

Diversity and Equity Fire Training (DEFT) Program

Winnipeg Fire Service
Winnipeg, Manitoba

2023

**PROUD PRACTICES IN
EQUITY, DIVERSITY
& INCLUSION Award**
*Prix DES PRATIQUES EXEMPLAIRES
EN MATIÈRE D'ÉQUITÉ, DE
DIVERSITÉ ET D'INCLUSION*



Call for Proud Practices in Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (ED&I)

As part of the CAFC's Fire Service for All Action Plan for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, the CAFC has launched an ED&I award to recognize leaders in this area. It has also committed to identifying leading practices that are already in effect across the country and to facilitating the sharing of learnings.

In keeping with these goals, the 2023 ED&I Award will be based on a call for "Proud Practices & Lessons Learned". Award submissions are accepted in the submission form below as "Case Studies". Each will be featured on the CAFC website for all members so that others can learn from your experience.

Instructions:

1. Please answer each question taking care not to exceed a response of 3 pages in Calibri 11 point font.
2. Type your response directly into the space given beside the question.
3. When completed, please save your submission on your desktop in the following format: **OrganizationName_LastName_FirstName**. If you have more than one submission put the number beside your organization's name.
4. Please [submit your application here](#). Please complete the online portion of the application and attach your Word file. You will receive confirmation upon submission once you click the red "Submit" button.
5. All submissions are due no later than **August 4, 2023**. Winners will be announced at FRC 2023.

Submission Form

REQUIRED ITEM	RESPONSE
1. Initiative title: (max. 2 lines)	Diversity and Equity Fire Training (DEFT) Program
2. Organization name:	Winnipeg Fire Paramedic Service (WFPS)
3. Province:	Manitoba
4. Name and title of contact person:	Michelle Weimer Executive Assistant
5. Email address for contact:	mweimer@winnipeg.ca
6. Is your department volunteer, career or composite?	Career Department
7. Human Resources: Please estimate the minimum number of people (in Full Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Number of Executive Members: 4• Number of employees that assisted with classes: 3 WFPS Training Officers

Equivalent) required to implement this initiative.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of employees assisting with the program: 14 mentors from WFPS Fire Operations (volunteer) • Hours of training for Fire Level 1 and 2: 300 hours
7. Operating Resources: Please estimate the operating dollars required to implement this initiative (if relevant).	\$156,000
8. Source of resource: Where did operational funding for this initiative come from if relevant?	\$136,000 tuition fees to cover training salaries.
9. Purpose: What specific problem was this project designed to address? How did you know there was a problem?	<p>WFPS executive staff were involved in the creation and implementation of the first Diversity Equity Fire Training (DEFT) pre-employment program. WFPS leaders who helped create the vision and lead the program implementation included Fire and Paramedic Chief John Lane (retired), Fire and Paramedic Chief Christian Schmidt, Deputy Chief Russ Drohomereski (retired) and Deputy Chief Scott Wilkinson. Project leadership was provided by Corinne Pierce, WFPS Human Resource Manager. The DEFT program launched in 2021 as a part-time, Winnipeg-based, WFPS delivered initiative providing Firefighter level I and II training exclusively to diverse candidates with program support from the Office of the Fire Commissioner and the Manitoba Emergency Services College (MESC). Rather than travelling to Brandon, Manitoba for full-time study at the MESC, successful applicants are provided this training at the WFPS Academy over a 12-month period. These measures help to reduce barriers to employment, reduce costs associated with travel, tuition fees, accommodation, as well as address family/employment-related obligations that may have prevented these individuals from pursuing firefighting in the past. This program is only available to individuals that live in Winnipeg, and have been traditionally under-represented in the firefighting profession. This includes: women, Indigenous Peoples, newcomers, racialized peoples, 2SLGBTQ+ people, and persons with disability. The DEFT program aligns with the City of Winnipeg’s Corporate Strategic Plan, the WFPS Master Plan, and the Corporate social responsibility commitments made by Council through the Equity Office to recruit more diversified candidates to represent the community we serve.</p>
10. Context: Use this space to describe any other contextual elements essential to understanding the initiative.	<p>The WFPS is under-represented in our six equity groups. The current applicant pool is reflective of a younger and more privileged population. The cost and location of the MESC program creates significant barriers for equity groups. Bridging the gap to increase representation required a direct commitment from the organization to offer something customized to increase diversity and inclusivity at WFPS. The City of Winnipeg wants the public service to look like the community we serve. As the WFPS is an</p>

	<p>emergency response service, the members are face-to-face with the citizens of Winnipeg on a daily basis, so representation is important.</p>
<p>11. Population group: Please describe the population group and or setting(s) relevant to this initiative.</p>	<p>The WFPS provides emergency fire and medical response to 832,186 residents of Winnipeg. The WFPS Communications Centre is responsible for coordinating and dispatching all emergency and non-emergency calls for EMS and Fire service originating in Winnipeg. In 2022 the WFPS responded to 146,980 calls for service. WFPS is an active member of the community working to promote fire and injury prevention. We provide leadership in EMS and fire safety education with initiatives such as school and public fire safety programs, National Fire Prevention Week and Paramedic Services Week activities and the Youth Fire Stop Program. WFPS is committed to providing the public with the knowledge and skills required to enjoy safer lives.</p>
<p>12. Description of approach: What methods, materials, and principles did the project involve? How were these developed or used?</p>	<p>WFPS leaders, with support from Human Resources, created the Mentorship Program. WFPS members volunteered to become mentors for the participants of the program. As part of the mentorship, mentors arranged for the DEFT students to visit WFPS stations to meet with on-duty crew members and view, first-hand, station and responder life. The mentors were available to text or call when the students had questions, and to offer ongoing support. This piece is critical to the recruitment and retention of students. The WFPS and Office of the Fire Commissioner worked in collaboration ensuring the didactic and practical portions of the training complied with accreditation requirements.</p>
<p>13. Tools and tactics: Did this initiative result in any tools, forms, policies, or guidelines etc. that might be shared or applied across the country? If yes, please describe them.</p>	<p>This program is now considered a foundation pre-employment program at the City of Winnipeg. It is a basis for which all new pre-employment and employment programs will be created. This program is having a positive impact on the workplace and helping to change the culture within the WFPS. This innovative, ground-breaking diversity program is garnering attention from fire services across Canada and the US.</p>
<p>14. Measurement approach: What measures or indicators (quantitative or qualitative) did you use to monitor or evaluate the impact of your initiative?</p>	<p>Analytics showed deficiencies. WFPS analytics showed significantly low diversity numbers in the WFPS, and specifically within the fire operations work unit. This allowed for an honest conversation about what is needed to increase our candidate pool. The main issue was the fact that WFPS has limited control over recruitment to the MESC program, which is the main source of level 2 Firefighter-PCP candidates. WFPS uses the City of Winnipeg Diversity Dashboard now for monitoring workforce metrics. This Dashboard was created by the City's information technology group and has also received professional recognition through an external awards program.</p>

<p>15. Impact/evaluation: What was the impact of this project using the measures you identified directly above?</p>	<p>This is considered innovative for our Service, and for fire departments throughout Canada. It is a unique and newly sought-after program with many departments from around the country inquiring about program details with the goal to duplicate it in cities in both Saskatchewan and Ontario. In the first year of the program 16 students graduated. A second class of 15 students will graduate in September 2023.</p>
<p>16. Observation/Discussion: Summarize other reactions or responses encountered or lessons learned when the program was implemented.</p>	<p>Some challenges encountered were related to programming and student supports, EDI program alignment with corporate goals and objectives, and supporting the WFPS leaders through program creation. The Human Resource Manager and WFPS Executive worked collaboratively to ensure that any problem areas were discussed, that all team members were included in discussions to ensure the focus remained on the success of the students. The students' success was the primary driver for all involved. Finding physical space, classroom space, instructors, and student supports was key.</p>
<p>17. Critical success factors/lessons: List the most important success factors needed to replicate the initiative</p>	<p>WFPS and Human Resource leaders set the stage for the workforce to implement the program, being flexible for students, and finding facilities and instructors for the program. Funding needed to be sourced as it was identified that students may not be able to pay the full tuition and would need financial assistance. Funds were sourced by the Human Resource team with partners such as the Manitoba Metis Federation, multiple Indigenous bands, and newcomers support groups. All students were offered flexible options to assist them with tuition fees.</p>
<p>18. Limiting factors: In order to make even further improvements, what, if any, system-level barriers would need to be addressed?</p>	<p>Over time, there was an inadvertent creation of systemic obstacles not providing the same opportunity for diverse individuals to attend these schools and gain the prerequisite education to apply to the WFPS. This program eliminated many of these barriers.</p>