local community's need for volunteers? Do people know how to get in touch if they are interested?
- **People's attitudes towards volunteering**
 - What do people think about volunteer firefighters? What do people think about being a volunteer firefighter? How does this align with interested individuals' values and expectations?
- **Drivers of current and future behavior**
 - How are "doers" and "non-doers" similar and different? How does this influence a non-doer's probability of volunteering?

METHODOLOGY

The initial phase of formative research included a rapid research review conducted in September 2014. This review consisted of an in-depth analysis of existing recruitment and retention campaigns and fire department survey data, a review of presentation and discussion notes from the September 2014 Fall NVFC SAFER work group meeting, and the completion of an informal recruitment and retention focus group with NVFC board members on September 19, 2014. Additionally, six one-on-one interviews were conducted with volunteer fire service professionals during the period of September 17-19, 2014.

The second phase of formative research consisted of an omnibus online survey completed by 1,224 U.S. adults (age 18+). The demographically representative sample was selected based on U.S. Census data for age, ethnicity, gender, region, and income. The survey included 4 questions and was fielded September 29 - October 1, 2014.

The third phase of formative research included two, three-day qualitative discussion sessions (“bulletin boards”) conducted online during the period of October 21-23, 2014. One discussion board, the “doers,” included 24 active volunteer firefighters of mixed demographics, recruited by NVFC and Salter>Mitchell. The other board of “non-doers” included 24 participants of various demographics who exhibited a strong or moderate interest in volunteering with the volunteer fire and emergency services, recruited by Salter>Mitchell.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The below outlines the higher level insights provided by the volunteer firefighter recruitment campaign formative research:

Interest in Volunteering

Results from the online omnibus survey provided insight on individuals' interest in volunteering:

- There is substantial interest in operational volunteer opportunities nationwide, with 29% of survey respondents indicating a high level, or a moderate level of interest in volunteer firefighting and first responder opportunities (5.7% 'definitely interested;' 22.8% 'might be interested.')
- When examining the role of age, interest was significantly higher among the 18-34 segment with 44% of 18-34 year olds showing interest in operational volunteer opportunities (13% 'definitely interested;' 31% 'might be interested.')
- Level of interest did not significantly vary when examining the role of gender.
- Minority respondents exhibited as much, if not more, interest in operational volunteer opportunities as Caucasian/White respondents.
- Roughly 40% of survey respondents indicated interest in volunteering non-operationally with a local volunteer department (fundraising, safety/prevention education, recruitment, other).
 - 20% of survey respondents indicated an interest in helping volunteer departments fundraise.
 - 18% of survey respondents indicated an interest in helping volunteer departments in fire safety and prevention educational outreach.

Awareness of Local Needs and Opportunities

Results from the online omnibus survey provided insight on individuals' awareness of local volunteer needs:

- Respondents indicated low recognition of need for volunteer firefighters and emergency responders in their community.
 - 80% of respondents said they "do not know" if their local department is looking for volunteers.
- Respondents indicated low knowledge of whether their local fire and rescue department was a volunteer, combination, or career department.

Attitudes Towards Volunteer Firefighters and Volunteer Firefighting

Responses to the qualitative discussion boards assessed twelve key behavioral determinants in order to provide insights to doer and non-doer attitudes towards volunteer firefighting.

Norms – *What people think is expected of them.*

- Doers and non-doers cite strong support from family, friends, and employers as a driving factor in joining and remaining a volunteer.

Self-Standards – *What people expect of themselves.*

- When considering non-doer perceptions of who volunteers *are* and perceptions of what they *do*, non-doers cited that they are similar to volunteers because:
 - They appreciate friendships and camaraderie.

- They want to help people.
- They care about their community.
- They want to learn new skills.
- They like excitement.

Efficacy – *An individual's confidence that he or she can pull of an action.*

- In general, interested non-doers have not applied because they perceive:
 - They do not have the physical attributes of a volunteer.
 - They cannot be fully committed to the job.
 - They do not have the right skill set.
 - They do not have enough information about the job expectations and the application process.

Environment

- Having friends within the department, and flexibility in scheduling were key things cited by doers that make it easier to sustain commitment to the fire department.
- Isolation, unmet expectations, frustration with leadership, and lack of support from family or employers were cited reasons by doers for what makes it harder to sustain commitment to the fire department.

Rewards, Risks, & Penalties – *Positive results of acting; Actual and perceived negative results of acting or not acting.*

- Doers cite the ability to give back to the community and save lives as significant rewards of serving.
- Doers cite the risk of dying or injury to self, and lost time with loved ones as significant risks and penalties.

Feelings – *Emotional benefits or barriers to action.*

- Emotional hooks for volunteer firefighting center around a feeling of accomplishment: overcoming fear of inadequacy and being overwhelmed, and a focus on camaraderie, accomplishment, and pride.

Control

- The non-doer perception is that you can only join or not join, when in reality, level of commitment is mostly flexible. There is little understanding of the nature of the volunteer opportunity and the factors at play.

Investment – *All the costs – financial and otherwise – of acting.*

- There is an unclear perception of the amount of time it takes to train and serve as a volunteer. Inaccurate perceptions could lead individuals to not volunteer.

Drivers of Current and Future Behavior

Responses to the qualitative discussion boards were used to assess drivers of current and future behaviors:

How doers became interested:

- Respondents often indicated interest in volunteering as a firefighter or first responder evolved due to a personal connection to the fire service, such as personally knowing someone who volunteers, being involved in an explorer or juniors program, or being involved in a related medical or volunteer activity.

How doers came to join:

- Current volunteers indicate that some form of invitation was a driving factor in their decision to volunteer.
 - Most volunteer firefighters surveyed said they were personally invited by a family member or friend to join.
 - A selection of respondents expressed interest in joining, once better informed of the opportunity, and revealed an untapped market just waiting for a personal invitation to get to know the department and its team better.
- Current volunteers indicate that they were more likely to join after being given a taste of what it's like to be a volunteer.
 - Survey respondents indicated that the ability to experience the opportunity first-hand allows them to picture themselves as part of the team and to tackle initial fears, therefore improving efficacy.
 - Respondents indicated that the more valuable interactions they (and their families/friends) have with the fire department, the better able they are to see how they could fit in.

How people are lost to follow-up:

- Non-doers cited that a key reason why they did not join is because they were unable to get in touch with the fire department, or that their inquiries went unanswered.
- Non-doer respondents surveyed across the country said that a factor in why they had not yet joined was that they hadn't been invited to join, so never considered it.
- There is a perceived sense that an interested individual must "join *now*... or not join at all." A lack of choices, flexibility with timing and levels of commitment keep some away.

Factors influencing retention:

- Doers often cite that bad training can be a leading cause of drop-out.
 - Doers cited the following as successful ways to keep new recruits interested in training: flexibility and convenience of online training, innovative training methods, survey respondents for ongoing improvements, frame training to build camaraderie.
 - Doers cited the following as factors in new recruits leaving: time-consuming and boring training.
- Doers cite the following reasons for thinking about leaving the volunteer fire service: boredom, senior leadership's poor treatment of firefighter, tired of best efforts resulting in loss, amount of time required to volunteer, poor communication between officers and members.
- Doers cite the following reasons for why they remain volunteers: they enjoy the department and people, officers and senior firefighters have encouraged them to stay, leaving would not change anything, they enjoy what they do and don't expect anything in return, dedication to department and the community.

Implications and Recommendations

Based on these findings a nationwide volunteer firefighter recruitment and retention strategy should aim to accomplish the following:

- Increase interest and awareness in volunteer opportunities; they are not currently top of mind for interested individuals.
- Increase the reach and frequency of personal invitations to improve outcomes.

- Increase frequency of innovative ways for interested individuals to taste/experience what it's like to be a volunteer.
- Improve tracking of conversion rates of the interested individuals who join.
- Increase the number of innovative training options for volunteers, and engineer the training process for retention.

DETAILED FINDINGS

This report will supply the more detailed quantitative and qualitative findings of the online omnibus survey and discussion boards.

Interest in Volunteering & Awareness of Local Opportunities *Omnibus Survey Results*

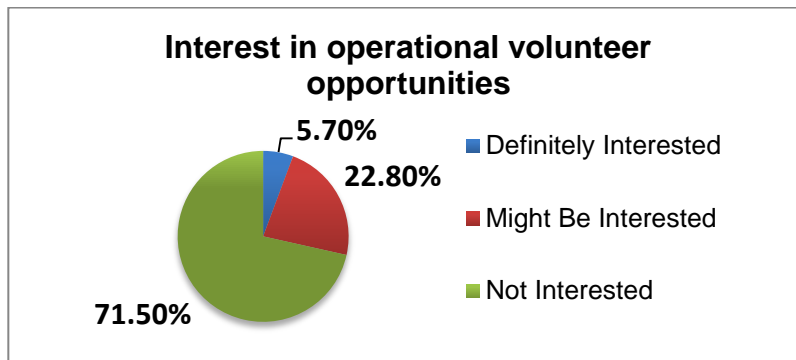
The omnibus survey (n=1224) supplied quantitative findings for the following four questions:

1. Are you interested in volunteering as a firefighter or emergency medical technician?
 - a. Definitely interested
 - b. Might be interested
 - c. Not interested
2. Which of these opportunities, if any, would you be interested in pursuing?
 - a. Volunteering to help raise money for a volunteer fire department
 - b. Volunteering to promote fire safety and prevention
 - c. Volunteering to recruit new volunteer firefighters
 - d. Volunteering to provide other non-emergency support for a volunteer fire department
 - e. None of these
3. Does your local fire department use paid firefighters, volunteer firefighters, or a combination of the two?
4. Is your local fire department seeking volunteers?

Additional data collected included respondent gender, age, ethnicity, marital status, highest level of education, annual household income, and census region.

Among survey respondents, those between the ages of 18 and 34, an age that also allows them to serve for several decades after completing their training, expressed the highest level of interest among all age groups. Of this age group, 12% said they were very interested and 31% were somewhat interested in volunteering as a first responder. Also, even though the current volunteer force is largely white and male, interest in volunteering is fairly consistent across racial, ethnic and gender lines.

Survey Question 1: Are you interested in volunteering as a firefighter or emergency medical technician ?



Of the 1224 survey respondents, nearly 6% indicated a high level of interest in volunteering as a firefighter or an emergency responder, and nearly 23% indicated a moderate interest in volunteering as a firefighter or emergency responder.

Operational interest by gender:

	Definitely interested	Might be interested	Not interested
Male	6.3%	24.1%	69.6%
Female	5.2%	21.6%	73.2%

- Survey results indicated that there is not a statistically significant difference in interest in operational volunteer opportunities between males and females (not significant at 90% or 95% confidence).

Operational interest by age:

	Definitely interested	Might be interested	Not interested
18-24	12.4%	31.4%	56.2%
25-34	12.8%	31.3%	55.9%
35-44	5.1%	30.9%	64.1%
45-49	4.9%	27.9%	67.2%
50-54	1.0%	18.6%	80.4%
55-64	2.1%	13.7%	84.2%
65+	1.8%	7.7%	90.5%

- Both 18 to 24 year-olds and 25 to 34 year-olds are significantly more likely to be 'definitely interested' in operational volunteer opportunities than those 35 and older (statistically significant at 95% confidence).
- 35 to 49 year-olds are significantly more likely to be 'definitely interested' than those 50 and older (statistically significant at 95% confidence).
- Individuals 18 to 24, 25 to 34, and 35 to 49 are significantly more likely than those over 50 to have a moderate interest in operational volunteer opportunities (statistically significant at 95% confidence).

Operational interest by ethnicity:

	Definitely interested	Might be interested	Not interested
Native American, Inuit or Aleut	9.1%	54.5%	36.4%
Asian American/ Pacific Islander	19.1%	31.9%	48.9%
African American/ Black/Caribbean American	4.9%	25.0%	70.1%
Hispanic Origin	6.1%	33.3%	60.6%
Caucasian/White	5.0%	18.7%	76.3%
Other	5.0%	30.0%	65.0%

- Asian American individuals are significantly more likely than Caucasians, African Americans, and individuals of Hispanic origin to be “definitely interested” in operational volunteer opportunities (statistically significant at 95% confidence).
- Individuals of Hispanic origin are significantly more likely than Caucasians to be moderately interested in operational volunteer opportunities (statistically significant at 95% confidence).

Operational interest by marital status:

	Definitely interested	Might be interested	Not interested
Married	4.9%	21.0%	74.1%
Living with partner	9.2%	31.2%	59.6%
Single, Never Married	8.7%	26.8%	64.5%
Other	0.0%	15.2%	84.8%

- Single, never married individuals are significantly more likely than married individuals to be “definitely interested” in operational volunteer opportunities (statistically significant at 95% confidence).
- Single, never married individuals and those living with a partner are significantly more likely than individuals who are married and of ‘other’ marital status to be moderately interested in operational volunteer opportunities (statistically significant at 95% confidence).

Operational interest by highest level of education achieved:

	Definitely interested	Might be interested	Not interested
Less than High School	8.3%	50.0%	41.7%
High School Graduate or Equivalent	6.2%	23.3%	70.5%
Two-Year College Degree	5.3%	29.3%	65.4%
Four-Year College Degree	5.9%	20.6%	73.5%
Graduate School	5.2%	17.8%	77.0%
Other	5.9%	14.7%	79.4%

- Individuals with a 4-year college degree or graduate degree are significantly less likely to be interested in volunteering than those whose highest level of education is a high school diploma or equivalent (statistically significant at 95% confidence).

Operational interest by annual household income:

	Definitely interested	Might be interested	Not interested
Less than \$25,000	7.5%	21.1%	71.4%
\$25,000 to \$49,999	4.5%	23.9%	71.6%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	6.8%	23.3%	69.9%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	5.7%	24.1%	70.3%
\$100,000 and above	3.5%	22.2%	74.2%

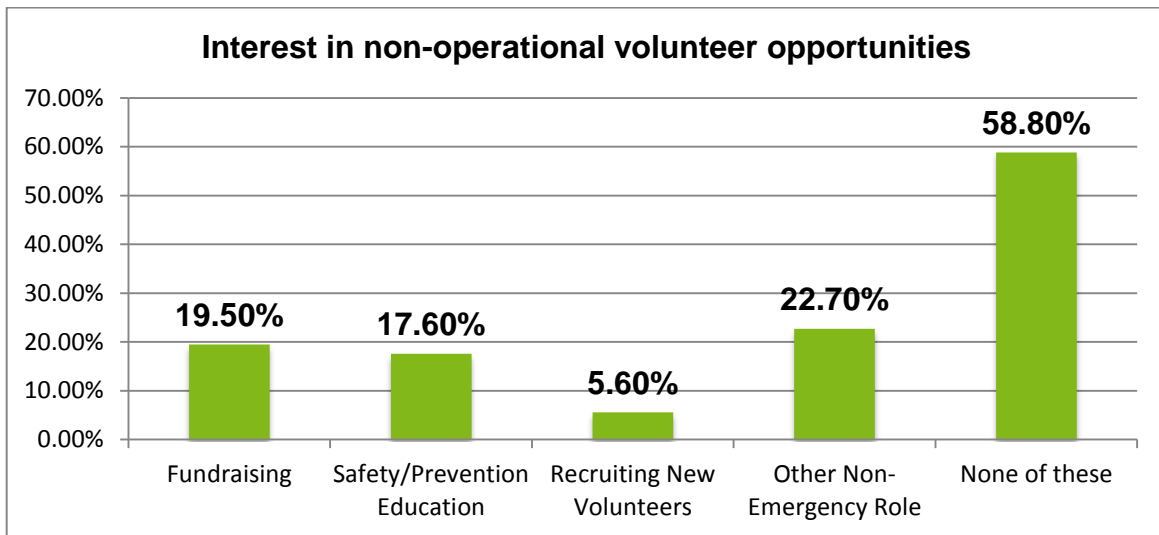
- Individuals with an annual income less than \$25,000 are significantly more likely to be “definitely interested” in operational volunteer opportunities than those who have an annual income of over \$100,000 (statistically significant at 95% confidence).

Operational interest by census region:

	Definitely interested	Might be interested	Not interested
Midwest	3.4%	20.7%	75.9%
Northeast	5.6%	21.6%	72.8%
South	6.0%	22.9%	71.1%
West	7.3%	25.1%	67.6%

- Individuals in the West census region are significantly more likely than individuals in the Midwest to be “definitely interested” in operational volunteer opportunities (statistically significant at 95% confidence).

Survey Question 2: Which of these opportunities, if any, would you be interested in pursuing?



There is a high level of interest in non-operational volunteer support opportunities across the nation, including helping the volunteer fire and rescue service with fundraising, fire safety and fire prevention education, recruiting new volunteers, and other non-emergency support roles. **41% of survey respondents indicated an interest in at least one non-emergency volunteer support role.**

Non-operational interest by gender:

	Fundraising	Safety/Prevention Education	Recruiting New Volunteers	Other Non-Emergency Role	None of These
Male	16.2%	16.2%	5.3%	20.8%	61.3%
Female	22.6%	18.8%	6.0%	24.5%	56.6%

- Females are significantly more likely to be interested in helping to fundraise than men (statistically significant at 95% confidence).
- One in five individuals is interested in volunteering to help volunteer firefighters in a non-emergency role.

Non-operational interest by age:

	Fundraising	Safety/Prevention Education	Recruiting New Volunteers	Other Non-Emergency Role	None of These
18-24	35.2%	29.5%	10.5%	29.5%	42.9%
25-34	28.2%	22.5%	9.3%	27.3%	28.9%
35-44	22.7%	19.5%	5.9%	25.4%	53.1%
45-49	14.8%	18.9%	2.5%	23.8%	59.0%
50-54	13.7%	15.7%	1.0%	17.6%	62.7%
55-64	12.1%	14.7%	4.7%	21.1%	65.3%
65+	11.3%	7.2%	4.1%	14.9%	75.7%

- 18 to 24 year-olds and 25 to 34 year-olds are significantly more likely to be interested in helping to fundraise than those 35 and older (statistically significant at 95% confidence).
- 18 to 24 year-olds and 25 to 34 year-olds are significantly more likely to be interested in helping to promote fire safety and prevention, *and* to help recruit new volunteers than those 50 and older (statistically significant at 95% confidence).

Non-operational interest by ethnicity:

	Fundraising	Safety/Prevention Education	Recruiting New Volunteers	Other Non-Emergency Role	None of These
Native American, Inuit or Aleut	27.3%	18.2%	9.1%	18.2%	54.5%
Asian American/Pacific Islander	25.5%	36.2%	8.5%	21.3%	42.6%
African American/Black/Caribbean American	16.8%	19.0%	4.9%	28.3%	54.3%
Hispanic Origin	26.7%	27.2%	9.4%	26.1%	47.2%
Caucasian/White	18.2%	13.9%	4.7%	21.0%	63.3%

- Individuals of Hispanic origin are significantly more likely to be interested in helping to fundraise than Caucasians and African Americans (statistically significant at 95% confidence).
- Asian Americans are significantly more likely than Caucasians and African Americans to be interested in helping to promote fire safety and prevention (statistically significant at 95% confidence).

Non-operational interest by marital status:

	Fundraising	Safety/Prevention Education	Recruiting New Volunteers	Other Non-Emergency Role	None of These
Married	16.6%	15.2%	4.7%	21.2%	62.7%
Living with partner	23.9%	24.8%	9.2%	28.4%	47.7%
Single, Never Married	26.0%	22.1%	7.1%	27.0%	50.3%
Other	12.9%	11.2%	3.4%	15.2%	70.8%

- Single, never married individuals are significantly more likely than married individuals to help fundraise *and* to help promote fire prevention and safety (statistically significant at 95% confidence).

Non-operational interest by highest level of education achieved:

	Fundraising	Safety/Prevention Education	Recruiting New Volunteers	Other Non-Emergency Role	None of These
Less than High School	25.0%	25.0%	0.0%	58.3%	33.3%
High School Graduate or Equivalent	20.5%	15.4%	5.1%	18.8%	61.3%
Two-Year College Degree	19.2%	21.4%	7.1%	24.4%	57.9%
Four-Year College Degree	19.4%	15.5%	4.9%	23.6%	60.9%
Graduate School	18.3%	19.2%	7.0%	24.9%	53.1%
Other	20.6%	17.6%	0.0%	5.9%	64.7%

- Individuals who have not completed high school are significantly more likely to be interested in helping provide other non-emergency support for volunteer fire departments than individuals of any other education level (statistically significant at 95% confidence).

Non-operational interest by annual household income:

	Fundraising	Safety/Prevention Education	Recruiting New Volunteers	Other Non-Emergency Role	None of These
Less than \$25,000	19.8%	18.6%	4.4%	23.9%	59.1%
\$25,000 to \$49,999	18.7%	18.7%	6.0%	19.9%	61.9%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	20.1%	15.5%	5.9%	22.4%	59.8%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	19.6%	17.7%	5.7%	28.5%	49.4%
\$100,000 and above	19.7%	16.2%	6.6%	21.2%	59.6%

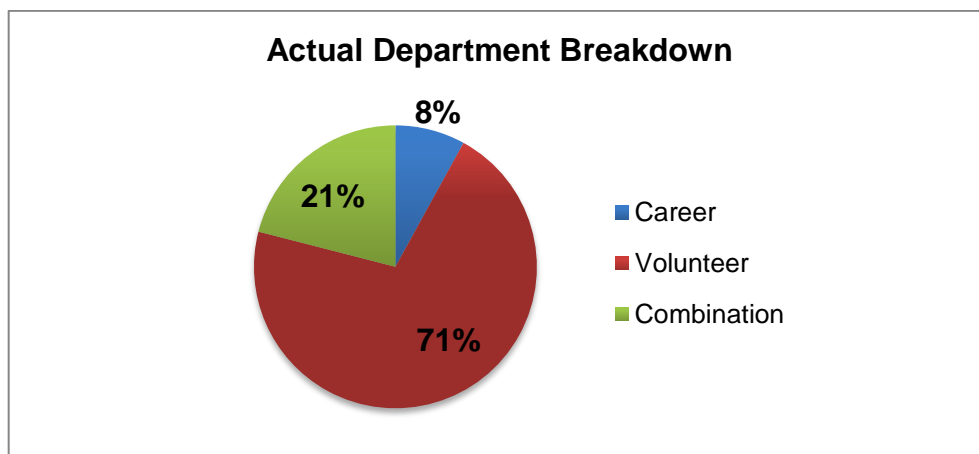
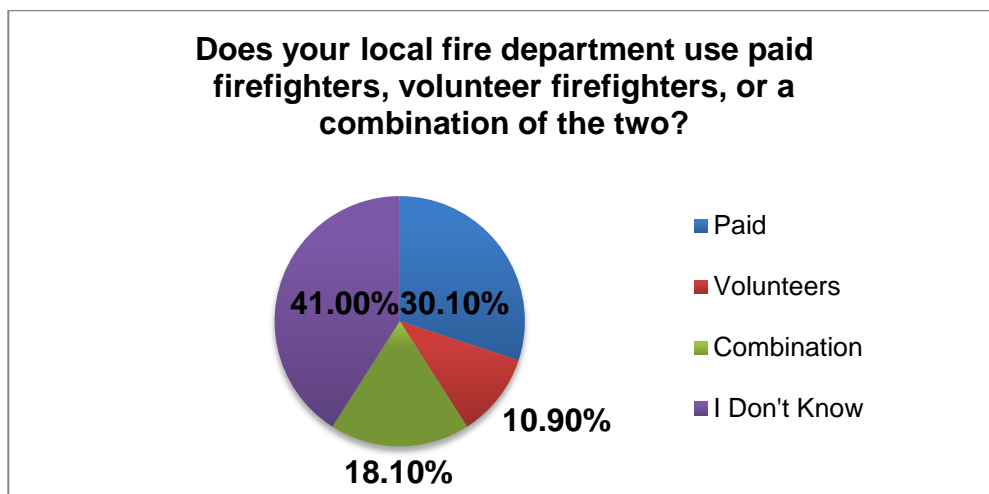
- Individuals with an annual income between \$75,000 and \$99,999 are significantly more likely to be interested in helping to provide other non-emergency support for volunteer fire departments than individuals of any other annual income level (statistically significant at 95% confidence).

Non-operational interest by census region:

	Fundraising	Safety/Prevention Education	Recruiting New Volunteers	Other Non-Emergency Role	None of These
Midwest	17.7%	16.2%	4.5%	17.7%	63.5%
Northeast	14.6%	13.1%	3.3%	18.8%	65.7%
South	21.6%	18.2%	7.0%	23.9%	56.5%
West	22.3%	20.2%	6.7%	28.1%	53.8%

- Individuals in the South and the West census regions are significantly more likely to help volunteer departments in fundraising efforts than those in the Northeast (statistically significant at 95% confidence).

Survey Question 3: Does your local fire department use paid firefighters, volunteer firefighters, or a combination of the two?



There is a severe discrepancy in the perceived and actual prevalence of volunteer firefighters and emergency responders in the U.S. Survey data reveals that only 11% of respondents believe that their local department is staffed by volunteers, when 71% of firefighters are volunteers.

Awareness of department type by gender:

	Paid	Volunteers	Combination	I Don't Know
Male	37.7%	15.9%	17.7%	28.7%
Female	23.0%	6.3%	18.3%	52.4%

- Women are significantly more likely to say they do not know whether their local fire department is a paid, volunteer, or combination department (statistically significant at 95% confidence).

Awareness of department type by age:

	Paid	Volunteers	Combination	I Don't Know
18-24	13.3%	7.6%	18.1%	61.0%
25-34	20.3%	6.2%	20.7%	52.9%
35-44	24.6%	6.3%	19.5%	49.6%
45-49	23.0%	18.0%	26.2%	32.8%
50-54	36.3%	10.8%	13.7%	39.2%
55-64	41.1%	11.1%	15.3%	32.6%
65+	45.9%	18.5%	13.5%	22.1%

- Individuals 18 to 24, and 25 to 34 are significantly more likely to say they do not know whether their local fire department is a paid, volunteer, or combination department (statistically significant at 95% confidence).

Awareness of department type by ethnicity:

	Paid	Volunteers	Combination	I Don't Know
Native American, Inuit or Aleut	27.3%	18.2%	9.1%	45.5%
Asian American/ Pacific Islander	14.9%	19.1%	14.9%	51.1%
African American/ Black/Caribbean American	27.7%	5.4%	17.4%	49.5%
Hispanic Origin	23.3%	3.9%	11.1%	61.7%
Caucasian/White	33.5%	13.3%	19.9%	33.2%
Other	15.0%	5.0%	25.0%	55.0%

- Minority individuals are significantly more likely to say they do not know whether their local fire department is a paid, volunteer, or combination department compared to Caucasians (statistically significant at 95% confidence).

Awareness of department type by marital status:

	Paid	Volunteers	Combination	I Don't Know
Married	34.9%	13.7%	19.4%	32.0%
Living with partner	27.5%	11.9%	19.3%	41.3%
Single, Never Married	21.9%	6.8%	16.4%	54.9%
Other	33.1%	9.6%	16.3%	41.0%

- Single, never married individuals are significantly more likely to say they do not know whether their local fire department is a paid, volunteer, or combination department compared to individuals of all other marital statuses (statistically significant at 95% confidence).

Awareness of department type by highest level of education achieved:

	Paid	Volunteers	Combination	I Don't Know
Less than High School	8.3%	8.3%	0.0%	83.3%
High School Graduate or Equivalent	23.6%	10.3%	17.5%	48.6%
Two-Year College Degree	24.4%	12.4%	19.9%	43.2%
Four-Year College Degree	36.1%	9.1%	17.9%	36.9%
Graduate School	37.6%	12.7%	16.4%	33.3%
Other	17.6%	14.7%	26.5%	41.2%

- Individuals who have not completed high school are significantly more likely to say they do not know whether their local fire department is a paid, volunteer, or combination department compared to individuals of all other marital statuses (statistically significant at 95% confidence).

Awareness of department type by annual household income:

	Paid	Volunteers	Combination	I Don't Know
Less than \$25,000	21.4%	9.1%	16.7%	52.8%
\$25,000 to \$49,999	25.4%	8.8%	15.7%	50.2%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	34.2%	15.1%	18.7%	32.0%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	41.1%	11.4%	22.2%	25.3%
\$100,000 and above	38.4%	12.1%	20.2%	29.3%

- Individuals with an annual household income of less than \$50,000 are significantly more likely to say they do not know whether their local fire department is paid, volunteer, or

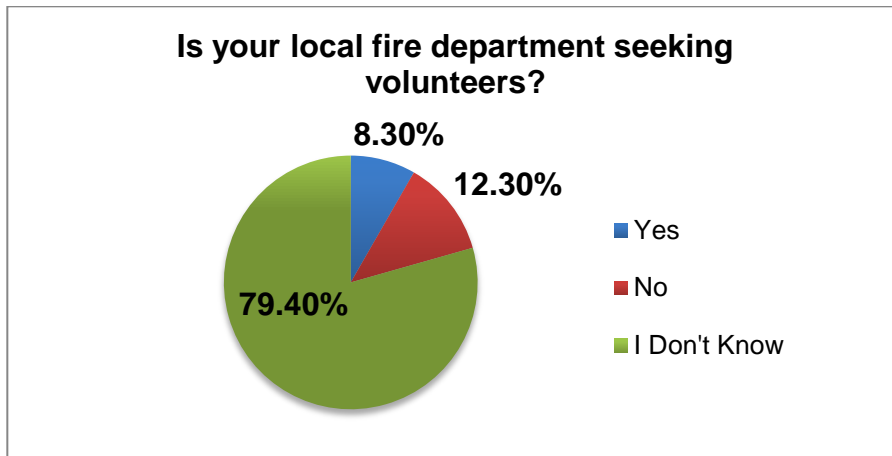
combination compared to those with an annual household income over \$50,000 (statistically significant at 95% confidence).

Awareness of department type by census region:

	Paid	Volunteers	Combination	I Don't Know
Midwest	35.0%	12.4%	18.8%	33.8%
Northeast	21.6%	24.4%	16.0%	38.0%
South	27.9%	9.7%	21.4%	41.0%
West	33.3%	2.4%	15.3%	48.9%

- Individuals in the West are significantly more likely to say they do not know whether their local fire department is paid, volunteer, or combination compared to those living in the Midwest, South, and Northeast (statistically significant at 95% confidence).

Survey Question 4: Is your local fire department seeking volunteers?



The majority of individuals in the United States are unaware of whether or not their local fire department is seeking volunteers.

Awareness of local volunteer need by gender:

	Yes	No	I Don't Know
Male	11.4%	14.2%	74.4%
Female	5.3%	10.7%	84.0%

- Females are significantly more likely than males to say they do not know if their local department is seeking volunteers (statistically significant at 95% confidence).

Awareness of local volunteer need by age:

	Yes	No	I Don't Know
18-24	6.7%	10.5%	82.9%
25-34	5.7%	9.7%	84.6%
35-44	7.0%	11.3%	81.6%
45-49	13.1%	7.4%	79.5%
50-54	7.8%	13.7%	78.4%
55-64	8.4%	16.8%	74.7%
65+	10.4%	15.3%	74.3%

- Individuals 25 to 34 are significantly more likely than individuals over 50 to say they do not know if their local department is seeking volunteers (statistically significant at 95% confidence).

Awareness of local volunteer need by ethnicity:

	Yes	No	I Don't Know
Native American, Inuit or Aleut	27.3%	18.2%	54.5%
Asian American/ Pacific Islander	10.6%	21.3%	68.1%
African American/ Black/Caribbean American	4.9%	11.4%	83.7%
Hispanic Origin	3.9%	6.1%	90.0%
Caucasian/White	9.6%	13.7%	76.7%
Other	10.0%	0.0%	90.0%

- African Americans and Hispanics are significantly more likely than Caucasians and Asian Americans to say they do not know if their local department is seeking volunteers (statistically significant at 95% confidence).

Awareness of local volunteer need by marital status:

	Yes	No	I Don't Know
Married	10.5%	14.2%	75.3%
Living with partner	9.2%	11.9%	78.9%
Single, Never Married	5.5%	9.6%	85.0%
Other	6.2%	12.4%	81.5%

- Single, never married individuals are significantly more likely than married individuals to say they do not know if their local department is seeking volunteers (statistically significant at 95% confidence).

Awareness of local volunteer need by highest level of education achieved:

	Yes	No	I Don't Know
Less than High School	0.0%	33.3%	66.7%
High School Graduate or Equivalent	8.2%	9.2%	82.5%
Two-Year College Degree	9.8%	13.2%	77.1%
Four-Year College Degree	9.3%	10.1%	80.6%
Graduate School	5.2%	19.2%	75.6%
Other	5.9%	8.8%	85.3%

Awareness of local volunteer need by annual household income:

	Yes	No	I Don't Know
Less than \$25,000	4.7%	14.8%	80.5%
\$25,000 to \$49,999	7.3%	9.4%	83.4%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	13.2%	10.0%	76.7%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	10.8%	13.3%	75.9%
\$100,000 and above	8.1%	15.2%	76.8%

Awareness of local volunteer need by census region:

	Yes	No	I Don't Know
Midwest	6.4%	17.7%	75.9%
Northeast	16.9%	13.1%	70.0%
South	7.5%	11.7%	80.8%
West	5.5%	8.0%	86.5%

- Individuals in the West are significantly more likely to say they do not know if their local department is seeking volunteers compared to individuals in the Midwest, South, and Northeast (statistically significant at 95% confidence).

Attitudes Towards Volunteer Firefighters and Volunteer Firefighting

Discussion Board Results

Norms

- Many current volunteers cite invites / inspiration from others as pivotal in their decision to volunteer.
- Potential recruits worry about competing commitments at home with the normative expectation being that they do NOT volunteer.
- Employers cited as potentially opposed to volunteering.

Who would support you?	Who would be opposed?
"My kids would think it's really cool and might want to come with me."	"My husband or wife because of my commitments at home."
"My nieces or nephews."	"My parents because of death and danger."
"My friends and community."	"Employers."
"Myself."	

Self-Standards

Discussion board respondents indicated that there are many qualities of volunteer firefighters and the work that volunteer firefighter do that resonate with respondents' own expectations for themselves.

Who are volunteer firefighters?

- Want to serve the community
- Willing & able to help others
- Positive contributor
- Want to be a hero
- Thrill-seekers
- In good shape
- Mentally & physically strong
- Want to belong to something that matters

What do volunteer firefighters do?

- Help others & save lives
- Make a difference
- Stay active
- Be part of a team
- Learn new skills
- Have role in the community
- Get called out and away from things that matter
- Risk their lives
- Experience loss

Non-doers identify with volunteer firefighters in that they:

- Appreciate friendships & camaraderie
- Want to help people.
- Care about their community.
- Want to learn new skills.
- Like excitement.

A successful volunteer recruitment and retention campaign must be branded to draw on these self-standards.

Efficacy

Non-doers perceived three barriers to efficacy in acting: physical ability and skills to do the job, time to fully commit to the job, and having enough information to apply for the job.

- Perceived physical barriers include older age, being female, not being mentally strong enough, and physical ability due to past injuries.
- Perceived commitment barriers include conflicts with full-time jobs, caring for children, and other life obligations.
- Perceived information barriers include a lack of information about training and experience requirements.

By providing a central portal for information about the requirements for volunteering, and gaining support and buy-in from secondary audiences such as family and employers, a recruitment and retention campaign can overcome these barriers to efficacy.

Environment

Various factors were identified as factors that make sustaining the commitment to volunteer easier or harder. These environmental factors must be taken into context when building a campaign strategy.

What makes it easier?	What makes it harder?
Family and friends within the department	Isolation
Mentorship through doubts, difficulties	Unmet expectations
Sense of belonging	Frustration with leadership
Flexibility in training schedule	Missing out on family and friend experiences
Personal commitment to others as part of a “new class”	Lack of support from family or employer
Consistent, fair, transparent leadership	
Respect from the community	

Rewards, Risks, & Penalties

Volunteer firefighting has many intangible rewards that are accompanied by tangible risks and penalties, which make barriers to acting more difficult. A campaign strategy must properly maximize these rewards while minimizing and properly addressing the risks.

Rewards for Volunteering	Risks & Penalties for Volunteering
Save peoples' lives	Risk of dying or injury to self; depression
Camaraderie/brotherhood	Putting my life in danger when there are people who depend on me
Serving the community	The chance that I may not be able to save someone
Being able to assist in a time of need	Odd hours; Having to drop everything (job, family, middle of the night) to go volunteer
Details of the profession (riding fire trucks, using equipment, etc.)	Seeing and dealing with loss of life and property
Science and engineering aspects of the work	Not getting paid for a dangerous job
Have a specific role within the community	Time-consuming: time away from my family
Fight fires	
Sense of pride and accomplishment	
Being a role model	

APPENDIX A

QUALBOARD DISCUSSION GUIDE – NON-DOERS

National Volunteer Fire Council Formative Research Discussion Guide for Non-Doers

DAY/SECTION 1

Instructions / Introductions / General Discussion

Question 1.1

Hello! Welcome to our Bulletin Board Discussion. I'm Zack, and I'll be moderating the group.

We are glad you could join us and are looking forward to hearing your opinions during the next couple of days! If you haven't already read through the information on the "Welcome Page," please do so. It contains valuable information about the process of participating in this online discussion. We suggest printing the Welcome Page for quick and easy reference during the group.

Throughout the course of our discussion, I encourage you to interact with not only me, but with other respondents. The idea here is to begin a free flowing exchange of ideas, opinions, and perceptions. There are no right or wrong answers here.

Since I am an independent researcher, it doesn't have an effect on me as to what you think or feel about our topic. So if you like something or don't like something, please feel free to express your true feelings.

As you begin to answer questions, you will notice that the questions initially have to be answered in order. Once you've answered all of the questions you may go back to them at any time, and in any order, to review what others have said and perhaps expand on what you wrote, too! Also, you will not be able to see how others have answered until you post your own answers. However, after posting your response, others' answers will be visible for you to read and comment.

Question 1.2

Our discussion will span 3 days. I will post new questions at 6 AM (EST) each morning: Tuesday, October 21st, Wednesday, October 22nd and Thursday, October 23rd. As you go through each day's worth of questions, please note that each of the question topic numbers may contain a few actual questions, so please try to answer everything that I ask. Also, since there will be several of you providing your opinions, you can also read (and comment on) what others post and comment on their responses as well!

This discussion is meant to gather your natural feedback. Please don't feel the need to do any outside research unless specified in the discussion. We're not here to change your thoughts or feelings toward anything. We're only looking for your honest opinions. Please be sure to fully answer each question.

Question 1.3 – Warm Up

Before we jump into the questions, we'll start with some introductions. Briefly, tell us a little bit about yourself. What do you do for a living? Tell us about where you live. What are your hobbies and passions?

Question 1.4 – Ever Consider

Have you ever thought about applying to the volunteer fire service? Why?

- a. Yes
- b. No

Question 1.5 – Ever Apply

[IF YES at 1.4] *Did you ever end up applying?*

- a. Yes
- b. No

Question 1.6a – Reason Why

[IF YES] *Why? And what happened?*

Question 1.6b – Reason Why Not

[IF NO] *Why not?*

Question 1.7 – Actual Description

Who volunteers to be a firefighter? What type of person are they?

What are their values?

What do they do for a living?

What are their personalities like?

Question 1.8 – Perceived Motivation

Why do you think they joined? What do they get out of it?

Question 1.9 – Differences

How are you different from this typical description of a volunteer firefighter?

Question 1.10 – Similarities

How are you similar?

Question 1.11 – Duty Benefits

What do volunteer firefighters do that you'd like to do?

Question 1.12 – Duty Barriers

What do they do that you wouldn't want to do?

Question 1.13 – Understanding of Training

How much training do you imagine volunteer firefighters have to go through? How rigorous do you think it is?

Question 1.13 – Understanding of Training

How much time in a given week do you imagine volunteer firefighters spend volunteering

Question 1.14 – Interest Scale

How interested are you in volunteering as a volunteer firefighter or emergency medical technician? Why?

- a. Definitely interested
- b. Might be interested
- c. Not interested

Question 1.15 – Existing Barriers

What has kept you from volunteering as a firefighter so far?

Question 1.16 – Perceived Benefits

What would be the good things to come from being a volunteer firefighter?

Question 1.17 – Perceived Barriers

What would be the bad things that could come from being a volunteer firefighter?

Question 1.18 – Perceived Efficacy

What do you imagine is the hardest part of being a volunteer firefighter?

Question 1.19 – Social Concern (Norms 1)

Whose opinion would matter to you most when deciding whether or not to volunteer as a firefighter? What do you think they would say? How come?

Question 1.20 – Social Desire (Norms 2)

Who would want you to volunteer as a firefighter? How would they react if you did?

Question 1.21 – Social Desire (Norms 3)

Who would not want you to volunteer as a firefighter? How would they react if you did?

Question 1.22 – Social Reaction (Norms 4)

How would you want others to think of you if you were a volunteer firefighter?

Question 1.23 – Understanding of Need

Is your local fire department volunteer-based?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Don't know

Question 1.24a – Knowledge Base

[IF YES OR NO AT 1.23] *How do you know?*

Question 1.24a – Knowledge Base

[IF DK AT 1.23] How would you find out?

Question 1.25 – Involvement

How more or less likely would you be to volunteer if you knew volunteers were needed in your community?

- a. Much more likely
- b. Somewhat more likely
- c. Neither more or less likely
- d. Somewhat less likely
- e. Much less likely

Question 1.26

That concludes Day 1! Please check in tomorrow to answer any follow-up questions. Tomorrow's board will be available at 6 AM ET.

Thanks for your help – so far you all have been a GREAT group!

DAY/SECTION 2

Message Concept Evaluation and Discussion

Question 2.1

Welcome to Day 2 of our bulletin board discussion. Before we get going, please go back to Day 1 for a few minutes to see if I have posted any follow-up questions for you, and please post additional comments if I have posted any new questions for you. Also, you might find it interesting to read what some of the other participants have said and might want to comment. I appreciate you sharing your thoughts!

Question 2.2 – Message Test Intro

Today, I'd like to share a few message concepts that could be developed into a larger campaign about volunteer firefighters. I'm looking for your honest, unfiltered feedback. I'll show you one message, followed by a series of questions before asking you another question.

[RANDOMLY ASSIGN EACH RESPONDENT TO 1 OF 4 GROUPS AND FOLLOW BELOW EXPOSURE ORDER. REPEAT Qs 2.4-2.7 FOR EACH MESSAGE]

MESSAGE EXPOSURE ORDER:

Group 1: Msg A, Msg B, Msg C, Msg D, Msg E, Msg F

Group 2: Msg F, Msg E, Msg D, Msg C, Msg B, Msg A

Group 3: Msg B, Msg D, Msg F, Msg A, Msg C, Msg E

Group 4: Msg E, Msg C, Msg A, Msg F, Msg D, Msg B

MESSAGE LIST

- *Message A*
Volunteer firefighters get valuable skills and experiences.

Volunteering as a firefighter, EMT, or paramedic can provide you with training, experience and leadership opportunities that employers and others respect. By volunteering, you show others what you know, what you've done and who you are.

- *Message B*

Joining a volunteer fire department is like getting a second family.

Volunteer firefighters have each other's backs. When volunteer firefighters join a department they also build new friendships as they go through training and challenges with each other. The firehouse is a place of belonging, full of people as committed to helping others as you are.

- *Message C*

Volunteering as a firefighter shows what you are about.

Being a volunteer firefighter is not for everybody. It's a calling that says a lot about the people who join. Volunteer firefighters are a special breed with the courage and commitment to help and protect their neighbors in emergencies.

- *Message D*

Being a volunteer firefighter is a way to give back and make a difference.

Volunteer firefighting is about neighbor-helping-neighbor. It's about a commitment to your community. It is a way to pass on one's good fortune by helping others.

- *Message E*

Volunteer firefighters are heroes.

No calling is more admired than that of the volunteer firefighter. For those who volunteer, the admiration is especially great: Unpaid and sometimes unnoticed, they are willing to put their lives on the line to save others.

- *Message F*

Volunteering as a firefighter empowers you to do great things.

When you become a volunteer firefighter, you immediately feel empowered. You have the training -- and now the responsibility -- to help others in emergencies. You can save lives and change lives in a way no other volunteering opportunity allows.

Question 2.3 – Main Point

What is the main idea that the below message is trying to get across, in your own words?

Question 2.4 – New or Surprising Idea

Does the below message have any new ideas in it or is it stuff you've already heard before? Is it surprising? Why or why not?

Question 2.5 – Relevance

Who is the below message written for? What type of person? Does it apply to you? Why/why not?

Question 2.6 – Think Differently

Does the below message make you think about anything differently? How so?

Question 2.7 – Action

Does the below message make you want to do anything? If so, what?

Question 2.8 – Most Impact

Which of these messages is the most powerful? Why?

- a. Msg A
- b. Msg B
- c. Msg C
- d. Msg D
- e. Msg E
- f. Msg F

Question 2.9 – Most Likely to Act

Which of these messages would be most likely to make you want to volunteer? Why?

- a. Msg A
- b. Msg B
- c. Msg C
- d. Msg D
- e. Msg E
- f. Msg F

Question 2.10 – Homework

Before we end our discussion today, I have a small homework assignment for you. Between now and when you log back in for tomorrow's discussion please visit the following campaign websites.

Washington States' **Just Be There** campaign: <http://justbethere.info>

New York State's **Fire In You** campaign: <http://fireinyou.org>

Keeping in mind that these websites are for specific locations, take a look around and think about what you like most like and what you think is most effective. Also think about what you like least, what you think doesn't work. Our discussion tomorrow will be mostly about these campaigns, so please visit and explore so you can provide your two cents.

Question 2.11

That concludes day 2! I look forward to "seeing" you all tomorrow! New questions will be available at 6 AM ET. Thanks!

DAY/SECTION 3

Campaign Feedback / Close

Question 3.1

Welcome to Day 3 of our bulletin board discussion. Before we get going, please go back to Day 2 for a few minutes to see if I have posted any follow-up questions for you, and please post additional comments if I have posted any new questions for you. Also, you might find it interesting to read what some of the other participants have said and might want to comment. I appreciate you sharing your thoughts!

Question 3.2 – Campaign Evaluation Intro

At the end of yesterday's discussion I gave you all an assignment to review a couple of campaign websites. Today I'd like to talk about what you thought of those campaigns.

Question 3.3 – *Just Be There* Message

Let's start with the *Just Be There* campaign.

In your own words, what is the main message of the *Just Be There* campaign? What makes you say that?

Question 3.4 – *Just Be There* Like

What do you like most about the *Just Be There* campaign? What do you think they do particularly well? Why?

Question 3.5 – *Just Be There* Dislike

What do you not like about the *Just Be There* campaign? What do you think they need to improve? Why?

Question 3.6 – *Just Be There* Audience

Who do you think the *Just Be There* campaign is meant to reach? Are you part of their audience? Why or why not?

Question 3.7 – *Just Be There* Impression

What is your overall impression of the *Just Be There* campaign?

Question 3.8 – *Fire In You* Message

Let's move on to the *Fire In You* campaign.

In your own words, what is the main message of the *Fire In You* campaign? What makes you say that?

Question 3.9 – *Fire In You* Like

What do you like most about the *Fire In You* campaign? What do you think they do particularly well? Why?

Question 3.10 – Fire In You Dislike

What do you not like about the *Fire In You* campaign? What do you think they need to improve? Why?

Question 3.11 – Fire In You Audience

Who do you think the *Fire In You* campaign is meant to reach? Are you part of their audience? Why or why not?

Question 3.12 – Fire In You Impression

What is your overall impression of the *Fire In You* campaign?

Question 3.13 – Exposure (Heart)

I now want to show you a potential print ad that could be used in a campaign and get your feedback.



Question 3.14 – Heart Message

In your own words, what is the main message of this ad? What makes you say that?

Question 3.15 – Heart Like

What do you like most about this ad? Why?

Question 3.16 – Heart Dislike

What do you not like about this ad? Why?

Question 3.17 – Heart Audience

Who do you think this ad is for? Are you part of their audience? Why or why not?

Question 3.18 – Heart Impression

How does this ad compare to *Just Be There* and *Fire In You*?

Question 3.19 – Exposure (Fire pole)

I now want to show you a second potential print ad that could be used in a campaign and get your feedback.



Question 3.20 – Firepole Message

In your own words, what is the main message of this ad? What makes you say that?

Question 3.21 – Firepole Like

What do you like most about this ad? Why?

Question 3.22 – Firepole Dislike

What do you not like about this ad? Why?

Question 3.23 – Firepole Audience

Who do you think this ad is for? Are you part of their audience? Why or why not?

Question 3.24 – Fire pole Impression

How does this ad compare to *Just Be There* and *Fire In You*?

Question 3.25 – Information Seeking

If you wanted to get more information about volunteering where would you look? Where else? Why?

Question 3.26 – Information Seeking

What would be the most helpful way to learn more about volunteering? Why?

Question 3.27 – Information Seeking

How could the fire department make it easier for you to volunteer?

Question 3.28

That's it for today's questions. Thank you all for your participation. If you have any further questions or comments, please post them here.

I'd like to thank you for participating. We really appreciate and value all of the information you've given us during the course of this discussion. You should be receiving your honorarium check in the next 3 weeks. If you have any questions about this project, please feel free to contact my colleague Lindsay at Lindsay.Ford@saltermitchell.com. Goodbye!!

APPENDIX B

QUALBOARD DISCUSSION GUIDE – DOERS

National Volunteer Fire Council Formative Research Discussion Guide for Doers

DAY/SECTION 1

Instructions / Introductions / Personal Experience

Question 1.1

Hello! Welcome to our Bulletin Board Discussion. I'm Zack, and I'll be moderating the group.

We are glad you could join us and are looking forward to hearing your opinions during the next couple of days! If you haven't already read through the information on the "Welcome Page," please do so. It contains valuable information about the process of participating in this online discussion. We suggest printing the Welcome Page for quick and easy reference during the group.

Throughout the course of our discussion, I encourage you to interact with not only me, but with other respondents. The idea here is to begin a free flowing exchange of ideas, opinions, and perceptions. There are no right or wrong answers here.

Since I am an independent researcher, it doesn't have an effect on me as to what you think or feel about our topic. So if you like something or don't like something, please feel free to express your true feelings.

Additionally, your responses will only be used to inform a report about our discussion. They will not be shared with any volunteer fire departments.

As you begin to answer questions, you will notice that the questions initially have to be answered in order. Once you've answered all of the questions you may go back to them at any time, and in any order, to review what others have said and perhaps expand on what you wrote, too! Also, you will not be able to see how others have answered until you post your own answers. However, after posting your response, others' answers will be visible for you to read and comment.

Question 1.2

Our discussion will span 3 days. I will post new questions at 6 AM (EST) each morning: Tuesday, October 21st, Wednesday, October 22nd and Thursday, October 23rd. As you go through each day's worth of questions, please note that each of the question topic numbers may contain a few actual questions, so please try to answer everything that I ask. Also, since there will be several of you providing your opinions, you can also read (and comment on) what others post and comment on their responses as well!

This discussion is meant to gather your natural feedback. Please don't feel the need to do any outside research unless specified in the discussion. We're not here to change your thoughts or feelings toward anything. We're only looking for your honest opinions. Please be sure to fully answer each question.

Question 1.3 – Warm Up

Before we jump into the questions, we'll start with some introductions. Briefly, tell us a little bit about yourself. What do you do for a living? Tell us about where you live. What are your hobbies and passions?

Question 1.4 – Motivations Intro

Everyone participating in this discussion over the next three days is either a volunteer firefighter or emergency responder. Our conversation is going to be mostly about your experiences with these positions.

So let's start at the beginning. How long have you been volunteering?

Question 1.5 – Initial Motivation

What first made you want to get involved with the volunteer fire service? Why?

Question 1.6 – Initial Influencer

Was there anybody who influenced you to join the volunteer fire service? Who was it? What'd they say? What did you talk about?

Question 1.7 – Initial Deterrent

Was there anybody who did not want you to join the volunteer fire service? Who was it? What'd they say?

Question 1.8 – Benefits

Tell me about some of the good things that sometimes happen because you are a volunteer firefighter.

Question 1.9 – Barriers

Tell me about some of the bad things for you that come from being a volunteer firefighter.

Question 1.10 – Efficacy Barrier

What can sometimes make it difficult to be a volunteer firefighter?

Question 1.11 – Efficacy Solution

What could make it easier?

Question 1.12 – Likes (all)

What do you like about being a volunteer firefighter? Why?

Question 1.13 – Likes (most)

What is the best part about being a volunteer firefighter? Why?

Question 1.14 – Dislike (all)

What do you dislike about being a volunteer firefighter? Why?

Question 1.15 – Dislikes (most)

What is the worst part about being a volunteer firefighter? Why?

Question 1.16 – Pre-existing Concerns

What concerns did you BEFORE you joined? Which of those concerns turned out to be accurate?

Question 1.17 – Retention (1) FULL MASK

This question is private and will not be seen by the rest of the people in this discussion. Have you ever thought about leaving the volunteer fire service? Why?

Question 1.18 – Retention (2) FULL MASK

IF YES: What kept you from leaving?

Question 1.19 – Retention (3)

Do you know anybody who has left the volunteer fire service?

Question 1.20 – Retention (4)

IF YES: Why do you think they left?

Question 1.21 – Continuing Motivation

If you had to pick two things that keep you coming back as a volunteer firefighter, what would they be? Why?

Question 1.22

That concludes Day 1! Please check in tomorrow to answer any follow-up questions. Tomorrow's board will be available at 6 AM ET.

Thanks for your help – so far you all have been a GREAT group!

DAY/SECTION 2

Outside Perceptions**Question 2.1**

Welcome to Day 2 of our bulletin board discussion. Before we get going, please go back to Day 1 for a few minutes to see if I have posted any follow-up questions for you, and please post additional comments if I have posted any new questions for you. Also, you might find it interesting to read what some of the other participants have said and might want to comment. I appreciate you sharing your thoughts!

Question 2.2 – Actual Description

Who volunteers to be a firefighter? What type of person are they?

What are their values?

What do they do for a living?

What are their personalities like?

Question 2.3 – Differences

How are you different from this typical description of a volunteer firefighter?

Question 2.4 – Similarities

How are you similar?

Question 2.5 – Actual Description

How is this typical description consistent or inconsistent with how most people think of volunteer firefighters?

Question 2.6 – Friends Impressions

What do your friends think of you being a volunteer firefighter? Why do you say that?

Question 2.7 – Family Impressions

What does your family think of you being a volunteer firefighter? Why do you say that?

Question 2.8 – Valued Opinions

Whose opinion about your involvement with the fire department matters to you most? Why? Who else?

Question 2.9 – Recruit Method (1)

How does your department find new volunteers?

Question 2.10 – Recruit Method (1)

How successful has each of these outreach methods been? How do you know?

Question 2.11 – Recruit Method (2)

Where does your department look for new volunteers?

Question 2.12 – Recruit Improvement (local)

What could your department do better in order to attract new volunteers?

Question 2.13 – Recruit Improvement (national)

What could the National Volunteer Fire Council do better to help your department attract new volunteers?

Question 2.14

That concludes day 2! I look forward to “seeing” you all tomorrow! New questions will be available at 6 AM ET. Thanks!

DAY/SECTION 3

Message Concept Feedback / Close

Question 3.1

Welcome to Day 3 of our bulletin board discussion. Before we get going, please go back to Day 2 for a few minutes to see if I have posted any follow-up questions for you, and please post additional comments if I have posted any new questions for you. Also, you might find it interesting to read what some of the other participants have said and might want to comment. I appreciate you sharing your thoughts!

Question 3.2 – Message Test Intro

Today, I'd like to share a few message concepts that could be developed into a larger campaign about volunteer firefighters. I'm looking for your honest, unfiltered feedback. I'll show you one message, followed by a series of questions before asking you another question.

[RANDOMLY ASSIGN EACH RESPONDENT TO 1 OF 4 GROUPS AND FOLLOW BELOW EXPOSURE ORDER. REPEAT Qs 3.3-3.9 FOR EACH MESSAGE]

MESSAGE EXPOSURE ORDER:

Group 1: Msg A, Msg B, Msg C, Msg D, Msg E, Msg F

Group 2: Msg F, Msg E, Msg D, Msg C, Msg B, Msg A

Group 3: Msg B, Msg D, Msg F, Msg A, Msg C, Msg E

Group 4: Msg E, Msg C, Msg A, Msg F, Msg D, Msg B

MESSAGE LIST

- *Message A*
Volunteer firefighters get valuable skills and experiences.
Volunteering as a firefighter, EMT, or paramedic can provide you with training, experience and leadership opportunities that employers and others respect. By volunteering, you show others what you know, what you've done and who you are.
- *Message B*
Joining a volunteer fire department is like getting a second family.
Volunteer firefighters have each other's backs. When volunteer firefighters join a department they also build new friendships as they go through training and challenges with each other. The firehouse is a place of belonging, full of people as committed to helping others as you are.
- *Message C*
Volunteering as a firefighter shows what you are about.
Being a volunteer firefighter is not for everybody. It's a calling that says a lot about the people who join. Volunteer firefighters are a special breed with the courage and commitment to help and protect their neighbors in emergencies.
- *Message D*
Being a volunteer firefighter is a way to give back and make a difference.

Volunteer firefighting is about neighbor-helping-neighbor. It's about a commitment to your community. It is a way to pass on one's good fortune by helping others.

- *Message E*

Volunteer firefighters are heroes.

No calling is more admired than that of the volunteer firefighter. For those who volunteer, the admiration is especially great: Unpaid and sometimes unnoticed, they are willing to put their lives on the line to save others.

- *Message F*

Volunteering as a firefighter empowers you to do great things.

When you become a volunteer firefighter, you immediately feel empowered. You have the training -- and now the responsibility -- to help others in emergencies. You can save lives and change lives in a way no other volunteering opportunity allows.

Question 3.3 – Main Point

What is the main idea that the below message is trying to get across, in your own words?

Question 3.4 – Relevance

Who is the below message written for? What type of person? How come?

Question 3.5 – Think Differently

Does the below message make you think about anything differently? Does it paint the volunteer fire service in a new light in any way? How so?

Question 3.6 – Action

Does the below message make you want to do anything? If so, what?

Question 3.7 – Disaster Check

Is there anything about the below message that you do not like? Why?

Question 3.8 – Most Impact

Which of these messages is the most powerful? Why?

- g. Msg A
- h. Msg B
- i. Msg C
- j. Msg D
- k. Msg E
- l. Msg F

Question 3.9 – Best at Reinforcing Motivation

Which of these messages makes you feel better about your volunteer service? Why?

- g. Msg A
- h. Msg B
- i. Msg C

- j. Msg D
- k. Msg E
- l. Msg F

Question 3.10

That's it for today's questions. Thank you all for your participation. If you have any further questions or comments, please post them here.

I'd like to thank you for participating. We really appreciate and value all of the information you've given us during the course of this discussion. You should be receiving your honorarium check in the next 3 weeks. If you have any questions about this project, please feel free to contact my colleague Lindsay at Lindsay.Ford@saltermitchell.com. Goodbye!!