South Area Fire District Strategic Plan

2016-2021



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Executive Summary

The South Area Fire District strategic plan aimed at providing a platform for growth in a newly consolidated department. The department has faced numerous challenges during the consolidation process. It was established that it was in the best interest of the department to come together as one to create a strategic plan for the future needs of the department and the community. Including the members in the strategic planning process began to foster an atmosphere that encourages the members to discuss their beliefs, goals, strategies and challenges to become better together. The strategic planning meetings included long discussions about the strengths, weakness, opportunities and challenges that the department faces through a SWOC analysis. This identified goals for the future and helped the administration see what was needed to help the department grow. The planning committee also was involved in an engaging discussion surrounding the results of the employee survey. Some of the weaknesses and goals for the future were identified during this process. Through the commitment and feedback provided by the strategic planning committee the department's first strategic planning document has been formed.

Overview of the District

The South Area Fire District is one of the largest combination fire districts in the State of Wisconsin and the second largest fire department in Marathon County. The District employs 10 full time and 52 part time staff members. It operates out of two fire stations located in the Town of Rib Mountain and the Village of Weston. South Area Fire District provides service to 288 square miles and a population of 36,884. The District is responsible to cover a vast difference in demographics from urban areas with large manufacturing and shopping facilities to desolate agriculture area. This requires a large knowledge base for staff and a need for equipment to operate in many different types of emergency settings. In 2015 the department responded to 2,811 calls for service. The district has withstood multiple changes in leadership over the past several months following the merger of the Rib Mountain and Weston Fire Departments. In late 2015 The District committed to taking a close look at itself and decided to utilize a strategic planning process to set a plan for the future.

Services Provided

Operations	Administration
Fire Suppression	Support Services
Emergency Medical Services	Fire Prevention
Technical Rescue	EMS Training
Inter-facility Medical Transports	Public Affairs
Vehicle Extrication	Fire Inspection

The Mission Statement

The intent of a mission statement is to establish a purpose for an organization's existence within the community.

Through an inclusive and consensus process the strategic planning committee established the mission statement below to represent South Area Fire District.

MISSION-Serving our communities with experience, dedication and integrity.



Vision Statement

After an organization establishes a mission statement, a reason why they exist, the next step is to create a vision statement for the future. A successful organization understands its needs for future growth. Establishing a vision statement is a part of an organizational process that sets the tone for future growth and expectations. The following is the vision statement established by the strategic planning committee for South Area Fire District.

VISION STATEMENT-South Area Fire District, leading the way in public safety, community involvement, technology and fiscal responsibility.

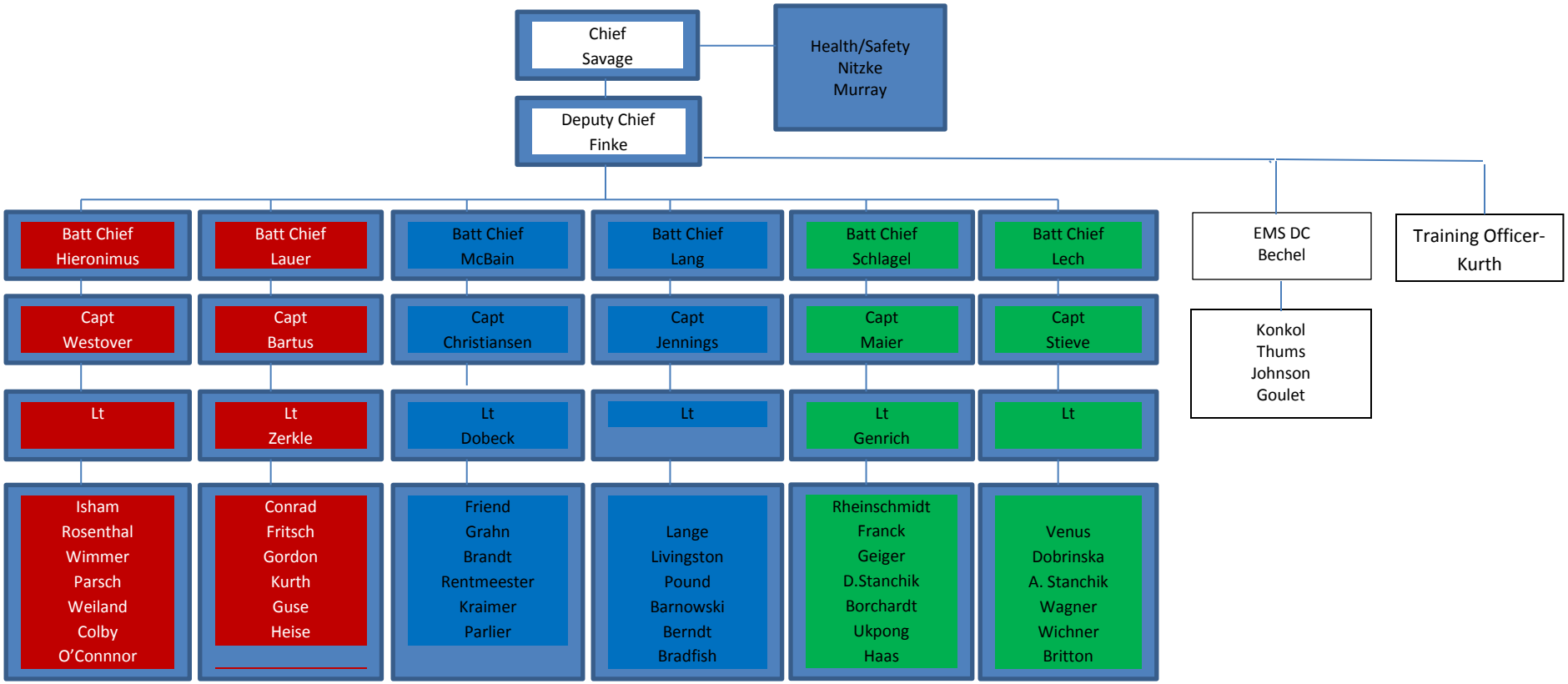
Core Values

Following the establishment of why your organization exists and understanding the vision for the future the department established a list of core values that represents the department beliefs. The following are the core values established by the strategic planning committee.

CORE VALUES

- Professionalism
- Respect
- Integrity
- Dedication
- Excellence

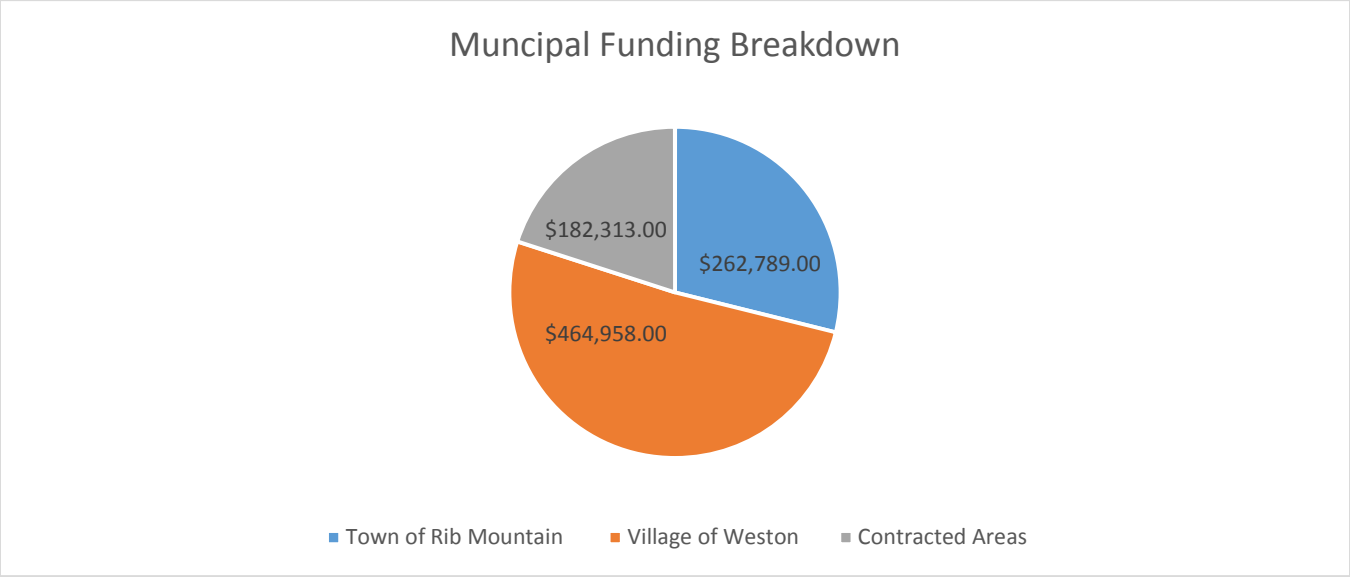
South Area Fire District-2015

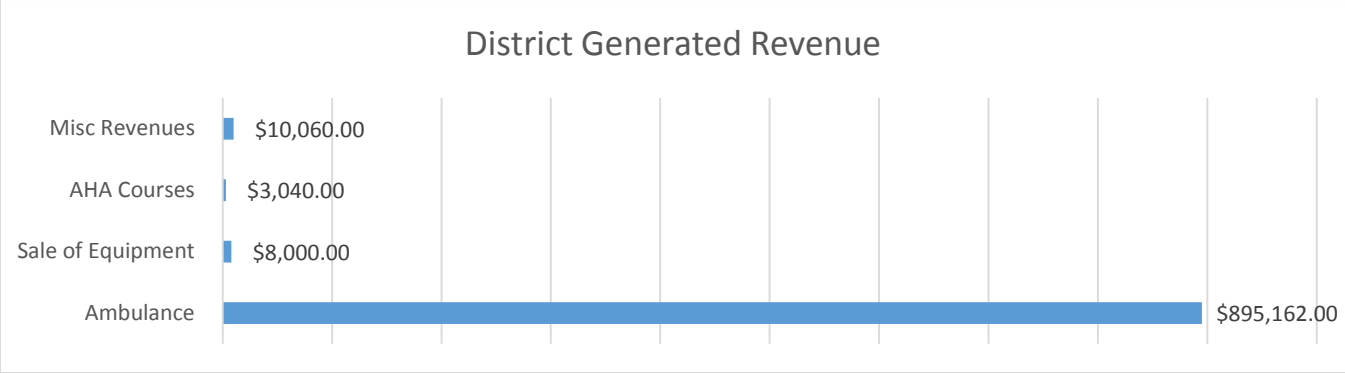


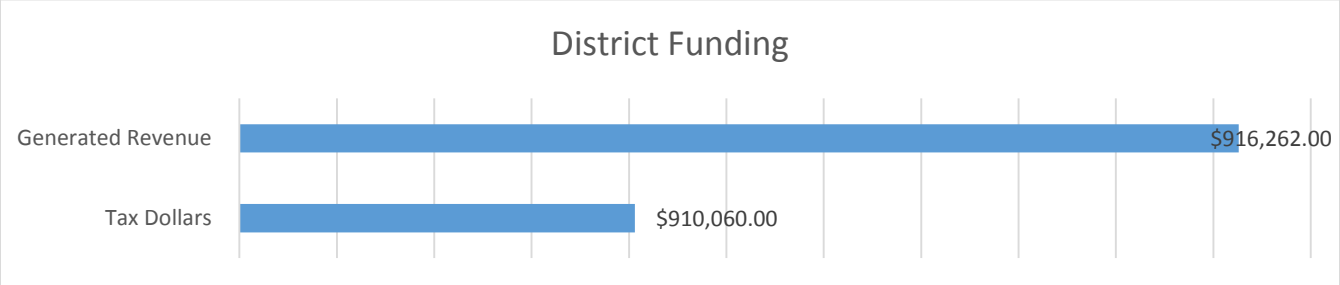
Budget History

2014 Operating Budget	$1,901,069
2014 Capital Budget	$0
2014 Revenue	$1,088,515

Revenue Breakdown Excluding Capital Purchases

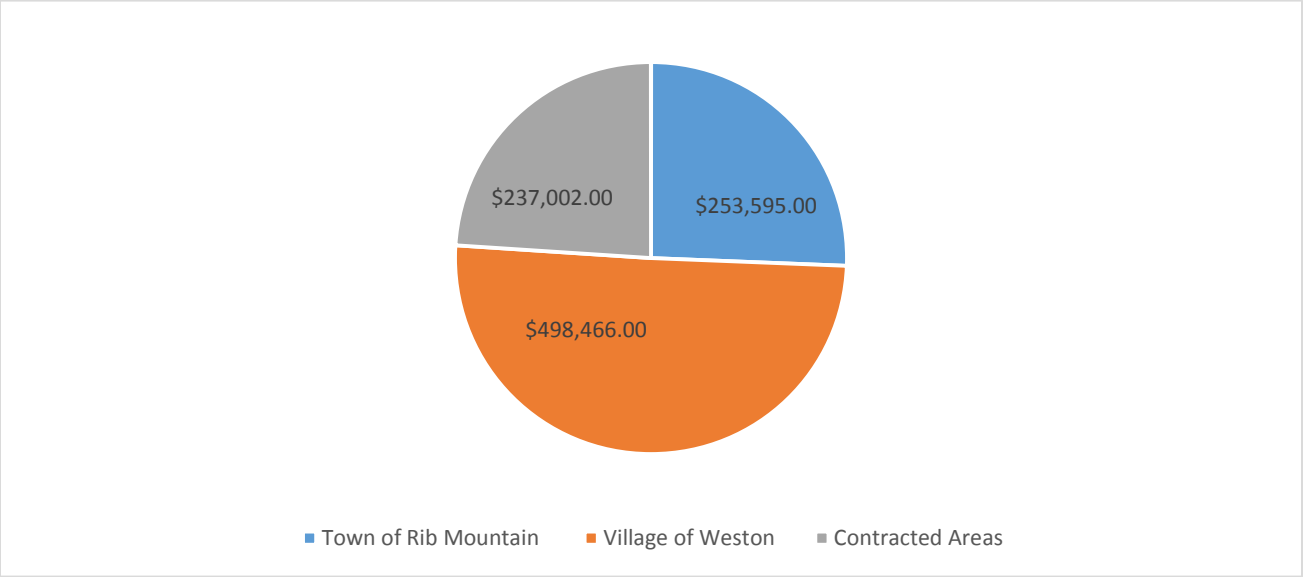


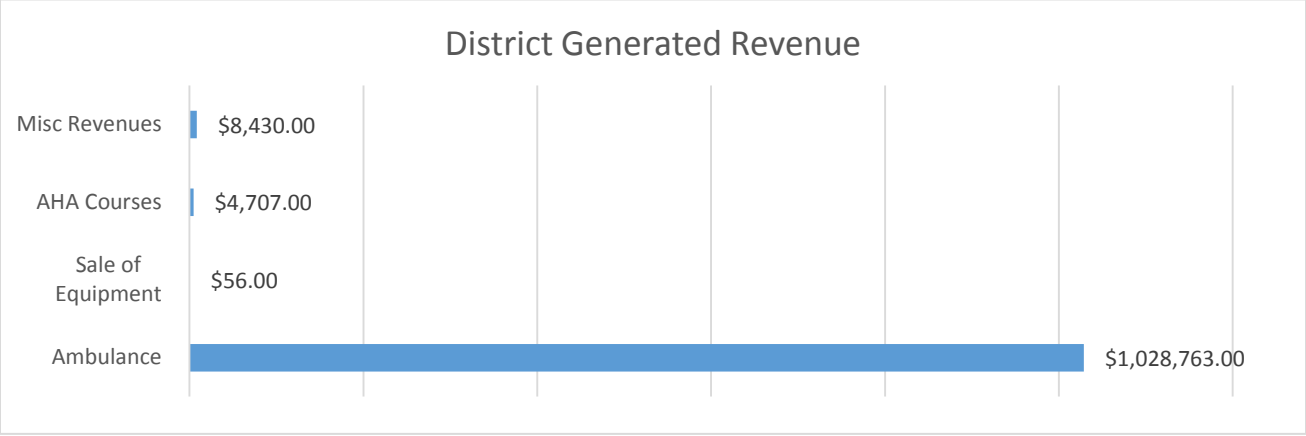


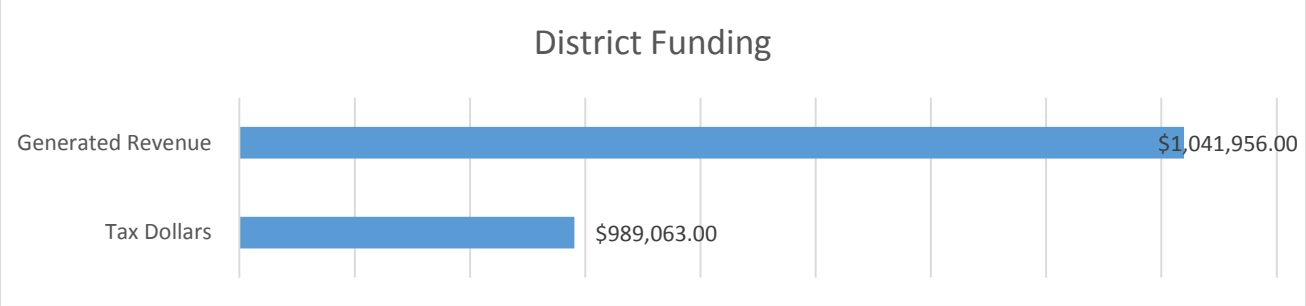


2015 Operating Budget	$1,974,111
2015 Capital Budget	$214,000
2015 Revenue	$1,270,528

Revenue Breakdown Excluding Capital Purchases







2016 Operating Budget	$2,173,707
2016 Capital Budget	$905,500
2016 Projected Revenue	$1,300,000

** Specific Revenue Breakdowns are not available at the time of publication as final numbers from contracted areas will not be available until the end of 2016.



Strengths	Strategies Needed to Maintain	Lead Responsibility	Fiscal Needs	Timeline
Fully staffed paramedic/fire service	• More paramedics are needed • Develop ways to retain staff at all levels	DC Finke	Possible funding needs for increased staffing	FY 2018-2019
Flexibility of staff	• Increase training to maintain broad knowledge base	TO Kurth	Maintain current funding for training	Start immediately
Late model/dependable equipment	• Obtain grants to maintain equipment into the future • Maintain and update current equipment replacement plan	Chief Savage DC Finke DC Bechel	Obtain grant funding and funding to maintain equipment replacement plan	FY 2017-2022
Maintain diversity of levels of care	• Continue to hire staff at all levels • Consider hiring full time paramedics • Increase pay for paramedics • Streamline paramedic binder	Chief Savage DC Finke DC Bechel	Increased funding for paramedic pay and possible increase in funding for full time staff	FY 2017-2019
Currently have a large instructor base within the department	• Develop training center • Promote training within the department • Maintain budget to train instructors	TO Kurth DC Bechel	Maintain training budget	Start immediately
Diverse experience level	• Make better use of individuals with years of experience	Battalion Chiefs	None	Start immediately

Strengths	Strategies Needed to Maintain	Lead Responsibility	Fiscal Needs	Timeline
Response Times	• EMS response times have improved in the past 60 days • Fire response is inconsistent- need more consistent practice to improve	All officers	None	Start immediately
PR Events/Public Education	• Continue open houses at both stations • Community CPR classes • Coordinate training with other departments • Involve media	SO Swatloski	None	Start immediately

Weaknesses	Strategies Needed to Improve	Lead Responsibility	Fiscal Needs	Timeline
Communication	• Consistent weekly updates • Utilize SAFER emails more often	Chief Savage DC Finke	None	Start immediately
Drill attendance, instructor quality	• Obtain further outside expertise • Option for child care	TO Kurth	Maintain training budget	Start immediately
Consistently losing staff	• Find opportunities for PT staff • Consider more full time opportunities	Chief Savage DC Finke	Increase budget for more full time staff	FY 2018-2020
Poor response for standby	• Tier system	DC Bechel	None	Started 6/16
Employees on multiple departments	• Not always a weakness • Incentive to commit to this department • Attempt to work together with other departments	DC Finke	None	Ongoing
Equipment familiarity between stations	• Standardize equipment • Training • Accountability	DC Finke TO Kurth All officers	None	Ongoing
Negative traditions/pride	• Establish new traditions • Modify old traditions	All officers	None	Ongoing
Lack of discipline/accountability for actions	• Follow chain of command • Clarify expectations	All officers	None	Ongoing
Lack of transfer coverage	• Tier system • Encourage members to apply	Chief Savage DC Finke DC Bechel	Possible funding to support full time or standby staff for transfers	FY 2017-2018

Weaknesses	Strategies Needed to Improve	Lead Responsibility	Fiscal Needs	Timeline
Support of both physical and mental health for staff	• Enhance/grow partnership with Greenheck • Discounts at gyms in the communities • Equipment upgrades • Require on duty physical fitness	BC Lang SO Swatloski	Seek grant funding for equipment upgrades	FY 2017-2018

Opportunities	Strategies to Obtain	Lead Responsibility	Fiscal Needs	Timeline
Growing coverage area, aging population	• Improve relations with other departments • Medi-van service for assisted living and nursing homes	DC Bechel	Possible need for equipment purchase if Medi-Van service is obtained	FY 2017-2018
Community paramedic	• Work with hospitals to develop program	DC Bechel DC Finke	None	FY 2016-2017
Specialty transfers	• Obtain contracts • Better coverage is needed • Better scheduling techniques needed	DC Bechel DC Finke BC Schlagel	Possible increased staffing for better coverage of transfers	FY 2017-2018
Expand educations opportunities to staff	• Advertise outside trainings • Make drills easier to participate in	TO Kurth Capt Stieve	Possible funding for IT equipment to broadcast drills. Maintain budget for training	FY 2016-2017
Technology growth	• Prepare for creating an IT department or outsourcing • Identify where new technology is needed	Capt Stieve	Possible funding for IT equipment/software	FY 2017-2018
Ergonomics-Changing how we operate	• Open suggestions from staff • Have an open meeting	DC Finke	Unknown	FY 2016-2017
Becoming our own training center	• Currently waiting for approval	DC Bechel	Possible needs initially to purchase training equipment	FY 2016-2017
Hiring	• Standardized applications • Update qualifications	DC Finke	None	FY 2016-2017
Training of local business	• Assess community needs • Recognize fire/EMS safe businesses • Business sponsor sporting event for charity • Training businesses to be proactive in emergency situations	SO Swatloski DC Bechel	None	FY 2017-2018

Opportunities	Strategies to Obtain	Lead Responsibility	Fiscal Needs	Timeline
Utilizing other department's technological capabilities	• Forming relationships with departments • Create a list of who has what type of equipment	FF Brandt	None	FY 2016-2017
Recognizing years of service	• Define what type of recognition • Define incentives	DC Finke	None	FY 2017-2018
Recruitment	• Standardize application process/qualifications • Develop internship • Promote/enhance local hiring	DC Finke Hiring Committee	None	FY 2017-2020

Challenges	Strategies to Obtain	Lead Responsibility	Fiscal Needs	Timeline
Fiscal Constraints	• Education of Town/Village Boards • Do not ask for staff to raise money to support the district	DC Finke Chief Savage	Need to maintain/increase budget to continue level of service	FY 2017-2022
Learning mapping/apparatus	• Verify who is responding • Continue map modules • Update maps in vehicles • Updates needed with station alerting systems	DC Finke	Funding needed to update station alerting systems	FY 2017-2018
Maintain two paramedics at both stations at all times	• Hire more paramedics • Incentive for taking paramedic class and staying with the district	Chief Savage DC Finke	None	FY 2017-2022
Manage growth and assimilation	• Recognition of district staff for positive actions • Chief officers continue to visit other stations	Chief Savage DC Finke DC Bechel	None	Immediately
More involvement in both fire and EMS needed	• Need better training for fire officers so they can deliver quality training to crews • Change in day to day operations to split up duties between shifts	DC Finke All Officers	None	Immediately

Challenges	Strategies to Obtain	Lead Responsibility	Fiscal Needs	Timeline
Sexual harassment issues and other liability	• Better training • Discuss with district how reports of harassment will be handled	DC Finke	None	Ongoing-Training has begun Q2 2016
Keeping current with industry changes	• Staff should continue to attend conferences and training opportunities • Mandatory training for officers such as SLICERS at house burns • Critical care paramedics need more ventilator training • Post articles that can be discussed once per week	DC Finke TO Kurth	Maintain training budget	FY2016-2022
Participation requirements	• New tier system will help • Address concerns about enough staff not being available to cover calls in the near future • Use merit pay system to benefit active staff • Encourage training participation • Mandatory quarterly shifts for officers	DC Finke	None	FY2016-2020

Challenges	Strategies to Obtain	Lead Responsibility	Fiscal Needs	Timeline
Industry rivals/politics	• Improve relations with other departments • Separate the district from attachments with previous department make-up	Chief Savage DC Finke	None	FY 2017-2018
Managing our message to the community	• Promote organization in the community • Ensure community members know who the members are	SO Swatloski	None	Immediately
Managing the media	• Reach out to local media • Reach out to hospitals; some are unaware of our level of service	PIO Nitzke	None	FY 2016-2017

Goals and Strategies for the Future

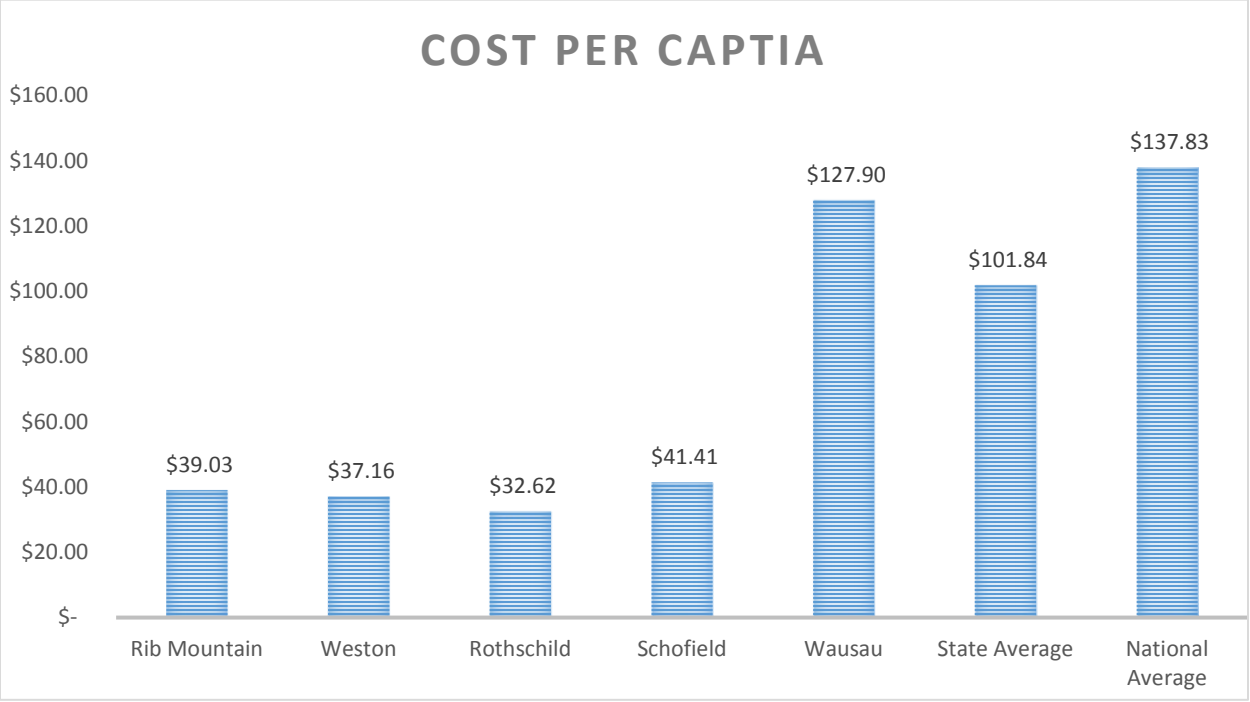
Goals are multi-year in nature and set the framework for policies and decision making in the future. The District has identified the following four goals:

1. Fiscal sustainability
2. Support of mental and physical health
3. Develop an emergency medical services training center
4. Develop standardized job descriptions and recruitment/promotion processes

Strategies are the means to achieve the goals. They are measurable and are the specific projects for which the organization is accountable and they provide a way for progress to be tracked. The following set of strategies has been created for each goal.

Goal 1: Fiscal Sustainability

Statement of Need: Maintaining fiscal sustainability and sufficient funding to effectively operate is critical to public safety. Due to the small amount of statistical data available, the data in this report is limited. The budget increased 3.8% from fiscal year 2014 to fiscal year 2015. During this time period revenues increased by 4.2%. Although there has been an increase in funds available to SAFER, the district continues to operate more efficiently than their counterparts in the metro area.



*SAFER and Wausau are the only agencies that provide both full time coverage and paramedic level EMS services.

The economic downturn over the past decade has forced many municipalities to look very closely at their budgets and make some tough decisions on what to cut. Many communities look first to public safety since these are normally the departments with the highest budget. Although many departments have looked to cut budgets, SAFER has found a way to cope with the challenges that face many communities. SAFER however, is not without problems during difficult economic times. Staffing is made up primarily of paid on call staff that is able to choose their hours. A significant amount of revenue is gained by performing inter-facility medical transports that is accomplished almost exclusively by paid on call staff. Inter-facility transports represented 14% of the revenue in 2015. A loss of this revenue would be detrimental to the budget. However, this funding is dependent on the availability of paid on call staff willing to respond. Fire staffing is also a concern. The NFPA and a recent NIST study recommend a minimum of three engines respond to the average size structure fire and each of those engines shall be staffed with a minimum of four firefighters. Current staffing includes, three at each station with a fourth firefighter staffed at station two during peak call times. This only allows for an efficient fire response from one station half of each day.

Goal 1: SAFER seeks fiscal sustainability to develop and maintain efficient and fiscally responsible fire and emergency medical response from all stations.

Strategies

1. Develop and implement annual revenue and expenditure projections for the next five years to forecast future budgets.
2. Examine current costs to determine if opportunities exist to contain costs of day-to-day operations.
3. Seek out opportunities for additional revenue to assist in cost recovery for increased staffing as well as a consistent staffing model.
4. Annually update fee schedule to assure that fees are able to capture the appropriate amount of revenue available.

<u>Goal 2: Support of Mental and Physical Health</u>

Statement of Need: In recent years the issue of firefighter health has come to the forefront at several different levels. Recently mental health of firefighters has been a concern. Many departments fear a line of duty death. However, most departments are three times more likely to suffer a suicide than a line of duty death. Firefighters learn to confront fear and accept their own mortality, as they have had to accept that death often comes abruptly and violently. Another concern is the physical health of firefighters. There are times when extreme exertion is placed on the body of a firefighter. Many times we think of a firefighter line of duty death being due to trauma involved with firefighting, which is rarely the case. According to the most recent data from NFPA, 59% of firefighter deaths are caused by overexertion/medial problems. Vehicle crashes are the next closest cause at 12%. The most common firefighter death is sudden cardiac death at 51%. Another common cause of firefighter deaths occurs after retirement from the fire

service. Over the past decade the CDC has begun to study the rates of cancer in firefighters and compare it to the general population. The study found that firefighters are 102% more likely to develop testicular cancer, 53% more likely to develop multiple myeloma, 62% more likely to develop esophageal cancer and 26% more likely to develop breast cancer.

Goal 2: SAFER wishes to develop and maintain programs for both mental and physical health.

Strategies

1. Continue EAP program as well as offer fire department Chaplin services to all employees**.**
2. Education of employees on warning signs of suicide of coworkers, as well as coping mechanisms.
3. Seek funding via grants to purchase and upgrade current exercise equipment at both stations.
4. Begin required physical fitness time on duty.
5. Develop standard operating guidelines for firefighter decontamination and equipment cleaning.
6. Seek funding to purchase equipment to properly decontaminate firefighters following fire response.

<u>Goal 3: EMS Training Center Development</u>

Statement of Need: Over the past several years Rib Mountain Fire Department and now SAFER, have offered both American Heart Association training as well as refresher courses for paramedic and critical care paramedic. In the past several months Northcentral Technical College has struggled to obtain and maintain quality EMS instructors. This has resulted in poor quality providers that the department has had to retrain before allowing them to function in the field. SAFER will work to obtain licensure from the State of Wisconsin to operate as an EMS training center. This will help assure the quality of the training providers and potentially open another funding source. Local high schools have also expressed interest in working with SAFER for the development of a training program for high school seniors. Training high school level individuals will help the individual chose a career path, while also providing assistance to the local volunteer EMS services.

Goal 3: SAFER wishes to obtain licensure to develop an EMS training center and become the preferred destination for students in Central Wisconsin.

Strategies

1. Gather support from area services for development of the training center.
2. Work in conjunction with the State of Wisconsin EMS office to obtain licensure.
3. Obtain further supplies and equipment to develop and maintain a high level of education.

4. Assign lead instructors for each discipline of EMS education as well as program oversight by the EMS Division Chief.
5. Work with local high schools to offer EMS courses to high school seniors.
6. Advertise services to local businesses to fill the gap of EMS education in the area.

Goal 4: Recruitment and Retention

Statement of Need: Recruitment and retention is a problem for many services across the country. Many part-time employees use SAFER as a training source and move on to full-time positions available at career departments. This can be both a positive and a negative for our service. It does help keep staffing costs at a minimum. However, the continuous loss of quality employees raises several concerns. Since the department is built on the model of paid on call staff the lack of consistency becomes a potential issue. There are also issues with a lack of commitment since many employees know that this is only a short-term job for them. In the past 12 months SAFER has lost six firefighter/paramedics to career departments. Unfortunately, during that same time period only three paramedics were hired, resulting in less staff to cover an increase in call volume and a higher incidence of long distance transport requests.

Strategies

1. Increase advertising for hiring of more paid on call staff to augment full time staff.
2. Increase pay for paid on call paramedics to retain current staff and attract more paramedics to apply for part-time employment.
3. Offer other benefits to attract and retain paid on call staff that meet minimum response standards.
4. Develop a long-term plan to hire more full-time staff to assure consistency. The costs could be offset by better coverage of inter-facility transports.



South Area Fire & Emergency Response District

2016 Member Survey

Chief Matt Savage
Deputy Chief Joshua Finke


If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more
YOU ARE A LEADER.
JOHN QUINCY ADAMS
E

Overview

Under the direction of Chief Matt Savage and Deputy Chief Joshua Finke, the S.A.F.E.R. Strategic Planning Steering Committee designed and implemented a survey of its employees. Anonymity assured, each employee answered more than sixty questions and one free-write portion via "Surveymonkey.com". The survey response rate was nearly 75%.

Executive Summary

This summary is intended for the senior management staff of S.A.F.E.R., controlling partners, principal investors, and is for internal use only (not approved for public release).

S.A.F.E.R.'s 2016 employee survey was designed to provoke an honest and candid response from employees in five categories including how employees feel about (1) S.A.F.E.R. in general, (2) S.A.F.E.R. leadership, (3) S.A.F.E.R. projects, (4) their job at S.A.F.E.R., and (5) opportunity at S.A.F.E.R. In addition, all employees were provided with an open-ended question with an opportunity to write up to 1,000 words.

While employees responded favorably with a nearly seventy-five percent response rate, such a survey has never been attempted and a second survey is recommended within twelve months. Also, caution is advised when interpreting survey results, as many questions were designed to reveal employee perceptions.

Results suggests a majority of employees strongly support the work of S.A.F.E.R.'s Chief and Deputy Chief (87%), are proud to say they work at S.A.F.E.R. (94%), would like to work more (75%), and believe the Public (100%) and the Village/Town (90%) leadership support them.

In addition, employees enjoy a sense of fair play attesting that men and women are treated equally (67%), duty shifts and inter-facility shifts are appropriated fairly (85%), promotions are made without regard to age, gender, race, or ethnicity (90%), that their work is valued by the Chiefs (90%), their co-members (90%).

However, employee concerns include a perceived dysfunctional officer corps that doesn't care about them (70%), doesn't lead by example (93%), are unqualified for their position (73%), and makeup a broken chain-of-command (65%). In addition, a majority of employees feel they've been sexually harassed/know an employee that has (>70%); written statements underscore this result.

While the majority agrees training they've received from S.A.F.E.R. was worth their time (75%) and has improve their skills (82%), they would like more targeted training (55%) and better communication from the Fire committee (68%) and the EMS committee (68%). Employees also seek transparent and respectful communication free of favoritism, with a formalized method for the recognition of excellence.

Moving forward, the Strategic Planning Committee recommends continued thoughtful study of the survey results and the development of a short and long term operational plan designed to celebrate that which we do well and to bring about real, meaningful change where needed.

Employee Summary

This summary is intended for S.A.F.E.R. employees and is for internal use only (not approved for public release).

S.A.F.E.R.'s 2016 employee survey was designed to provoke an honest and candid response from employees in five categories including how employees feel about (1) S.A.F.E.R. in general, (2) S.A.F.E.R. leadership, (3) S.A.F.E.R. projects, (4) their job at S.A.F.E.R., and (5) opportunity at S.A.F.E.R. In addition, all employees were provided with an open-ended question with an opportunity to write up to 1,000 words.

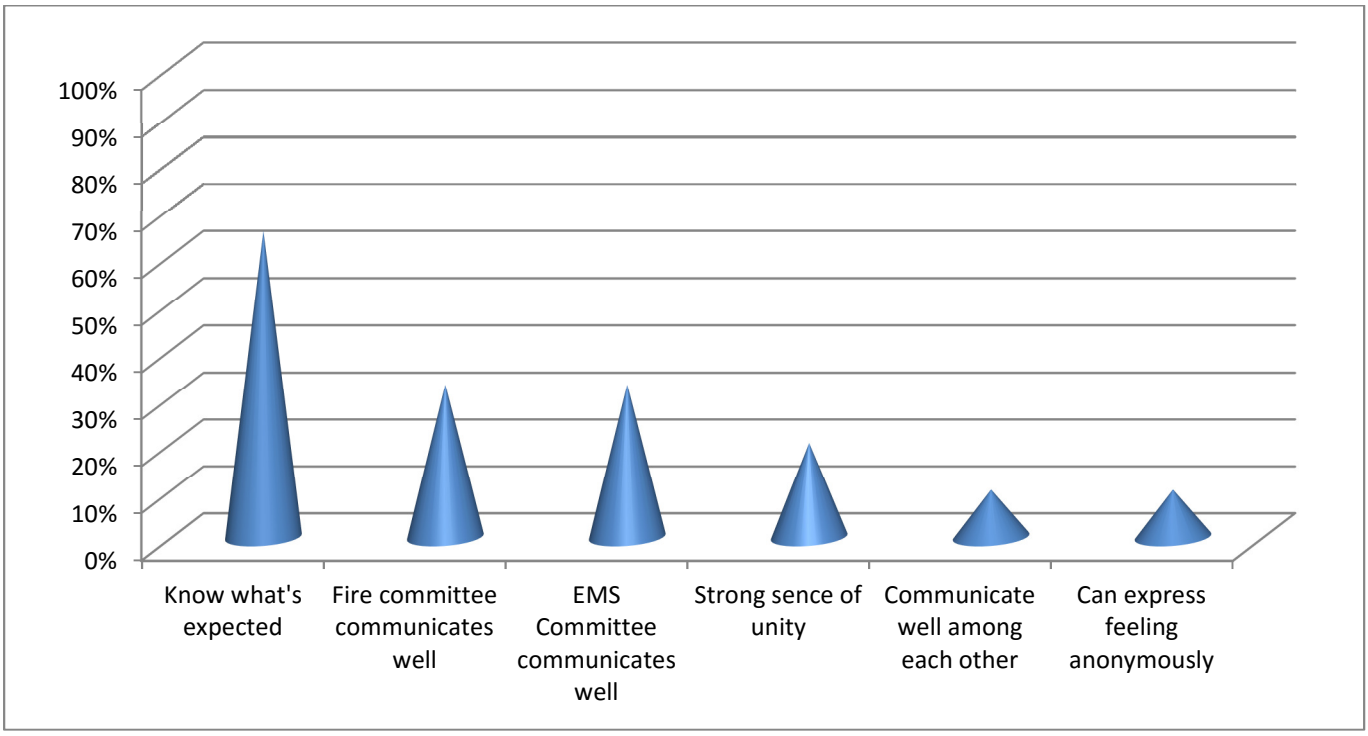
While employees responded favorably with a nearly seventy-five percent response rate, such a survey has never been attempted before and a second survey is recommended within the next twelve months. Also, caution is advised when interpreting survey results, as many questions were designed to reveal employee perceptions.

The employee summary focuses on twenty-two of the sixty-six total survey questions as selected by Deputy Chief Finke and S.A.F.E.R.'s Strategic Planning Committee and grouped into four categories: 1) Communication, 2) Conduct, 3) Leadership, 4) Personnel. Each is intended to stimulate productive discussion, constructive criticism, and most importantly ideas that result in real, meaningful change.

Those included in this process are reminded to be respectful of the sensitive nature of the survey results, the confidentiality of its content, and are encouraged to move beyond micro examples to find macro solutions.

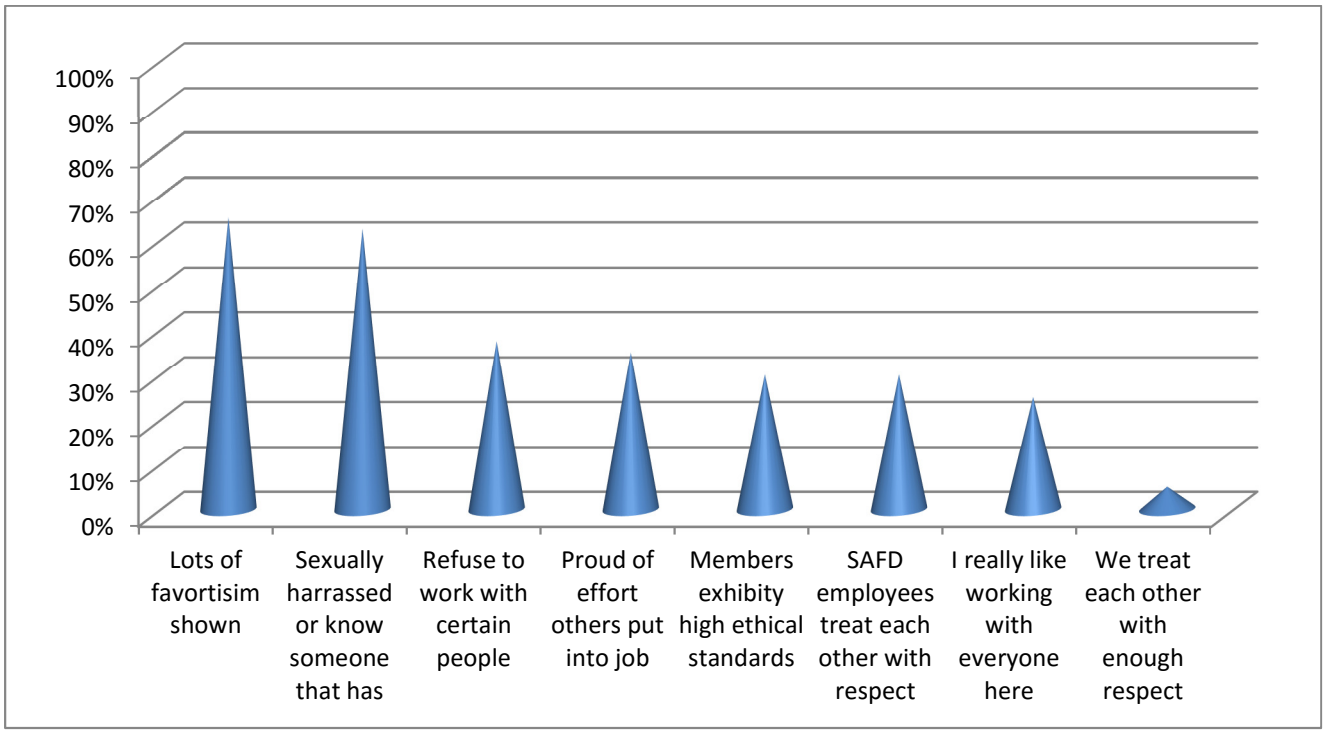
The first category, Communication, includes seven survey questions and their corresponding survey results detailed in Figure 1 below. Each percentage in Figure 1 below refers to employees answering "strongly agree" or "agree" to the question. For example, in the questions below "know what's expected of me", sixty percent of employees strongly agree or agree.

Figure 1: Communication



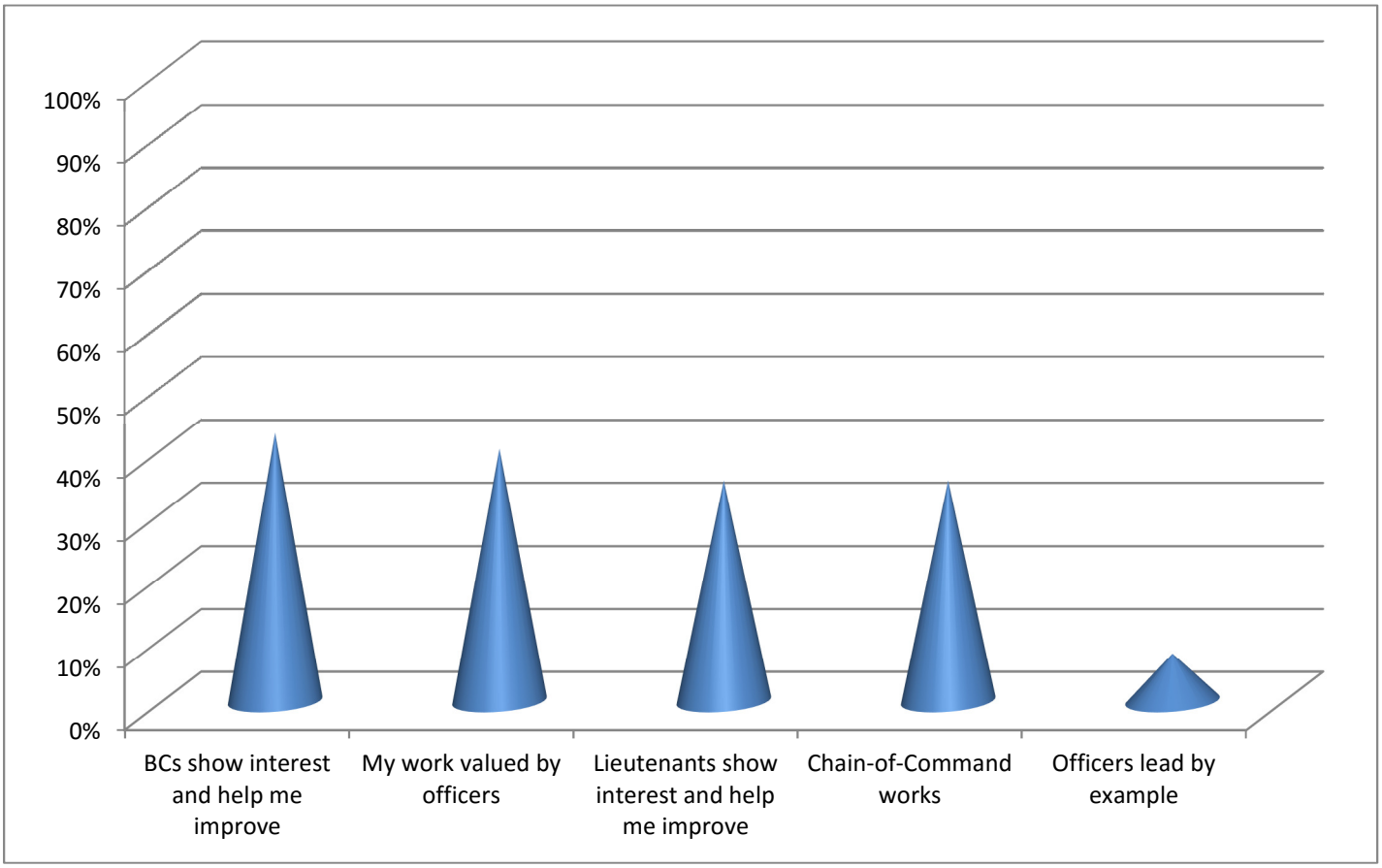
The second category, Conduct, includes eight survey questions and their corresponding survey results detailed in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2: Conduct



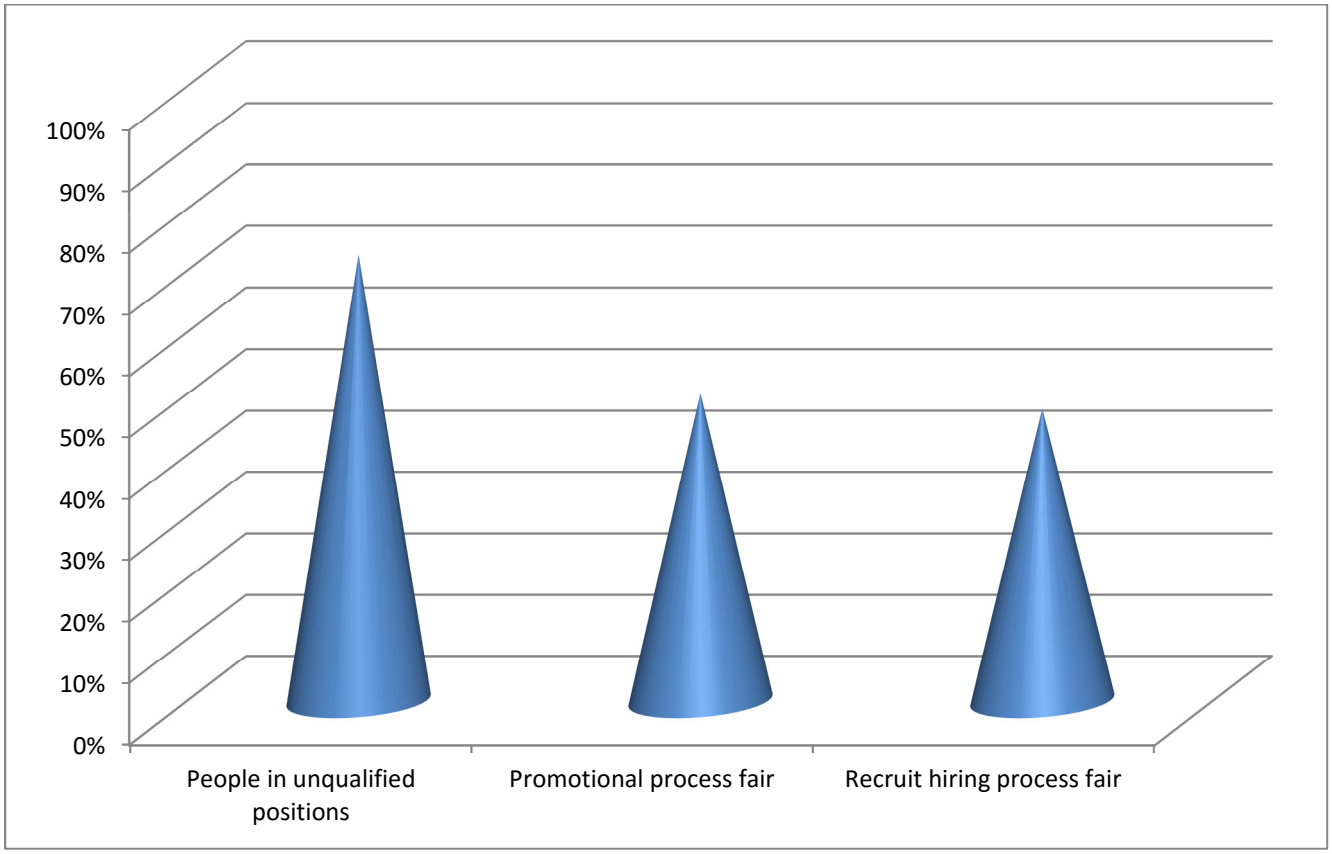
The third category, Leadership, includes eight survey questions and their corresponding survey results detailed in Figure 3 below.

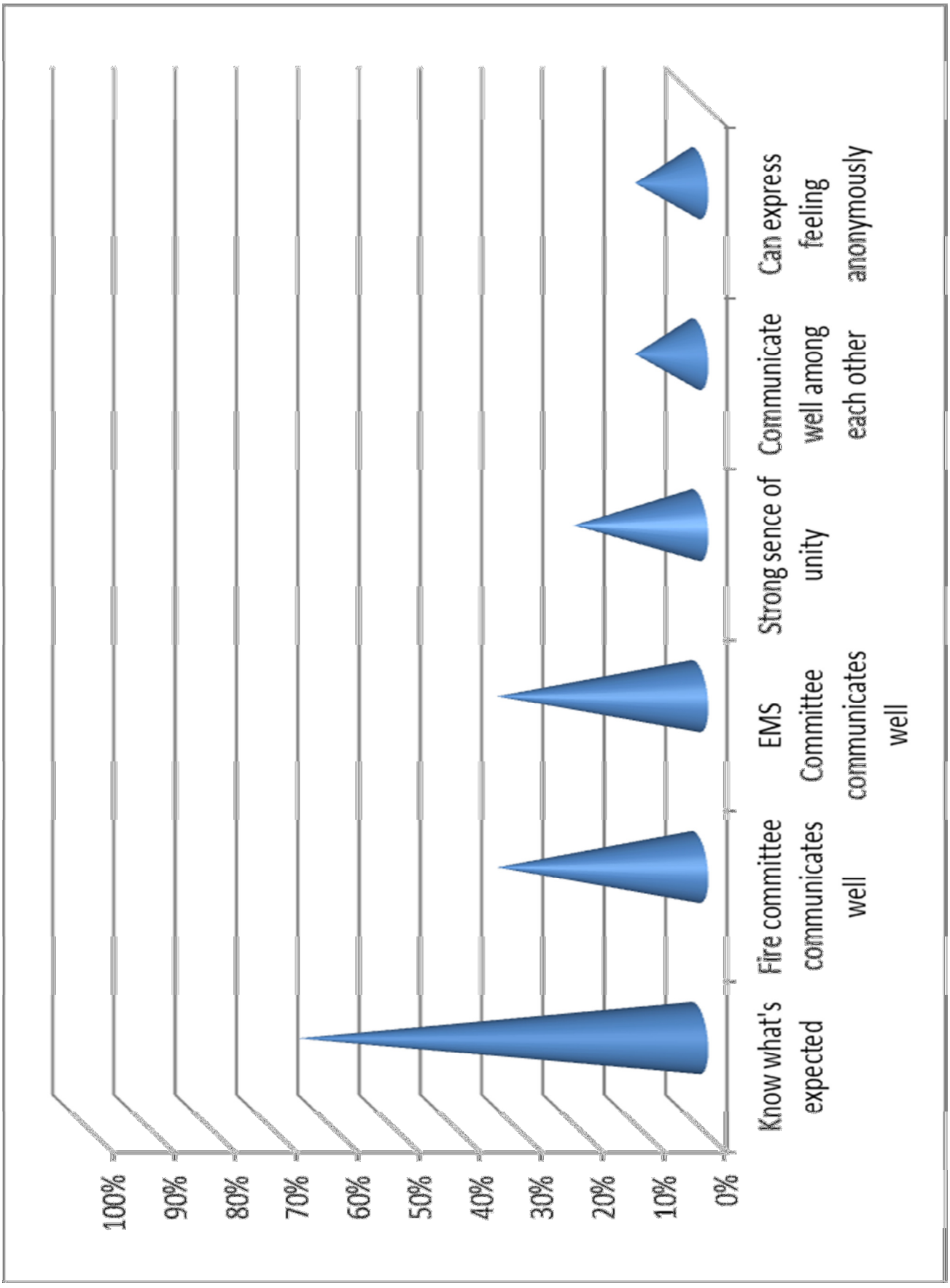
Figure 3: Leadership

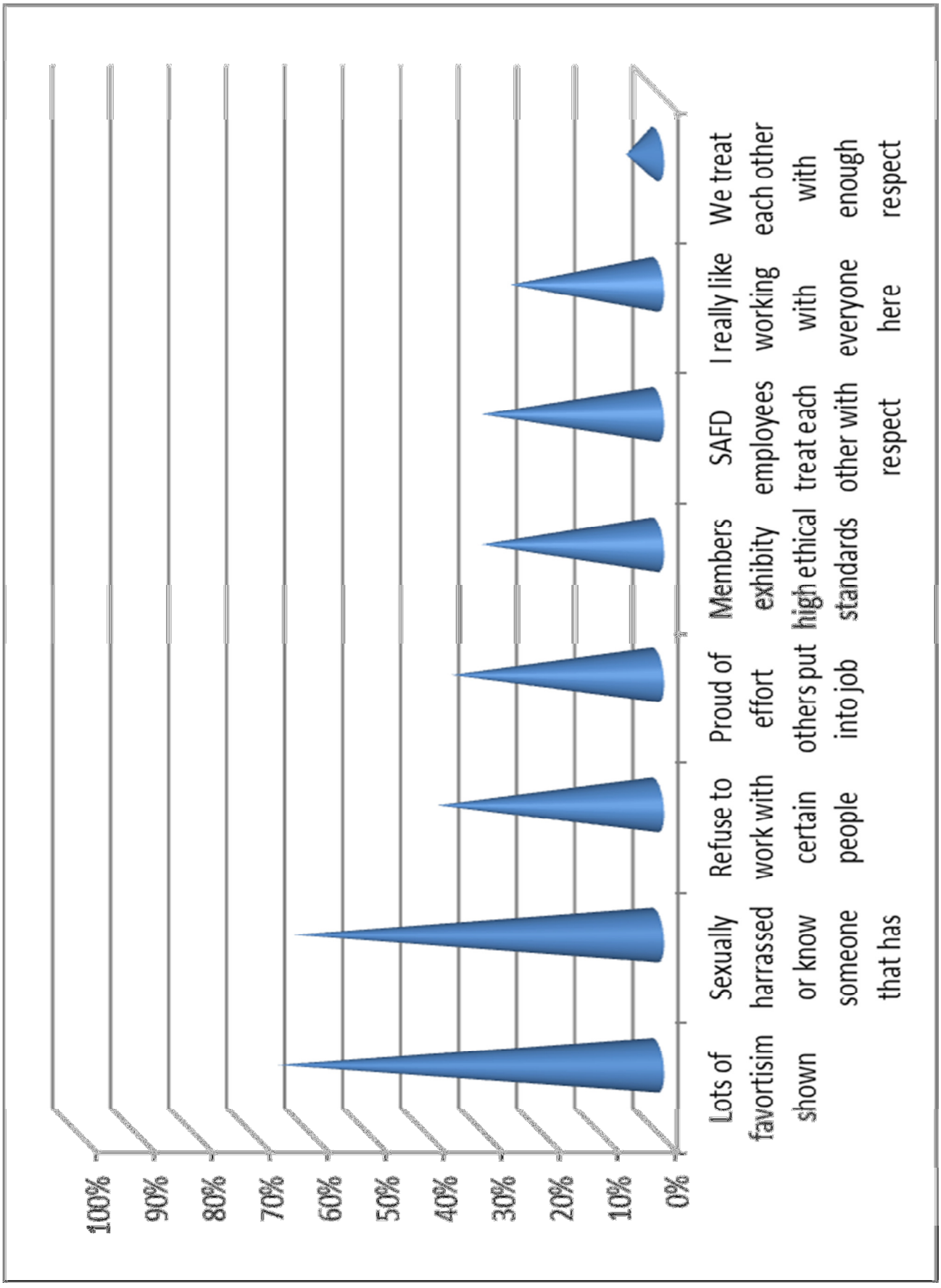


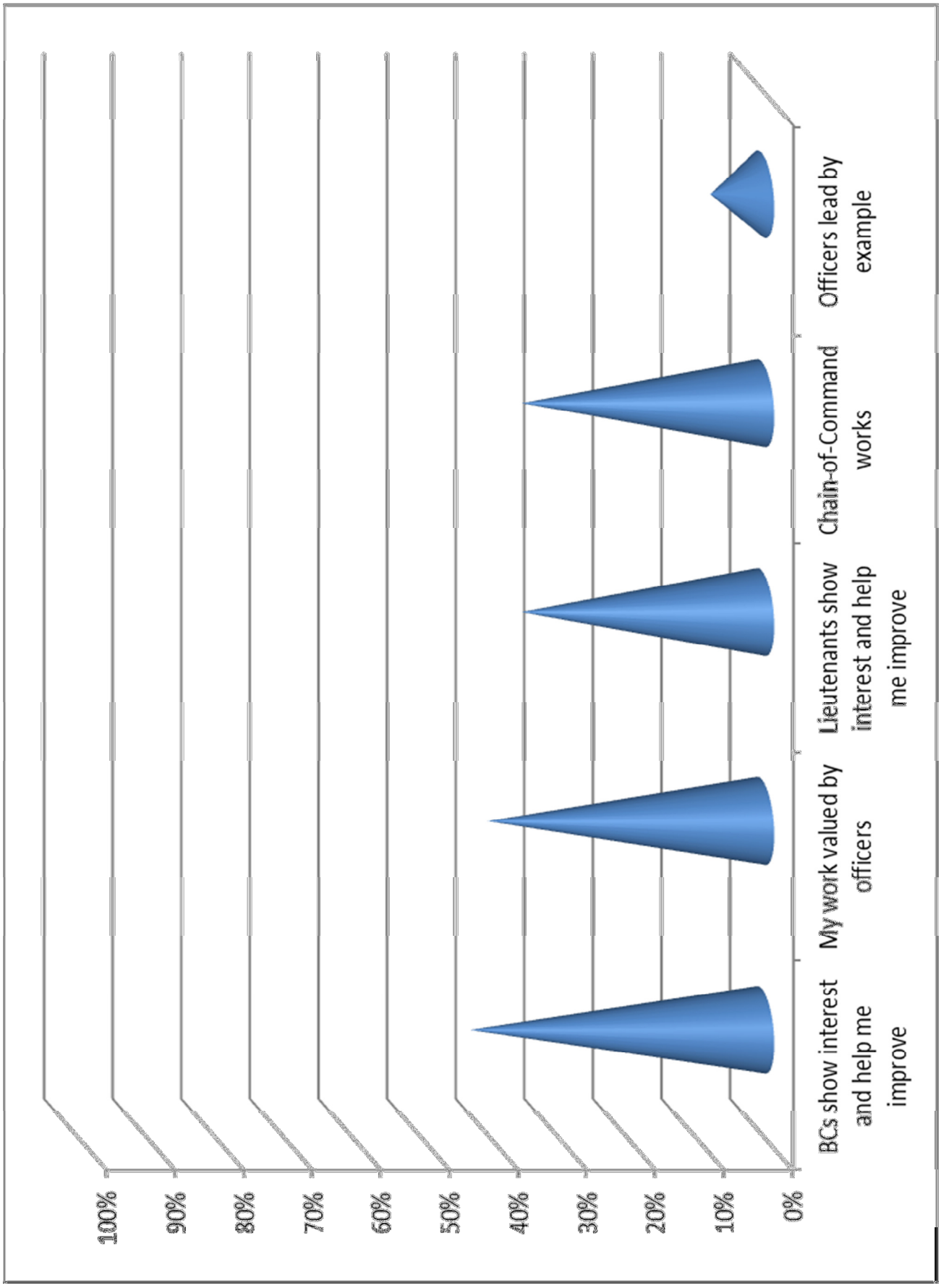
The fourth category, Personnel, includes eight survey questions and their corresponding survey results detailed in Figure 4 below.

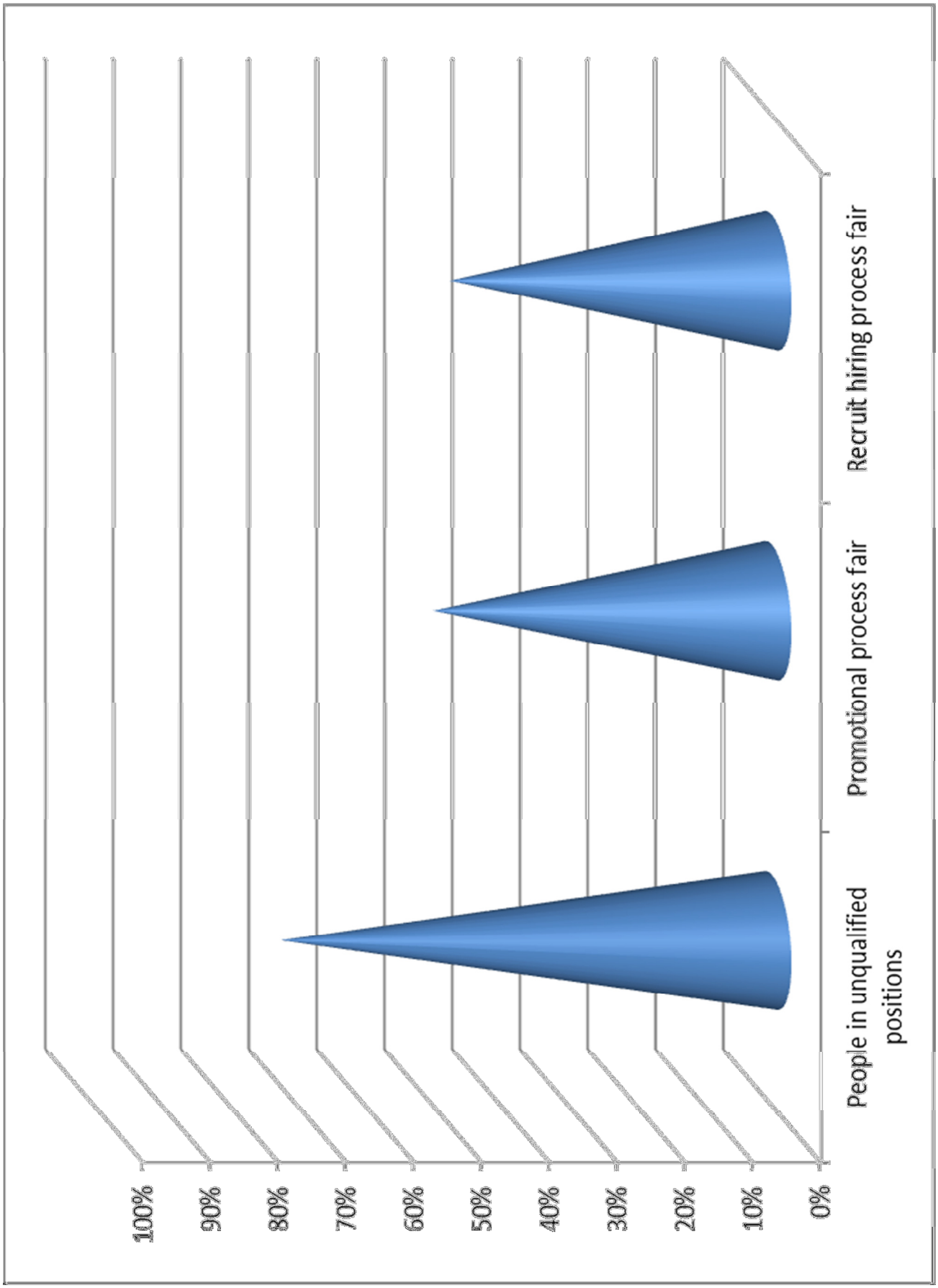
Figure 4: Conduct




100%
90%
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
Know what's expected
Fire committee communicates well
EMS Committee communicates well
Strong sence of unity
Communicate well among each other
Can express feeling anonymously


100%
90%
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
Lots of favortisim shown
Sexually harrassed or know someone that has
Refuse to work with certain people
Proud of effort others put into job
Members exhibity high ethical standards
SAFD employees treat each other with respect
I really like working with everyone here
We treat each other with enough respect


100%
90%
80%
70%
60%
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40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
BCs show interest and help me improve
My work valued by officers
Lieutenants show interest and help me improve
Chain-of-Command works
Officers lead by example


100%
90%
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
People in unqualified positions
Promotional process fair
Recruit hiring process fair