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City of Gainesville Policy Program Preliminary Research & Analysis

TOPIC: Recruitment of Women at Gainesville Police Department and
Gainesville Fire Rescue

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DATE: December 10th, 2021

REQUESTED BY: Commissioner Ward

OBJECTIVE

The aim of this research is to explore recruiting initiatives that Gainesville Fire Rescue and Gainesville Police Department have in place for women. This research also explores programs and policies across the United States that increase the recruitment of women to potentially establish a similar program and/or policy in the City of Gainesville.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

No society can develop successfully without providing equitable opportunities, resources, and life prospects for males and females.¹ Gender equality and female empowerment are desirable in fire service and law enforcement, yet progress is moving slow²—women accounted for only 8% of career firefighters working in the United States in 2018.^{3,4,5} Additionally, women made up 12.6% of the total

¹ https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1865/GenderEqualityPolicy_0.pdf

² <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/252963.pdf>

³ <https://www.nfpa.org/News-and-Research/Publications-and-media/Press-Room/News-releases/2020/Females-still-make-up-less-than-10-percent-of-the-US-fire-service>

⁴ Gainesville Fire Rescue. (2021, June 3). Personal interview [Personal interview].

⁵ <https://www.firerescue1.com/diversity/articles/recruiting-female-firefighters-closing-the-gender-gap-9uWxeMxA7BkMaj22/>

amount of police officers in the United States in 2018, which is a tenth of a percent increase from 2017.⁶⁻⁷

According to the 30x30 Initiative launched by the Women’s Leadership Academy in Newark, underrepresentation of women in policing undermines public safety.⁸ The 30x30 Initiative found that women officers use less force and less excessive force, are named in fewer complaints and lawsuits, are perceived by communities as being more honest and compassionate, see better outcomes for crime victims, and make fewer discretionary arrests.⁸

Yet, women face unique challenges or barriers in the fire and police force. Physical differences, maternity leave, benefits, and pay are just a few of these challenges or barriers.⁹ Overall, these barriers often result in women not being accepted into law enforcement or a low retention rate of qualified women.⁹ In this report, additional reasons for why the low numbers of women involved in the police and fire force are discussed.

Fire departments and police departments in Alachua, Tallahassee, Jacksonville, Tampa, Orlando, Pembroke Pines, Ocala and the Women’s Leadership Academy in Newark, New Jersey were contacted for this report for insight into how a program and/or policy advocating for more women in the police and fire services.

HISTORY/BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Gainesville, Florida

Gainesville Fire Rescue⁴

Currently, Gainesville Fire Rescue (GFR) has 18 women on staff. Of these 18 women, 8 are certified firefighters by rank, 5 are certified non-high risk Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs) and 5 are administrative staff. These women make up just under 10% of their full-time employees, as GFR has about 200 employees total.¹⁰ While GFR does not have initiatives in place to attract specifically women to the force, GFR aims to develop diversity throughout the whole fire service.

For recruitment specifically, GFR’s women on staff have helped recruit other women. GFR has found that having female recruiters helps attract other women, however GFR does not specifically or exclusively use female recruiters to attract women. GFR’s goal is to attract as many people as possible to the force, and to do this GFR has visited schools and career fairs at the University of Florida and Santa Fe College to help increase their exposure and gain new recruits. To increase female involvement, GFR has approached female athletes at both

⁶ <https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2018/crime-in-the-u.s.-2018/tables/table-74>

⁷ <https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2017/crime-in-the-u.s.-2017/tables/table-74>

⁸ <https://30x30initiative.org/about-30x30/>

⁹ <https://www.hsd.org/?view&did=695207>

¹⁰ Personal Conversation with Gainesville Fire Rescue

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schools. GFR also pushes to recruit local residents, and their partnership with UF has led to hiring of 4 female employees in the last 2 years.

GFR states that one reason there are fewer women in fire services is the Candidate Physical Ability Test (CPAT), which has deterred many women from joining fire services. To attempt to resolve this, GFR has created a team that provides mentoring, trainings, and resources for new arrivals. While the pandemic has caused a big hit to recruitment, GFR's CPAT academy has helped increase the number of firefighters on the GFR force. Through the CPAT academy, GFR schedules workouts that prepare people for the CPAT test.

While GFR offers a variety of professional benefits to firefighters to help retain them, none of these programs are specific to women. For example, GFR has implemented a professional development model that offers all employees the chance to eventually become a fire chief. GFR notes that their supervisors are heavily involved in professional development and emphasizes that it is important to notice and support your employees. GFR also has a human resource committee dedicated to being a resource for employees, along with a mental health professional that is free to all members of the department.

GFR has historically lost candidates because they frequently get hired out from underneath them during their training periods, due to other departments hiring faster and having better pay or benefits. GFR's current hiring procedure is to look at candidates who are already fully certified and credentialed to become firefighters. Candidates must possess an Emergency Medical Services (EMS) certificate and Firefighter 2 certificate, which takes about 6 months of training. GFR notes that their applicant pool for certified hiring is very small, with the average class size being about 10 trainees a year. However, GFR has hired a few individuals who are non-certified or single certified, with the goal to put these candidates through the trainings.

Since there are limited numbers of women becoming firefighters statewide, and because the few who do typically get hired automatically from other agencies that offer better benefits, GFR loses out on these candidates. GFR notes that other agencies offer a standard retirement amount of 3%, whereas Gainesville is 2.5%, while paying in 9% of their salary, which deters many candidates from GFR. Because of this, GFR has pushed for non-certified hiring, which allows them to hire candidates prior to the candidates being fully credentialed and certified and instead allows the candidates to undergo the required trainings while already being employed by GFR. Although this requires more of an investment from the department, not hiring non-certified or single certified candidates can mean they get hired elsewhere faster. Additionally, hiring non-certified or single certified candidates allows for more local hiring.

According to GFR, a marketing and recruitment budget would significantly help in hiring, training, and retaining candidates at GFR. GFR specifically recommends implementing a Gainesville incentive program (i.e. providing incentives or benefits to encourage firefighters to choose to work with Gainesville rather than other departments). GFR also notes how benefit packages and exposure of those benefits are essential to increasing the number of firefighters recruited. GFR says that the perception of benefits, like a step plan for raises, are

important to consider too, as this can recruit or deter candidates from joining GFR. Currently, a step plan is not in place, which may make GFR a less attractive employer in comparison to other employers. To be comparable to other cities, GFR says 7% could be added to firefighters' starting pay. Finally, GFR suggests there be more marketing of what the fire department does, especially of their EMS services.

Gainesville Police Department¹¹

Currently, 49 of the Gainesville Police Department's (GPD) officers are women. In total, 244 officers are employed at GPD, meaning that approximately 20% are women. For the positions of rank, women occupy 24 of 97 positions for a total of 23% of those positions (Corporal, Sergeant, Lieutenant, Captain, Chief Inspector, Chief). While GPD does not offer any specific initiatives for women, GPD does offer minority initiatives through advertising, but those are based on race rather than gender. GPD has also had conversations about extending relationships out to Santa Fe College (SFC) and their athletic department to help recruit women. GPD has had relationships with criminal justice organizations at the University of Florida (UF) through internships, and those internships have successfully turned into jobs. GPD says that getting more involved with those organizations is one of their goals to recruit more officers. Finally, GPD offers a junior police academy, however, the academy is not specific to gender or race.

GPD recently started a women's mentoring group for women in the police department, which meets monthly and has met eight times in 2021. The mentoring group includes both officers and civilians, and during the mentoring group, women bring up topics they are interested in learning more about (such as resume building, work life balance, childcare etc.) and special speakers are organized to discuss desired topics. One element that has historically deterred women from joining the police force is balancing the job with a family, and to help reduce this challenge women at GPD receive 3 months of paid maternity leave. GPD additionally implemented a lactation room for mothers to use when they return to work in the summer of 2021.

The Gainesville Police Department has a recruiting team made of diverse member of our department. The team is coordinated through the Personnel Division by the dedicated recruiting officer. Although there has not been a direct focus on hiring women, they plan to redirect energy and resources to this effort in the future.

Additionally, there are technically focused groups, like SWAT and K9, that women have started expanding to, as GPD has stated it is important to recognize that there is room for women in all spaces in the department. For example, GPD has had 4 female K9 officers and 3 female SWAT officers, and the lieutenant in the traffic safety team is a woman.

¹¹ Gainesville Police Department. (2021, May 18). Personal interview [Personal interview].

Collaborative Reform Initiative Technical Assistance Center¹²⁻¹³

The Collaborative Reform Initiative Technical Assistance Center (CRI-TAC) grant provides customized technical assistance solutions designed to meet the unique needs of state, local, tribal, and campus communities throughout the United States. CRI-TAC is sponsored by Department of Justice (DOJ), and self-contracted with International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP).

GPD has been awarded the IACP’s CRI-TAC grant to specifically learn about recruitment and retention methods for women in the police force. Chief Jones shared that the lack of women in the police force is a national issue, which can be contributed to low recruitment rates. For instance, one reason women may decide against joining the police force is because they think they cannot raise their families while policing.

Overall, the CRI-TAC grant will aid in long-term recruitment. Through CRI-TAC, GPD plans to survey officers internally about what is keeping them in the force, along with what would be more likely to keep them in the force.

PRELIMINARY RESEARCH AND FINDINGS

For this report, peer police and fire departments at the City of Alachua, Alachua County, Tallahassee, Jacksonville, Tampa, Orlando, Pembroke Pines, and Ocala and the Women’s Leadership Academy in Newark, New Jersey were contacted to investigate if there were any existing initiatives in place focused on the recruitment for women. Following the sections on each of our peers in this report, a best practices section is included.

Alachua County Fire Rescue (ACFR)¹⁴

Alachua County Fire Rescue has 23 full-time female staff. ACFR also offers on-call positions, which adds 8 more women to the ACFR force. Of the 232 personnel that work at ACFR, 9% are female.

ACFR is split between two houses—one side is the traditional fire side of the house where one is required to be fire certified (all employees on the fire side are full-time). The other side is the EMS side of the house, where a fire certification is not required. Most women at ACFR are in the rescue lieutenant position (15 women out of the 23), which are paramedic firefighter positions. There are 6 female firefighters.

Since ACFR is split between two houses, applicants to ACFR have more entry points to the fire force. Most departments require an applicant to be fire/EMT certified. However, since ACFR offers driver,

¹² Gainesville Police Chief Tony Jones. (2021, May 28). Personal interview [Personal interview].

¹³ <https://www.theiacp.org/resources/document/cri-tac-brochure>

¹⁴ Captain Karem Scott-Kotb. (2021, June 30). Personal interview [Personal interview].

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firefighter, and EMS positions as entry points, applicants have more options if they do not wish to become fire certified.

For the fire side of the house, ACFR notes that they have been hiring applicants if an applicant is able to pass the interview and Firefighter Physical Ability Test (FPAT) from Orange County, Florida in lieu of the CPAT. While most offices continue to use CPAT, ACFR's experience is that CPAT has an adverse effect on women, and that transitioning to FPAT has been a step in the right direction for recruiting more female applicants. While in use at ACFR, it was found that CPAT would eliminate nearly all female applicants, despite the fact that data does not indicate that CPAT produces better firefighters. ACFR began using FPAT the beginning of 2021 and has put all current employees through the test to find the right cutoff time. Since using FPAT, ACFR has had significantly higher pass rates, especially among women. The most recent hiring class has been the first time ACFR has had 3 female firefighters in one class.

Jacksonville Sheriff's Office¹⁵

The Jacksonville Sheriff's Office (JSO) hosted Facebook Live broadcasts earlier in 2020 focused on women in the agency in different roles. One role involved a female police officer, another a female corrections officer, and a female civilian. The broadcasts were focused on attracting more women to the agency by showcasing the diversity in jobs in the agency and the ability of women to do all of them.

JSO's benefits are available for all employees, which include paid leave, tuition reimbursement, a tax deferred program, a defined contribution plan (401(a) program), a paid parental leave program, and insurance (medical, dental, vision). These benefits are determined by job class and collective bargaining unit.

JSO also has an internship program with the University of North Florida to allow college seniors to experience the agency. JSO allows interns to participate in ride-alongs with various units throughout the department. Also, JSO hosts job fairs at various colleges in the southeast region. However, the internship program and job fairs that JSO hosts are offered/open to everyone.

Jacksonville Fire and Rescue Department¹⁶

The Jacksonville Fire and Rescue Department (JFRD), says that JFRD has an apprentice program that attracts females and helps with diversity. JFRD also has a private fundraiser promoted by the JFRD Fire Chief Kevin Jones, where 1 female and 1 male student athlete are selected and awarded a scholarship/stipend to attend one of the 10 title one schools in the area. The athletes are also mentored during their schooling/training.

¹⁵ Gary R. Dickinson and Bart Laird. (2021, June 28-30). Personal communication [Personal communication].

¹⁶ Teresa R. Kinstle. (2021, June 23-29). Personal communication [Personal communication].

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At JFRD, women and men get paid leave for maternity for 6 weeks, are able to accrue paid time off, and tuition reimbursement for women and men at JFRD is available.

Additionally, while JFRD does not have specific partnerships, JFRD does recruit applicants at colleges and high schools. JFRD has been to churches, gyms, veterans job fairs and other surrounding recruitment events that are promoted in the area.

JFRD also provided data which showed that between 2011-2021, the number of women at JFRD has increased from 119 females to 192 females, or 8.9% to 11%.

Orlando Fire Department¹⁷

The City of Orlando Fire Department (OFD) Recruitment Office says that OFD is currently undergoing a new marketing campaign that includes recruitment methods targeted toward women. The launch will include various images and video of women from the OFD department. Moreover, specific outreach of women for OFD recruitment is conducted at women organizations and associations. Currently, 8% of OFD personnel are women, and between 2011-2018 the number of women at OFD has increased from 24 females to 35 females, or from 5% to 6%.

¹⁷ Alissa R. Baussan. (2021, June 23-25, July 15). Personal communication [Personal communication].

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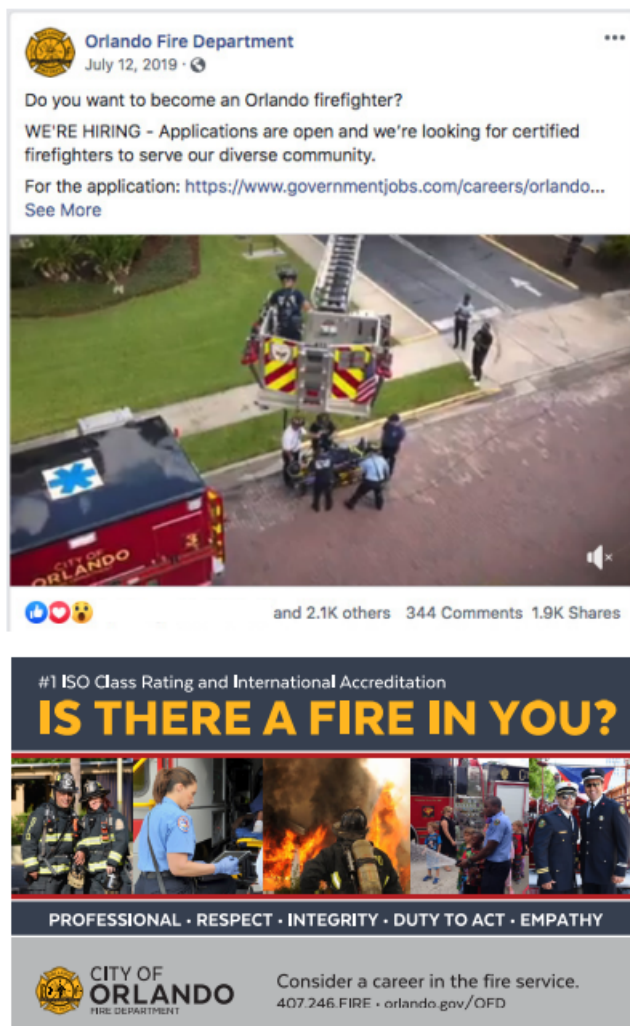


Figure 1. 2020 OFD Inclusivity and Equity Action Plan – OFD Recruitment Through Social Media.¹⁸

Figure 1 depicts OFD’s use of Facebook to recruit new officers. This post marked the first time OFD used its social media platforms to communicate recruitment messaging.¹⁸ OFD says that by incorporating a video into the post, they were able to reach more than 426,000 people, more than 30 times that of an average OFD post.¹⁸ Moreover, this post resulted in more than 40,000 engagements (likes, comments, shares), which is 21 times more than that of a typical OFD social media post.¹⁸

Employees of OFD receive an educational reimbursement of \$1,800 per year. Career Counseling to assist with preferment is also available at the OFD. Additionally, women are sent to the Women in Fire International Conference every year.

¹⁸ <https://www.orlando.gov/files/sharedassets/public/departments/public-safety/ofd/ofdinclusivityandequityactionplan2020h.pdf>

University of Florida Police Department¹⁹

The University of Florida Police Department (UFPD) says that UFPD has 21 sworn female police officers and 32 non-sworn female officers. UFPD has 60 sworn male police officers and 24 non-sworn male officers.

According to UFPD, the number of women at UFPD has increased over the last decade. UFPD is always looking for applicants that have a diverse background and have experience in law enforcement.

Tallahassee Fire Department²⁰

According to the Tallahassee Fire Department (TPD), they have 17 fire-certified female staff. These women make up 6% of the total fire certified personnel. 5 years ago, this figure was the same, however, going back 10 years, the percentage was around 8%.

TPD does not have any initiatives or programs specifically in place to attract women to the TFD force. TPD has a recruitment team made up of a diverse group of firefighters to attract a diverse group of applicants, however this group is not specific to the recruitment of women. Additionally, while there are not specific female targeted support programs, the City of Tallahassee does offer a variety of benefits to its employees, including paid sick and personal leave, tuition reimbursement, parental leave, etc.

TPD's recruitment team has a good working relationship with its surrounding universities, community colleges, and high schools in the area to provide recruitment materials to guidance counselors and students, as well as attending in person recruitment events.

Pembroke Pines Fire Department²¹

According to the Pembroke Pines Fire Department (PPFD), there are 3 women who work at PPFD and that 2 additional women have been selected and are currently in the hiring process. The percentage of women to men at PPFD is 1.6%, and the number of women employed at PPFD has decreased.

PPFD does not have any initiatives in place for women, and programs PPFD offers, like the Officer Development Program and educational reimbursement program (which is designed to encourage continued education), are offered to all. Paid leave is in accordance with guidelines and standards, and PPFD has agreements with local colleges for students to complete their field internship with them, which brings awareness and exposure to their fire department. None of these programs are specifically targeted toward women.

¹⁹ Kendall Graham. (2021, July 6-8). Personal communication [Personal communication].

²⁰ Mona Pearson. (2021, June 14). Personal communication [Personal communication].

²¹ Marcelino Rodriguez. (2021, June 23). Personal communication [Personal communication].

Ocala Police Department²²

According to the Ocala Police Department (OPD), they have 34 female officers currently, and women make up 23% of the police force.

OPD does not have any initiative for female officers, however OPD does have an initiative for minority police officers, focused on race and not gender.

OPD offers paid leave, medical insurance, a pension plan, and tuition reimbursement, but that is for all employees and not just women. OPD also works very closely with local colleges and attends several recruitment events a year.

Key Practices for Women Recruitment into Police and Fire Agencies

The National Center for Women & Policing describe that the main question heard from administrators is “How can I recruit and retain women in my agency?” The main questions heard from women in law enforcement are about sexual harassment, obstacles to promotion, and pregnancy policies.²³ The National Center for Women & Policing assert that by focusing on these gender-related issues, many of the same resources and solutions can assist law enforcement leaders in dealing with issues of other protected classes.²³

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Develop a Recruiting Plan that Targets Women

To increase the number of women involved in police [and fire agencies], a plan of action should be developed which targets women in the recruiting process and emphasizes the agency’s desire to significantly increase the number of women in its ranks.²³ Developing a plan of action that is successful is essential to meeting the goals described by the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies, which include the expectation that the agency’s sworn work force will be representative of the available workforce in the agency’s service community relative to its ethnic and gender composition.²³

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Forming a Recruitment Committee²³

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A recruitment committee is key to a successful recruitment plan. The committee should consist of:

- An equal employment/affirmative action/civil rights expert
- An Advertising/Marketing/Public Relations expert
- A representative knowledgeable about the agency’s testing process
- High-ranking women and minority members of the law enforcement agency
- Members of the community who represent women’s and minority organizations
- and businesses

²² Lyn Cole. (2021, July 2). Personal communication [Personal communication].

²³ <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/bja/185235.pdf>

- Recruiters from the agency or government office responsible for recruiting
- Faculty members from local college criminal justice programs
- High school and college career counselors
- High-ranking department officials

Once the recruitment committee is formed, the committee should develop recruiting goals for women and timetables for achieving those goals. Additionally, the committee should be delegated a budget, to be used for recruiting and advertising and marketing needs. The committee should also ensure that the recruitment plan includes methods that involve the community and current employees of fire and law enforcement agencies for the recruitment process. It is suggested that the committee meet at least twice a year to evaluate the recruitment plan’s progress and make necessary adjustments.

Designing Recruitment Brochures and Posters²³

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A recruitment plan should also involve a recruitment brochure. Photographs featuring women in uniform and depicting women officers performing community service functions should be incorporated. Moreover, descriptive information emphasizing fire and police work should be included so that candidates are aware of the fire or police duties they will have.

In the brochure, physical requirements, pay and benefits, minimum entry requirements, career advancement opportunities, and the application, testing, and training process should be emphasized. A telephone number and e-mail of the hiring agency should be provided and a tear-off form to send in for an application should be offered in the brochure.

Establishing a Recruiting Team²³

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A recruiting team should also be part of a recruitment plan. The team should include a diverse group of officers who are committed to community policing [or firefighting] and the recruitment of women.

Recruiters should be selected for their skills related to recruiting, like public speaking and public relations skills. Moreover, recruiters should be selected for their positive attitudes about women in policing, have a dedication to increasing diversity, be committed to community policing [or firefighting] values, have friendly personalities and be easy to talk to, and should receive training prior to being selected. It is recommended recruiters also be familiar with the agency’s policies and procedures, especially those which affect women. Recruiters should also have knowledge of women’s issues, including sexual harassment, family leave, and other similar problems.

Environment at Police and Fire Departments Error! Bookmark not defined.

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The environment of a fire [and police] department can be very different in a department where women have worked successfully for many years and earned the respect of their co-workers, compared to one that has yet to hire its first woman. The first woman in any fire department [and police department] will often encounter obstacles that are not found.

To create a more welcoming and supportive environment to women within police and fire departments, the 30x30 Initiative from the Women’s Leadership Academy in Newark suggests that departments address barriers to promotion, which include shift change requirements, harmful workplace culture, and unequal access to opportunities.²⁴

Shift Change Requirements²⁴

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The 30x30 Initiative notes that the variable shift changes that most agencies require—where newly promoted officers are given undesirable shifts, like the night shift, makes it difficult for women to balance family and work. Moreover, the 30x30 Initiative says that since women bear the brunt of childcare and other caregiving responsibilities, variations in shift assignment disproportionately affect their ability to participate in promotions.

Harmful Workplace Culture²⁴

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According to the 30x30 Initiative, research suggests that there is a perception among rank-and-file male officers that women officers, if they apply, would be awarded a promotion simply because agencies are desperate to hire women in supervisory roles. If women officers feel as though they won’t be promoted on merit, they may not wish to be promoted at all, which is how harmful workplace culture can negatively impact women in the fire and police force.

Unequal Access to Opportunities²⁴

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The 30x30 Initiative states that a harmful workplace culture can influence access to the opportunities that can strengthen a candidate’s qualifications. Therefore, it is important to think of harmful culture beyond the interpersonal level, such as verbal and physical harassment from colleagues that may discourage women from seeking promotion.

For agencies to fully address barriers to promotion, agencies must examine management decisions related to shift assignments and discipline, and the criteria used for annual evaluations and promotions, which can be left open to a supervisor’s subjective determination of what a “good” leader looks like rather than the skills needed for the job.

PRELIMINARY COST/BENEFIT ANALYSIS

²⁴ <https://30x30initiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/What-Works-Promotions.pdf>

Risk

- Establishing a program and/or policy to increase women in firefighter and police-related fields in the City of Gainesville may require additional funding and/or reallocation of existing resources.
- May require training/office space, staffing reassignment, and/or new full-time employees (FTEs) as well as part-time employees (PTEs) to assist in program and/or policy implementation.

Benefits

- Implementing a program and/or policy to increase women in firefighter and police-related fields in the City of Gainesville can potentially:
 - Increase the participation of women in the Gainesville Fire Department (GFD)
 - Increase the participation of women in the Gainesville Police Department (GPD)
 - Allow for the GFD and GPD to develop a more robust hiring effort
 - Foster new creative ideas to solve problems, increase efficiency, raise cultural awareness, and increase customer satisfaction
 - Allow for the addition of new training programming
 - May allow for a more equitable alignment of resources for training programming
 - May allow for additional staff to cultivate programs and community partnerships

PRELIMINARY AND ILLUSTRATIVE LIST OF POTENTIAL STAKEHOLDERS

- The Gainesville Fire Department (GFD)
- The Gainesville Police Department (GPD)
- The City of Gainesville
- Our neighbors (i.e. families and their children)
- Local nonprofits
- Local businesses
- University of Florida
- Santa Fe College

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

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