



WINSTON-SALEM FIRE DEPARTMENT REPORT

**Cultural climate assessment and recommendations
to address allegations of racism and discrimination
in the Winston-Salem Fire Department**

INTRODUCTIONS

WPR Consulting
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A full-service *diversity, equity, and inclusion* firm that partners with clients in the public, private, non-profit and higher education sectors to build sustainable social and transformative change.

WPR's range of services include, but are not limited to:

- Environmental scans/SWOT analyses
- In-person and virtual employee engagement
- Personalized DEI training models to improve staff cultural competencies
- Culture and climate assessments that will guide the partnerships and actions required for welcoming and inclusive environments.

RETAINED WPR CONSULTING, LLC

- Complete a cultural assessment of allegations of racism and discrimination in the Winston-Salem Fire Department (WSFD).
- Develop a list of recommendations, resources and support the WSFD would need to build a more inclusive cultural environment.
- Address training, technical assistance, staff development and accountability that may be needed to promote DEI as standard operational procedure.
- Develop a comprehensive diversity, equity and inclusion training module that can be used to improve the cultural competency of fire employees and other city staff as needed.

PROCESS

- Conducted interviews and focus groups with staff of the WSFD, the City Manager's Office, and the City's Human Relations Department.
- OMNIBUS, Hate Out of Winston, the Winston-Salem Urban League, the NAACP and other individuals.
- Studied the City's racial/ethnic demographics.
- Reviewed social media posts by WSFD employees.
- Researched the history of the WSFD.



- The Consultants used “safe space” conversation modules to attain feedback from employees, community groups, and individuals we met with.
- The modules were designed to provide a safe space for feedback on a vision for diversity, equity and inclusion within the Winston-Salem Fire Department.

ANALYSIS

- Consultants used a variety of analytical and management techniques in completing this process and making an assessment on the cultural climate of the WSFD.
 - We reviewed documents, read news articles, met with and interviewed relevant staff and community groups and individuals to obtain information about opinions, perceptions, observations, beliefs and concerns on allegations of racism and discrimination in the WSFD.
- History
 - Cultural Climate Assessment
 - SWOT Analysis
 - DEI Training Module
 - Tough Talk / Conflict Resolution
 - Conversation Module
 - Recommendations
 - Resources List

HISTORY

- On March 1, 1951, Winston-Salem hired and formed the city's and the state's first integrated Fire Company
- WSFD was fully integrated by November 1967.
- In 1973 Sandra Waldron was hired as a Public Safety Officer, making her the first paid woman firefighter with the WSFD, and in the state of North Carolina.
- Since 1980, the City of Winston-Salem has appointed six Fire Chiefs, four African Americans and two Whites
- Currently, minorities make up 55% of the senior of the WSFD

WSFD SINCE 2015 - HIRING

Utilized Media Placement Services to target electronic hiring ads to fire service minorities.

Utilized Segmented Marketing Services for marketing in Black communities.

Created a majority minority interview panel: one Black female, one Black male, one Hispanic male, one White male.

Participation in local career and cultural fairs - Urban League and Hispanic League.

Created "WSFD Recruiting Profiles", features minorities in WSFD telling how they found their way to fire service.

Assigned mentors to recruits during the fire academy.

Co-sponsored the fire certification program at Glenn High School with KFD.

WSFD SINCE 2015 - PROMOTIONS

- Promoted the first Black female battalion chief.
- Promoted the second White female battalion chief.
- Promoted the first Black female division chief.
- Promoted the first White female division chief.
- Promoted the first Black male division chief.
- Promoted the first firefighter directly to captain, a Hispanic male.
- Promoted the first Black female deputy fire marshal.

WSFD SINCE 2015 – CAREER DEVELOPMENT

- Assigned the first Black captain to Rescue 1
- Four of six Safety and Training Captains are Black
- The department's first and only graduate of the National Fire Academy's Managing Officer Program is a Black male.
- The first two minorities (Black female, Black male) in department history have been credentialed as Chief Fire Officers by the Center for Public Safety Excellence.
- Two Black senior staff members are enrolled in the National Fire Academy's Executive Fire Officer Program, and a third minority application is pending.
- First graduate of the International Association of Fire Chiefs' Diversity Executive Leadership Program, Black female.
- A Black captain is currently assigned to acting status to fill a battalion chief vacancy.
- Assigned four Black captains to attend the Carl Holmes Executive Development Institute at Dillard University for the first time in the history of the WSFD

Recruited the department's first Black chaplain.

Appointed the department's first honorary fire chiefs, two Black males.

Supported inclusion of Willie Carter and Robert Grier, two of the first eight Black firefighters who integrated Station 4 in 1951, in AT&T's 2019 Heritage Calendar.

Supported Elizabeth Bergstone's submission of "Red, Black—and White" to the 2018 Writer's Digest Writing Competition. "Red, Black—and White" is the story of the integration of Station 4 in 1951. The piece won fourth place in the Magazine Feature Article Category.



CLIMATE ASSESSMENT

Some community groups, including current and former fire staff, have expressed a concern that they believe Chief Trey Mayo is racist. However, none of the personnel interviewed across demographics (White, Black, Latino, Asian) shared this concern in any of the group sessions.

The WSFD, in and of itself, is not a racist organization, however, there are individuals who are employed by the department who are viewed as racists. Multiple fire service staff (both Blacks and Whites), who participated in the focus group discussions, alleged that racism and discrimination occurs in the department.

Racial, and especially cultural, tensions exist within the WSFD, due in part to the geographical demographics of the employee pool used by the department.

CLIMATE ASSESSMENT

There is a perception by some within the WSFD, both Black and White, that there is no racism or discrimination in the department.

The WSFD has not done enough to tell its own story about the great things that happen in the department. Many of these things are identified in the WSFD history section of this report. Failure to do this has allowed other narratives in the community to define the WSFD.

Due to the size of the WSFD, the demographic makeup, and the number of shifts, the number of fire personnel and fire stations needed to address fire safety in the city, the WSFD has one race stations/shifts (all White or all Black), including in African American communities.

CLIMATE ASSESSMENT

In the WSFD, there are major concerns about holding one another accountable on issues of race and other issues.

There is a strong perception held by Black and White staff, within the WSFD, that the severity for discipline in the WSFD is dependent on the race of the individual who is being reprimanded.

Racial tensions in the WSFD are driven, in part, by Facebook postings that are perceived as expression of First Amendment rights (intent) by some staff and perceived as racist (impact) by other staff.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Design and Implement a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Strategic Plan and a corresponding action plan to provide a sense of direction and measurable goals and objectives for the WSFD (and the City).

Increase WSFD DEI awareness and knowledge through employee engagement.

After development, completion and implementation of the WSFD DEI Strategic Plan, follow up with efforts on a communitywide initiative.

Community Forums be created to bring residents together for deliberative community dialogues on tough issues and community concerns about the WSFD.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Increase outreach to diverse populations in Winston-Salem.

Provide diversity, equity and inclusion training to employees of the City and the WSFD on a continuous basis.

Use community gatekeepers to keep up with the pulse of various community factions.

Provide funding to the WSFD to hire four Fire and Life Safety Educators who will take the lead on community engagement initiatives, including DEI actions, community conversations, coordination on job fairs and fire education to community groups and neighborhoods.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Provide intercultural training for all WSFD staff.

Partner with the local public-school system to create programs in middle and high schools that lead to firefighting certifications and firefighting career training.

Ramp up WSFD public relations, public service announcement (PSAs), and internal communications.

Be more intentional about diverse shifts across all shifts and fire houses.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Conduct a discipline audit at the WSFD.

Conduct a demographics audit of WSFD by positions

Revisit and strengthen the City's Facebook Policy

WSFD Executive Team – have the “talk.”



RECOMMENDATIONS

City of Winston-Salem and WSFD review and assess all administrative policies and use a DEI lens to update them.

Designate DEI staff oversight.

WSFD develop and implement an anti-hazing policy.

