Determining the Viability of Accreditation for the Moorhead Fire Department

Jeffrey M. Wallin
Moorhead Fire Department
Moorhead, Minnesota
Certification Statement

I hereby certify that this paper constitutes my own product, that where the language of others is set forth, quotation marks so indicate, and that appropriate credit is given where I have used the language, ideas, expressions, or writings of another.

Signed_______________________________________
In 2011, several years of declining budgets was placing increasing pressure on city departments to justify expenditures or face their loss during budget cutting efforts. The problem was the Moorhead Fire Department did not have a comprehensive planning process in place and was receiving increasing pressure to consider pursing accreditation as partner emergency service agencies in their area had. The purpose of this Applied Research Project was to define the process and requirements of accreditation through the Commission on Fire Accreditation International (CFAI) and determine from the experiences of similar sized agencies, if accreditation was a viable planning option for the Moorhead Fire Department. Descriptive research in the form of a literature review and interviews conducted with CFAI accredited agencies similar to Moorhead was used to answer the following questions: a) What are the requirements of the CFAI accreditation process? b) What are the typical costs involved with accreditation? c) How many staff hours are typically required to complete the accreditation process? d) What are the potential benefits of accreditation? e) What unforeseen problems have other agencies encountered during accreditation? The results of the research indicated that CFAI accreditation was a viable planning option for the Moorhead Fire Department, developing in them the ability to collect and use meaningful data to analyze problems, determine deficiencies and develop effective plans, improve performance and justify their actions. Recommendations were made to educate department members and build support for accreditation, appoint an accreditation manager and team, and obtain Registered Agency status, researching and networking further, the requirements of accreditation. After continued communications, MFD should determine if they wish to pursue accreditation, develop a plan of action, obtain the
funding and support of city leaders and work to achieve accredited status according to the current CFAI guidelines.
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Introduction

The Moorhead Fire Department (MFD) was located adjacent to Fargo, North Dakota, in northwestern Minnesota along the Red River of the North. MFD provided an array of fire suppression, emergency medical, technical rescue, hazardous materials and fire prevention services to 38,065 residents of the City of Moorhead and an estimated 10,000 college students. These services were provided out of two stations with a full-time staff of 33 line and four staff personnel. MFD also actively participated in mutual aid contracts with neighboring career and paid-on-call departments.

The department experienced an expansion in the type and frequency of services provided during the 1990s and 2000s. These services were expanded without the aid of short-term or long-range plans. Two separate initiatives were launched in the 2000s to develop long-term plans or recommendations, but both ultimately failed. During this time frame, two of MFD’s service delivery partners became accredited through separate agencies. On the surface, it appeared that their organizations prospered as a result of their work to achieve accreditation.

At the time this paper was authored, MFD was in the midst of a leadership change and was under economic pressure to reduce costs or re-examine their operating practices due to a projected shortfall of revenues over the next several years. The problem was the Moorhead Fire Department did not have a comprehensive planning process in place and was receiving increasing pressure to consider pursing accreditation as partner emergency service agencies in their area had. Several years of declining budgets, a trend that was expected to continue, was placing increasing pressure to justify expenditures or face their loss during budget cutting efforts.
MFD expected that if they did not bring new management tools to bear, they would face reductions in staff or services provided, to the detriment of the customers they served.

The purpose of this Applied Research Project was to define the process and requirements of accreditation through the Commission on Fire Accreditation International (CFAI) and determine from the experiences of similar sized agencies, if accreditation was a viable planning option for the Moorhead Fire Department. Descriptive research was used to answer the following questions: a) What are the requirements of the CFAI accreditation process? b) What are the typical costs involved with accreditation? c) How many staff hours are typically required to complete the accreditation process? d) What are the potential benefits of accreditation? e) What unforeseen problems have other agencies encountered during accreditation? The answers to these questions were then used to formulate a recommendation to resolve the problem.

Background and Significance

MFD, established in 1872, had been providing fire suppression services since its inception. In the mid 1970s, they added non-transport emergency medical care, auto extrication and water rescue services. In the mid 1980s they added ice rescue services. In 1995 the department added hazardous materials response capabilities and in the following year added confined space and technical rescue services.

As each of these services was added, the skills and education of their members were increased, new equipment and/or vehicles were purchased and new and increasingly technical policies and procedures were implemented. These improvements occurred, however, without the aid of any type of formalized planning process. It had been the standard business practice of the department to approach each situation or opportunity as an independent function or event,
without analyzing the overall impact of individual actions or determining if they supported the overall long range goals of the department.

More recently, the City of Moorhead experienced an economic and real estate boom beginning in 1999. Over a 10-year period beginning in 1999, the city expanded 30.3% in incorporated area and increased 12.2% in population (City of Moorhead [COM], 2008; COM, 2010). It became clear to city leaders and the fire chief that some type of long-range planning process was needed to effectively respond to this growth. In 2005 the fire department embarked on a city-sanctioned master planning process. A consultant was hired to oversee the process and work began with a planning committee from the fire department in 2006. The plan was completed in 2007 after several planning sessions, opportunities for community input and the completion of a fire station location study and standard of response. This strategic plan, intended to cover operations from 2007-2010, was ultimately neither adopted nor implemented for reasons that remain undisclosed to this day. In the mean time, staffing was expanded in anticipation of the eventual opening of a third station and six additional firefighters were hired in 2008.

The local economy slowed significantly in 2007 and general fund revenues for the city later contracted in the wake of a statewide economic downturn and housing market revaluation. New housing construction in Moorhead peaked in 2005 and slowed slightly for the next few years. By 2007, however, new housing constructed had dropped to 64.4% of peak levels (COM, 2011). City growth plans were abandoned and individual department budgets were frozen or reduced in anticipation of a short-term reduction in revenue and city development.

In 2009, the City of Moorhead entered into a contract with the International City/County Management Association (ICMA) to study fire department operations and made long-term recommendations. This study was facilitated by the city manager’s office and involved little
input from the fire department, outside of a two hour site visit by the author of the work. The resulting report and recommendations were generally unusable, centering on an unjustified recommendation to change from 24-hour to 12-hour shifts and a recommendation to adopt a European based fire prevention philosophy with little detail about what that would entail, or how that should be accomplished. The report was never adopted by the city.

The financial conditions in 2010 had not improved, with new housing construction down to 31.1% of peak levels (COM, 2011). General fund revenues peaked in 2007 and dropped every consecutive year since, resulting in a 9.1% decrease from peak levels by 2010 (COM, 2010; COM, 2008). Realizing that the economic slowdown was likely to be a more long-term event, the city manager and city council found themselves in a position to discuss cost saving options. Layoffs, reorganization, merging with the police department, billing for service and eliminating emergency medical services were all options that were discussed. Three vacant fire department positions, while not eliminated, remained unfilled in 2011.

An additional problem with planning for the future was the resignation of the chief in 2010. The city expressed that they would not make plans to replace the chief until the State of Minnesota set their bi-annual budget, a portion of which included revenue sharing from property taxes back to the City of Moorhead. Lengthy budget battles and a state shutdown due to a state budget impasse had significantly delayed this process. In the meantime, the department found it difficult to make substantive plans for the future in such an unstable environment, with no permanent administrative head to champion the needs of the department. Without a credible fact-based set of business and operating practices that could justify the continued expense of fire department operations, it appeared likely that staffing would be reduced and core services eliminated, ultimately causing harm to MFD’s customers.
Since master planning and consultant studies had been unsuccessful at developing a plan for the MFD’s future, one avenue that remained was accreditation. F-M Ambulance Service, Moorhead’s EMS transportation provider, became an accredited agency of the Commission on Accreditation of Ambulance Services in 2006. MFD noticed an increase in the array of services they provided and an improvement in the quantity and quality of equipment on their apparatus since becoming accredited. They reported that the largest benefit they received was having great tools in place that justified their decisions and provided for consistent operations regardless of staff changes. They also felt that they were proactive in their operations versus being reactionary (K. Krupich, personal communication, August 25, 2011).

The Fargo Fire Department (FFD) became an accredited agency of the CFAI in 2010. During their preparations for accreditation, they established growth benchmarks that dictated when and how the department would expand, added support staff, increased training requirements and developed measurement tools that decreased response times and increased resource availability (B. Hover, personal communication, February 23, 2011).

The administrative staff of the MFD noticed a change in the operating practices of the FFD and a shift towards a more business-oriented approach to their delivery of services. The line staff of the MFD had also noticed an increase in the perceived professionalism of the FFD, but for some, the perception was that this had come at a high cost. The author had observed some of the line staff at the FFD expressing that they felt that too many people were pulled off of the line apparatus for too long a period of time to work towards accreditation. Their lead accreditation worker had confirmed that this was a belief held by some of the line staff at the FFD, although he strongly disagreed with this opinion, purposing that this perception resulted from a practice of poor vertical communication within the department in some areas,
accreditation being one example. He felt that the data gained from following the processes established by accreditation were an invaluable tool for planning and justification of decisions by management (C. Nelson, personal communication, July 22, 2011).

This general impression by some FFD personnel had been expressed to many MFD personnel during joint training operations, which lead many of the staff at MFD to believe that accreditation, while a potentially worthy endeavor, would likely be beyond their much more limited capacity in terms of staffing and financial support. It was likely, however, that if MFD did not have a comprehensive set of planning and performance measurement processes in place, that they would see reductions of staff, services, or both, as the city dealt with ever restricting budgets.

The third course in the Executive Fire Officer Program of the National Fire Academy addressed many of these issues. A few of the goals of the Executive Analysis of Fire Service Operations in Emergency Management course were to prepare senior staff officers to conduct risk and capability assessments and consider the legal mandates and standards in place that govern and influence the operation of a modern fire department (United States Fire Administration, n.d.a.). At the time this paper was written, the MFD had not completed any of these activities successfully. Accreditation may have been able to assist with this.

Resolving this problem would also assist the United States Fire Administration in meeting its second and third strategic goals, “Improve local planning and preparedness,” and “Improve the fire and emergency services’ capability for response to and recovery from all hazards” (United States Fire Administration, n.d.b.).
Literature Review

The literature review was conducted with a focus on each of the five research questions.

*What are the Requirements of the CFAI Accreditation Process?*

The CFAI outlined a four step process to achieve accreditation. The first of these steps was to become a Registered Agency. After making application and paying a nominal fee, an agency had a three year window of opportunity to explore the accreditation process. During this time they obtained access to the CFAI network, received the CFAI newsletter and were given a copy of the current edition of the Fire & Emergency Service Self-Assessment Manual (FESSAM). During this three year period, the CFAI also suggested that agency members attend CFAI basic workshop training (Center for Public Safety Excellence [CPSE], 2010c). Purcell (2005) suggested that the added networking opportunities provided by attending this training would also have been very valuable during the self-assessment process, providing an additional support network to answer questions and suggesting efficient work practices.

It was at this point that an agency should have educated its members, local administrators and elected officials about the process, costs and benefits. Often there would have been skepticism among these stakeholders, but those attending the workshop training could have helped educate stakeholders about the process. Key personnel and work teams should also have been established during this period of time (Eastman, Jones, & Stephenson, 2010).

The second step in the process was becoming an Applicant Agency. After making application and submitting the required fees, an agency would begin the process of preparing several documents for accreditation. They would be assigned a volunteer mentor and would be given a SharePoint site to facilitate the review of draft documents by the mentor and the offering
of feedback and advice. A career agency had 18 months to complete this phase of the process (CPSE, 2010c).

During this phase, four major documents would have been prepared or revised as the agency examined their operations: the self-assessment, a community risk analysis, the standard of cover and the strategic plan. The self-assessment was driven largely by the FESSAM, containing 10 major categories, divided into 43 criteria with 258 performance indicators, 82 of these being critical criteria that an agency must have met to qualify for accreditation (CPSE, 2009, pp. 20-23).

The 10 major categories covered: governance and administration, assessment and planning, goals and objectives, financial resources, programs, physical resources, human resources, training and competency, essential resources and external system relationships. For each of these categories, the agency was expected to provide performance data or exhibits of existing policies, suggested operating guidelines or other documents that would have demonstrated the current practices of the agency. Documents were not to be manufactured for the self-assessment process. It was expected that the agency would have prepared in advance of the Applicant Agency phase to have been in a position of operating as the CFAI recommended while completing the application (CPSE, 2010c). It was suggested that the three year Registered Agency time frame should have been used to prepare for Applicant Agency status (Black, 2009).

Under the governance category, the agency must have demonstrated that it was legally established. This often meant that there should have been a mission statement that reflected all of the services provided, an organizational chart, and clear communication with and governance by an administrative body, as well as qualifications for the chief fire officer. The agency also needed to demonstrate compliance with all legal requirements at the federal, state and local level.
The administrative structure, department staffing and job descriptions should have been appropriate to the agency’s mission (CPSE, 2009, pp. 82-83).

Under the assessment and planning category, the agency needed to demonstrate that they had analyzed their community for population density as well as demographic, economic and other risk factors to develop a standard of cover for fire and non-fire hazards. This would have required using a formal risk/benefit analysis and meeting minimum travel time standards. A strategic plan must also have been developed (CPSE, 2009, pp. 83-85).

Under the goals and objectives category, the agency must have demonstrated that they had long-range organizational goals, as well as specific measurable objectives designed to work toward those goals. This would have required that a formal management process had been in place and that the goals and objectives were reviewed and updated at least annually (CPSE, 2009, pp. 86-87).

Under the financial resources category, the agency must have had a written process, policies and guidelines in place for budget development. This should have included direction from the governing body, participation from many in the agency, and a final budget that was consistent with the goals and objectives of the organization. Independent audits of the budget needed to be completed annually and the budget must have been built on anticipated revenues (CPSE, 2009, pp. 87-89).

The programs category was quite large, being further subdivided into nine criteria for each of the major services often provided by fire departments. Almost every service must have been evaluated annually, and for those involving emergency response, proper operating procedures must have been in place that met the response goals established in the standard of
cover. These were the only major requirements for the provision of technical rescue, hazardous materials and aviation and marine rescue & firefighting services (CPSE, 2009, pp. 89-96).

Additionally, ICS must have been used for fire suppression incidents, and HIPAA requirements must have been met and patient care reports completed for all EMS incidents. Agencies must also have had a formal all-hazard, multi-agency plan in place that included operating guidelines and processes for interoperability. Agencies must have adopted a fire prevention code and had the legal authority to investigate fires. A risk-based public education program must have been in place and there must have been staff with the proper expertise to have met the agency’s life safety goals (CPSE, 2009, pp. 89-96).

Under the physical resources category, both the governing body and department personnel must have been involved with the planning for physical facilities. Facilities and apparatus must have been adequately distributed to meet the standard of cover and must have meet all applicable codes and regulations. A policy-based vehicle maintenance program must have been in place that met the manufacturer’s recommendations, legal regulations and the need for safety. Equipment must have been regularly inspected, tested and maintained with proper records kept, and personnel must possess appropriate safety equipment (CPSE, 2009, pp. 96-99).

Under the human resources category, a human resource manager must have been designated. Job related hiring and promotional practices, including probationary periods, must have been in place that met all applicable laws. Adequate personnel policies must have been in place and communicated to employees including harassment prevention policies. A position classification system with published pay rates must have been established. An occupational health and safety program must also have been in place as well as a health and wellness program
including initial, regular and rehabilitative medical and fitness evaluations (CPSE, 2009, pp. 99-102).

The training program must have had a process in place to identify the training needs of the agency, conduct performance-based measurement of individual, company and multi-company performance and there must have been adequate facilities and apparatus to support the training needs. Training materials must have been evaluated annually (CPSE, 2009, p. 103).

Under essential resources, the agency must have established minimum fire flow requirements, used this information during risk assessment and pre-fire planning and assuring an adequate water supply was available. A radio system must have been in place to allow communications in the field and there must have been operating procedures in place for the communications center. Adequate administrative support was also required to achieve the agency’s goals. The agency must have also maintained external agency relationships that supported cost effectiveness or the missions of the agency. There must have been formal agreements in place for these relationships (CPSE, 2009, pp. 104-107). Each of the 10 categories also contained other non-mandatory performance indicators that could be found in the FESSAM.

The second document that must have been produced for accreditation was the community risk assessment. This thorough analysis should have considered both fire and non-fire hazards, broken down by geographic area considering the probability of each event and the consequences of event occurring in terms of life safety, economic and environmental impacts. Fire flow needs should have also been calculated for identified hazards and fire management zones established to better manage the risks in each unique area (CPSE, 2009, pp. 44-46).

The risk assessment document served as one of the eight elements of the standard of cover document, following the introduction. Using the risk analysis as a basis, the agency then
outlined the time and on-scene performance expectations that would serve the needs of the community. A matrix was then developed outlining the tasks that must be accomplished and the resources and time required to complete them. This would allow for the outlining of the resources required to establish an Effective Response Force (ERF). From these, the agency could define the concentration and distribution of resources needed to develop an ERF within the timelines required based on the identified risks. A desired level of response reliability would also have been established based on call volume to outline the desired percentage of time that an ERF could be assembled within the required time frame. Lastly, the agency would provide an analysis of historical response data to determine if the previous standards had been met, and if not, why (CPSE, 2009, pp. 44-46).

The last major document that needed to be prepared for accreditation was the strategic plan. The plan should have utilized input from external as well as internal stakeholders. A good community-driven strategic planning process should have re-examined the mission, values and vision statements. Deficiencies noted in the self-assessment should then have been considered along with a S.W.O.T. analysis (internal Strengths, internal Weaknesses, external Opportunities, external Threats) to have developed short-term and long-term (three to five year) goals and objectives, with related budget implications (CPSE, 2009, pp. 73-77).

Purcell (2005) felt that the entire self-assessment process, including creation of the four documents, was such a daunting task that the agency should establish an accreditation manager and an accreditation team made up of a cross-section of department members. He further suggested establishing timelines and holding strictly to them, assembling the required exhibits as data was collected for the self-assessment processes to save time in the long-run.
After the self-assessment documents had been completed, an agency would enter the third step, Candidate Agency status. During this phase, the agency uploaded all compliance documents for peer review. Once the documents were approved, the CFAI assigned a team of peer evaluators to conduct an on-site review of the actual practices, policies, procedures and plans, comparing them against the proof of compliance documents submitted for each category. This process could have taken several days (Black, 2009; CPSE, 2010c; Purcell, 2005).

The final step to obtain accreditation involved a presentation of the peer assessment team’s findings and recommendation to the commission in the presence of agency representative(s) during the spring or fall meeting. The commission would then either grant, deny or defer the award of accreditation until further clarification was made. Awards of Accredited Agency status were valid for five years. During that time, annual compliance reports would need to be submitted and the agency would be required to reapply for accreditation at the end of the five year period, repeating the self-assessment and peer review processes (CPSE, 2010c).

*What are the Typical Costs Involved with Accreditation?*

When an agency applied for Registered Agency status they were required to submit a fee of $525. A fee schedule outlined the Applicant Agency status fee based on the population protected by the agency. The City of Moorhead fell into the 10,000 - 49,999 population bracket, which required a $5,250 fee. There was no fee for entering Candidate Agency status, but the agency was required to pay the transportation costs and expenses of the peer review team. The CFAI recommended budgeting $6,000 for this process and an additional $1,000 - $1,500 for the team leader’s travel to the commission meeting. Once accredited, the agency was required to pay
an annual fee of one-fifth of the Applicant Agency fee, or in Moorhead’s case, $1,050 (CPSE, 2010b).

Charlottesville, Virginia, also incurred additional overtime and office expenses during their accreditation process (Purcell, 2005). Lincoln, Nebraska indicated that they incurred overtime expenses as well as the cost of textbooks and external analysis (Eastman, Jones & Stephenson, 2010). The CFAI also suggested that agencies may need assistance in facilitating the master planning process, standards of cover development or the full self-assessment process, offering a Technical Advisor Program for an additional cost (Fagan, 2009).

Cox (2008) conducted research for an Applied Research Project on fire department accreditation, sending surveys out to 121 accredited agencies. One of the questions asked was what the total estimated costs were, not including agency member salaries, to complete accreditation. Of the 88 that responded, 7% reported spending less than $2,500, 18% reported spending between $2,501 and $5,000, 36% reported spending between $5,001 and $7,500, 20% reported spending between $7,501 and $10,000 and 17% reported spending more than $10,000.

In an interview with the Fargo Fire Department, they also reported that the registration fees for one person attending one of the CFAI workshops was $600. This did not include airfare, per dieum, local transportation, or hotels (C. Nelson, personal communication, July 22, 2011).

How many Staff Hours are Typically Required to Complete the Accreditation Process?

The third research question revealed a wide array of answers via literature review. Culver City, California, indicated that a “significant amount” of staff time was required to complete the self-assessment and Lincoln, Nebraska, agreed, reporting that they spent lots of time, involving many department members (Eastman, Jones & Stephenson, 2010).
Black (2010) indicated that accreditation did add to the workload, but countered that at least 90% of this work came from administrative duties that the city management and elected officials expected that we were doing already; in effect, disregarding this extra work as not truly extra. Charlottesville, Virginia reported that they expended more than 600 staff hours during the process (Purcell, 2005). The Commission itself reported that the self-assessment process required between 700 and 1,000 staff hours to complete (CFAI, 2009a).

There would be a cost associated with MFD completing the work in-house. One could assume, for arguments sake that, 1,000 hours of work would be divided on a 50% basis between on-duty Assistant Chiefs and on-duty Captains. In 2011, Assistant Chiefs were paid at a 2008 contract rate of $29.97 per hour (COM, 2006). In 2011, the city of Moorhead paid benefits based upon 20.459% of base salary (D. Rurup, personal communication, May 25, 2011). This would bring the Assistant Fire Chief’s hourly rate to $36.10 per hour. In 2011, Captains were paid at a rate of $27.05 per hour (COM, 2009). Adding in benefits would bring the Captain’s hourly rate to $32.58 per hour. The result would be a total labor cost of $34,340.

Cox (2009) also asked his survey participants to estimate the number of hours devoted to the accreditation process. Of those responding, 9% reported spending 500 staff hours on accreditation, 26% reported spending 1,000 hours, 30% reported spending 1,500 hours and 34% reported spending 2000 or more staff hours on accreditation. His survey was limited to only those four choices.

What are the Potential Benefits of Accreditation?

Bruegman (2009; 2010) touted accreditation as means to help justify costs. Black (2009; 2010) recognized the benefit of being able to justify costs, measure performance, make risk-based decisions and plan for the future based on empirical versus anecdotal evidence, facilitating
quality improvement and developing recognition for following best industry practices. Purcell (2005) recognized both the added ability to justify costs and the ability to measure the true performance of the organization as benefits.

Eastman, Jones & Stephenson (2010) reported as benefits, an increased ability to justify costs, increased performance in their agencies, increased pride and safety for employees and the ability to utilize objective performance measurement to improve quality and establish credible long-range plans.

Holt (2010) reported specific improvement within the Sedgwick County Fire District Number One as a direct result of accreditation. Three new fire stations were constructed and the number of stations increased from eight to nine. Dispatch times were reduced from 90-120 seconds to approximately 60 seconds. The Insurance Services Office, Inc (ISO) rating improved, the budget increased 44.5% over seven years and an improved purchasing plan was instituted for fire suppression equipment, apparatus and personal protective equipment. In addition, he noted that in his observations, accredited departments were better able to critically analyze their performance and strive for continuous quality improvement in their operations. They also tended to have a better record of adding stations, staff and equipment.

The CFAI also listed many benefits an agency can realize through accreditation, including: Assuring others that your missions and objectives are appropriate, providing a detailed evaluation of the services provided, identifying strengths and weaknesses, creating methods and systems to address deficiencies, encouraging personal and organizational professional growth, providing a communication forum for organizational priorities, creating mechanisms to develop plans and fostering national recognition by colleges and the public (CPSE, 2010a).
In 2006, a study was conducted by Dennis Gage of the ISO to determine if accreditation had any impact on the ISO classification ratings for the areas protected by the accredited agencies. Of the 1,114 accredited agencies at that time, 92 had established ISO ratings. Since becoming accredited, 27 had occasion to be rerated. Of those, 70% realized improvement in their ratings and 30% retained their existing classification rating. No department received downgraded ratings. It was also noted that the accredited departments, when considered as a group, were ranked significantly higher than the performance of all agencies rated as a whole (West, 2006).

Cox (2008) also asked his respondents to indicate which of eight possible benefits they experienced as a result of achieving accreditation. A detailed evaluation of department services was cited as a benefit by 90% of respondents. Development of a strategic plan was listed by 80% of respondents and 65% reported improved departmental management and improved departmental efficiency as benefits. Increased public approval was a benefit for 51% of respondents and 48% felt that resource allocation was improved in their agency. Improved response times were realized by 36% of agencies and 28% received increased funding. Two percent of respondents indicated that they experienced no noticeable difference.

What Unforeseen Problems Have Other Agencies Encountered During Accreditation?

Black (2009) reported that some people had the opinion that the self-assessment process required too much work for staff members that were already stretched pretty thin. He countered this argument by pointing out that most agencies that fully examined the FESSAM realized that they were already doing most of the things required, simply not to the level of detail required by CFAI. He had also observed some agencies that were only completing the process for the sake of becoming accredited. He noticed that they lost most of the benefits of the process which lied
in the self-assessment process and subsequent quality improvement efforts. An additional observance he made was an occasional incorrect assumption that strategic planning and master planning were identical. Strategic planning, he noted, focused on a three to five year plan that coordinated the overall direction of an organization and its human resources. Master planning, on the other hand, was essentially a 20 year capital plan, being concerned primarily with the acquisition of “stuff”. Contrary to the belief and fears of some, the strategic plan required as a part of accreditation was not a new mask to help agencies mass equipment, facilities or vehicles. It instead focused on the services provided by the agency over a much smaller time frame.

Culver City, California, reported problems with staff not understanding the process, feeling that the process was a waste of time and feeling resentful that they were being judged by outsiders. Lincoln, Nebraska, reported that some members did not like some of the recommendations being made and labor and management did not agree on the potential benefits of accreditation. They also discovered a need for additional training in use of information technology and a need to change many of their reports from reporting averages of data to specific factual terms (Eastman, Jones & Stephenson, 2010).

Holt (2010) reported that organizational and personal psyches may be hurt as the self-assessment revealed actual empirical based performance measures over the anecdotally based performance levels already in place.

Cox (2008) also asked what difficulties accredited agencies found during the process. They were given four possible problems. Of those who responded, 44% cited problems with part of the accreditation process. Funding was a problem for 24% of agencies. Lack of local support (departmental and/or appointed/elected officials) was a problem for 15% of agencies and 11% indicated a lack of staffing to complete the process was a problem.
The literature review revealed a great deal of information. The CFAI appeared to pretty thoroughly outline the accreditation process, identified the basic costs involved, and give an estimate of the number of staff hours required to complete the process and the benefits one could expect to receive. But was the information presented by the CFAI accurate or complete? One would expect any agency to present themselves in a positive light, but were they only presenting the best case scenarios? Was the reality a somewhat less rosy picture than the one that was presented? Other opinions were needed to verify the CFAI’s claims.

There were, in fact, many who touted the benefits of accreditation, but most of the literature obtained originated in trade journals with the obvious intent to further the cause of accreditation. Were these opinions overly biased? West (2006) presented a solid case linking accreditation with ISO benefits. Cox (2008) also appeared to present more balanced data in his study. His set of survey questions did have some limitations, however. A limited set of available responses may have pigeonholed the responses, leaving valuable information that could not be properly classified out of the results. Cox (2008) also surveyed the full set of accredited agencies during his study. It was possible that the experiences of departments that are dissimilar in size or staffing would not have directly correlated to the experience that could be expected in Moorhead.

Based on these factors, the decision was made to design a more open ended information gathering process that focused on agencies that are similar to Moorhead. This information would be used to check the validity of and enhance the information obtained in the literature review.

Procedures

The research for this project was conducted in two phases, a review of available literature regarding accreditation and interviews of key accreditation personnel of agencies that were of
similar size or served similar sized jurisdictions as the Moorhead Fire Department. The combined results were used to answer the five research questions.

The literature began while attending the Executive Analysis of Fire Service Emergency Operations course at the National Fire Academy in Emmitsburg, Maryland, in January of 2011. Web searches of the card catalog at the Learning Resource Center were conducted on-campus using the subject terms: accreditation, CPC, Center for Public Safety Excellence, CFAI, Commission on Fire Accreditation International, planning and analysis. Textbooks, reports, applied research projects and journal articles were retrieved and studied, with potentially relevant materials being copied or downloaded from web sources for later analysis. Many articles were also discovered that addressed accreditation of law enforcement agencies, communication centers and emergency medical service providers. While they provided a good background on accreditation as a whole, they were found to be anecdotal in regard to the specific research questions posed, and were disregarded.

In February of 2011, the CFAI, Fire & Emergency Service Self-Assessment Manual, 8th Edition and the CFAI Standards of Cover, 5th Edition were purchased. These were reviewed over the course of the next two months.

Fire service textbooks in the Moorhead Fire Department reference library located at Station 1 in the classroom and training director’s office were also reviewed. Due to the age of most of the management texts, they were removed from consideration.

In May, June and July additional internet searches were conducted utilizing the Google and Bing search engines to further the literature review process and clarify questions raised during the research to that point. Search terms included; accreditation, fire service accreditation, fire department accreditation, benefits of accreditation, fire benefits of accreditation,
accreditation costs, fire accreditation costs, fire accreditation problems, different view accreditation, CFAI, Commission on Fire Accreditation International, CPSE, Center for Public Safety Excellence and problems fire accreditation.

In July, interviews were conducted with Firefighter Craig Nelson and Firefighter Pat Nelson, Fargo Fire Department to test initial research questions, and explore what interview questions asked of other fire departments would be useful for answering the research questions.

The most current spreadsheet of fire departments that had completed the accreditation process was then downloaded from the Commission on Fire Accreditation International web site (CPSE, 2011). A subset of the spreadsheet with key data columns is found in Appendix B. The data was first sorted by agency type and all agency types were eliminated except for career agencies. The data was then sorted by population served and all agencies were removed that did not fit into the “10,000 – 49,000” range.

For those agencies that remained, Google searches were conducted to determine an estimated population for each jurisdiction. While this method was not as accurate as pulling U.S. Census Bureau (Bureau) data, only rough estimates of the population for each agency was needed. The added time required to identify specific service boundaries or service areas for each agency that may have included areas outside of the immediate city, coupled with the added time required to match that information to Bureau data was beyond the needs of this study. Google searches were then conducted to research the background information for each agency and determine the number of stations operated by the agency.

The resulting data was analyzed, and a new spreadsheet was created containing agencies similar to the Moorhead Fire Department. Targeted agencies were predominately full-time municipal fire departments of either a similar size (operating out of two or three stations,) or
serving communities of similar size with populations between 30,000 and 45,000. The resulting spreadsheet contained 13 fire departments, located in: Culver City, California; Coral Gables, Florida; Covington, Georgia; Highland Park, Illinois; Lake Forest, Illinois; Park Ridge, Illinois; Wilmette, Illinois; Beachwood, Ohio; Shaker Heights, Ohio; Hilton Head Island, South Carolina; Spartanburg, South Carolina and Charlottesville, Virginia. A subset of the spreadsheet with key data columns is found in Appendix C.

In July and August, interviews were conducted with representatives of these agencies that identified themselves as being a principal individual that was involved with the most recent accreditation process. At times this person was listed on the CFAI spreadsheet, and at other times another person was identified by the local agency. Interviews were ultimately conducted with 12 of these agencies, for a feedback rate of 90.9% of identified agencies. Shaker Heights did not return repeated telephone requests for interviews.

For the research question: a) What are the requirements of the CFAI accreditation process, two questions were asked. The CFAI publishes a very extensive set of requirements to complete the accreditation process. In your experience, did you find them to be accurate? Were there any additional or unexpected requirements that were not found in the literature?

For the research question: b) What are the typical costs involved with accreditation, one question was asked. Outside of the published fees and expenses for training, site visits and presenting your application, and outside of regular fire department salaries, did you find any additional expenses or costs that you felt needed to be incurred to ensure a successful accreditation?

For the research question: c) How many staff hours are typically required to complete the accreditation process, three questions were asked. How many staff hours did you expend to
complete the accreditation process? Did you need to outsource any of the work or hire consulting staff or other workers to help complete the process? Could you explain what costs were involved with any of these?

For the research question: d) What are the potential benefits of accreditation, one question was asked. What were the most important benefits that your organization realized from becoming accredited?

For the research question: e) What unforeseen problems have other agencies encountered during accreditation, one question was asked. What unforeseen problems did your agency encounter during the accreditation process? The full results of the interviews may be found in Appendix D.

In August, the literature review and results of the interviews were then analyzed to answer the research questions and provide a recommendation for the Moorhead Fire Department.

One limitation of this research project should be noted. The interview sample contained only organizations that had successfully completed accreditation and were accredited at the time of the research. Consulting with agencies that were not successful in achieving accreditation, those that had allowed their accreditation to lapse, and those who did not finish the accreditation process could have revealed additional data. There is also no central data set containing information about agencies that had investigated accreditation and ultimately decided not to pursue it. The result is a set of findings that may be biased toward accreditation.

Results

Of the currently accredited agencies of the CFAI, 13 were identified to be of similar size to the Moorhead Fire Department or provide service to a similarly sized community. Telephone surveys were conducted with individuals who had been directly involved with or in charge of the
accreditation efforts of each agency. Of these 13 agencies, one did not return repeated requests for an interview. Information obtained from the 12 remaining agencies (Agencies) was used to answer the research questions. The full survey results are found in Appendix D.

**What are the Requirements of the CFAI Accreditation Process?**

The CFAI outlined a series of requirements and a process that must be completed for an agency to achieve accredited status. The Agencies were asked if the requirements as posted on the CFAI web site and in the CFAI Self-Assessment Manual were accurate. Eleven of the 12 Agencies indicated that the published requirements were accurate. Port Huron reported that there were some small adjustments in the process that were not totally communicated, but they were minor.

The Agencies were also asked if they encountered any additional or unexpected requirements during the accreditation process. Eight of the Agencies reported that there were no unexpected requirements.

Of those that reported unexpected requirements, Port Huron found, unexpectedly, that they were unprepared for re-accreditation because they had not been working on continuous quality improvement and had become comfortable with the standards they had achieved during their initial accreditation. Charlottesville and Park Ridge stated that they felt the requirements for the Standard of Cover were a little vague, in particular the process of community or “comprehensive risk analysis.” Charlottesville also felt that the requirements for the Strategic Plan were also a little vague, but added that the workshop training provided by the CFAI helped to fill in the gaps in all of these areas. Highland Park found that the Standard of Cover development might have been a bit surprising due to the way that CPSE expects the numbers to be formatted, and that they required three full years of statistics for various call types.
Some agencies offered suggestions to make the process go more smoothly for the applicant. Beachwood added that the process would go easier if an accreditation manager was selected that had strong organizational skills, and if there were other agencies that had completed accreditation were consulted during the process. Coral Gables and Hilton Head added that it was important to keep up on the changes that occurred in the self-assessment manual from edition to edition, as the standards became more stringent. Coral Gables strongly suggested that agencies maintain their documents on a daily basis to assist in re-accreditation.

Based on the results of the interviews, it appeared that the accreditation requirements listed by the CFAI on their web site and in their guidance documents were essentially accurate. Where Agencies ran into problems, it was more of a problem with the guidance documents not being thorough enough on their own to fully prepare agencies to develop the Standard of Cover document. This appeared to be more of an educational issue than one of the requirements being inaccurate or incomplete.

What are the Typical Costs Involved with Accreditation?

The CFAI also published the costs an agency should expect to expend to complete the accreditation process. Each of the Agencies interviewed were asked if they felt they needed to incur any additional costs or fees outside of what was published. Ten of the Agencies reported no additional costs. Coral Gables and Charlottesville identified the “soft costs” that accompanied clerical work, such as office space and office supplies, but both felt they were minimal.

The interview results confirmed the information published on the CFAI web site. It should be noted that staff and consultant costs were not included in this estimation of costs as they were covered in the following section.
How Many Staff Hours are Typically Required to Complete the Accreditation Process?

For this research question three separate questions were posed during the interviews. Again, the CFAI provided an expectation of the number of staff hours required, but it was hoped that this figure could either be verified or disproved in actual practice for similar sized departments. None of the agencies knew exactly how much staff time they spent on their initial accreditation. Lake Forest estimated 400 hours, but clarified that this was an “off the top of my head” guess. Highland Park indicated that it had expended hundreds and hundreds of hours. Park Ridge did not have an estimate on their initial accreditation, but they knew that they expended 1,500 staff hours on their most recent re-accreditation. Wilmette and Lake Forest all expressed that they spent “a lot” of staff time and Culver City felt that their first accreditation was “extremely time consuming.”

Several Agencies attempted to describe their staff commitment to accreditation. Beachwood stated that two people, “worked pretty much full-time on it,” outside of some ancillary duties, receiving quite a bit of help from a small handful of other people. Coral Gables had one person working on accreditation for about a year full-time. They noticed that this worked well if a staff person (40-hour employee) was working on accreditation, but if a shift person was the primary accreditation worker, they would need support staff to do the same job. They also purposed that having good data available and networking with another accredited department in your area will greatly increase your efficiency and reduce the staff time needed.

Culver City stated that they had several people working an average of 5 hours per week for about six months to complete their accreditation. Spartanburg described the initial accreditation as, “a lot of work,” but was able to better describe the work required to maintain their accreditation. They had one shift lieutenant who spent most of his time, outside of training,
physical fitness and responding to calls, working on maintaining accreditation. He felt that this was appropriate, however, as accreditation was really a process, a change in how you conduct business, and not a project to be viewed as something to complete, and then move on to other business. Charlottesville cautioned that overtime costs can be considerable, especially as the deadline approaches. Highland Park indicated that while they didn’t know what resources they expended on their initial accreditation, they had one person on days for about two months for the most recent re-accreditation. They also noted that many organizations took two to three years to prepare for their initial accreditation.

To help in fully defining the required labor costs, the Agencies were also asked if outside workers or firms were used to complete their accreditation, and if so, what costs were associated with outside labor. Only Wilmette indicated that they directly hired outside support to complete their accreditation. They hired an administrative analyst to work full-time for about two years, then worked with an MBA seeking grad student to write policies. They found that the grad student was not particularly effective, needing a large amount of training on fire service terminology and background knowledge. They were an early adopter of accreditation and there was no support network at the time. They felt that agencies should not need this level of assistance today. They also indicated that they now prefer to use outside labor for continued compliance as well, employing an off-duty fire officer from another jurisdiction for about 20 hours per week. They did not have a cost estimate for the outside labor for the initial accreditation.

Coral Gables stated that they did not “hire” any outside help, but they did use some personnel from other city and county departments for some specialties, although there was no cost associated with this. Beachwood did not use outside consultants, but did hire CPSE to
facilitate a strategic plan one year after their initial accreditation at an estimated cost of $12,000 to $13,000. Lake Forest did not pay for outside assistance, but did state that they used the mentor assigned to them by the CFAI. Spartanburg and Charlottesville did not use any outside resources, but recommended the new CFAI technical assistance team, a service for hire for those that did need additional assistance.

The question, how many staff hours were expended by the Agencies interviewed, was very difficult to quantify. It appeared that the number probably varied between 400 and 2000 hours. Assuming that Coral Gables had one person working full time with no other distractions for a year with two weeks of vacation, they would have expended 2000 in their accreditation (40 hours x 50 weeks). If Culver City had six people working on accreditation (they reported “several people” working on it,) for six months, they would have expended 780 staff hours preparing for accreditation (6 people x 5 hours x 26 weeks).

*What are the Potential Benefits of Accreditation?*

To answer this research question, the Agencies were asked an open ended question about what the most important benefits their respective agency realized as a result of accreditation, the intent being to illicit an unbiased response. Each Agency reported receiving benefits from accreditation, but the responses varied substantially.

Five Agencies (41.7%): Coral Gables, Highland Park, Hilton Head, Park Ridge and Spartanburg simultaneously listed improved planning as an asset gained by accreditation.

Four Agencies (33.3%): Charlottesville, Coral Gables, Highland Park and Spartanburg listed the establishing or improving of policies as a benefit.

There were two benefits being reported by three (25.0%) of the Agencies. Performance improvement was identified as an advantage of attaining accreditation by Culver City,
Spartenburg and Wilmet. Coral Gables, Highland Park and Lake Forest found the evaluation of their operations to be beneficial.

Two benefits were reported by two (16.7%) of the Agencies. Beachwood and Covington realized a reduction in their ISO rating that they attributed to accreditation and Culver City and Wilmette reported accreditation allowed them to grow their organizations in the midst of city-wide budget reductions.

The number of benefits listed by each Agency varied as well. The open ended nature of the question led to some difficulty in quantifying the number of benefits each agency reported, requiring some interpretation by the author and introducing the possibility of bias and error on the author’s part. The choice was made to present the benefits listed by each Agency in a general order of Agencies with a higher perceived number of listed benefits to those with fewer without trying to specifically label the number of benefits for each Agency.

Coral Gables found great value in both the self-evaluation and peer evaluation processes. This not only identified deficiencies, but revealed key internal misperceptions where they often weren’t doing what they thought they were. Good measurement tools were developed during the process and plans to improve their deficiencies were created. The most interesting benefit Coral Gables listed was the consistency and continuity of operations that resulted from the process, “If all the senior staff were wiped out and tomorrow an outsider had to come in and take the reins, they could by reading three documents: the self-assessment, the standard of cover and the master plan. They could hit the ground running.”

Culver City saw improvements in both their organizational and operational abilities. They were able to upgrade vehicles and equipment and shorten amortization schedules. During periods of budget reductions, they were able to retain staff by demonstrating the expected
impacts to their standard of coverage. They found political benefits as well that extended beyond their own department. The objective nature of the process and the evaluation by outside parties brought credibility to the department in the eyes of the City Council. Both the Council and fire department staff experienced a noticeable increase in their pride in the department as a result of the level of professionalism attained through accreditation.

Spartanburg found a host of what they classified as “simple benefits.” They created their first Suggested Operating Procedures manual and completed their first full department inventory of vehicles and equipment. They changed their focus to performance issues like turnout time, and they obtained an understanding of the importance of such a focus. They were able to collect good clean data and use that data to justify what they were doing. They gained an understanding of why they were doing what they were doing and reached a point where they were making better overall decisions.

Park Ridge felt that their most important benefit was gaining the ability to perform a community risk analysis. This enabled them to determine appropriate response levels and justified their actions. The peer assessment process also afforded them an added objective position from which to argue their budget requests, although they noted that such arguments can only carry a certain amount of weight if budgets get tight enough.

Wilmette found that they were able to provide better operations and better manage their risks though an objective analysis of existing conditions and practices. They also gained a set of tools that they successfully used to grow their department while other departments were being reduced during budget cuts.

Highland Park found that accreditation gave them the ability to set long term goals and use the action plan system to work toward reaching them. The Standard of Cover allowed them
to identify geographic areas that were being underserved and were able to redirect operations, thus improving operations. They also found the ability to perform internal evaluations to be a great benefit.

Lake Forest gained the ability to evaluate themselves and in the process discovered deficiencies they weren’t aware of. They also benefitted from the peer evaluation process, gaining a set of 14 recommendations for strategic improvement.

Beachwood realized an improvement in their ISO rating after accreditation, but stressed that to see real benefits an agency must be willing to be honest about their shortcomings and work to improve those areas. Covington also reported an improvement in their ISO rating and also felt that the city was in a more favorable position to attract new residents by having an accredited department.

Charlottesville indicated that they had many benefits, but focused on the gains they received by implementing better defined policies and procedures as well as a process to regularly review them. Hilton Head felt that they had become much better at planning their operations, taking a holistic approach to everything they did, exploring the department-wide impacts of individual decisions. Port Huron also reported an organization-wide benefit in a cultural change that they experienced. They feel that they became more open minded and were able to explore new ideas that they would previously have disregarded out of hand.

It is interesting that while all Agencies reported receiving benefits from becoming accredited and most Agencies listed multiple benefits, there was no single benefit that a majority of Agencies reported receiving in common. There were benefits that a higher percentage of Agencies reported receiving, specifically in the area of planning and policy creation.
One problem might be in the open ended nature of the question, or the limited time frame available for interviewees to formulate and deliver a response. One would hope that the benefits that were most meaningful or that had the greatest impact for each Agency would be recalled at that moment while the interview was being conducted.

Another possible explanation could be that the needs of each Agency were different, which would lead to varying reports of the benefits received. Further detailed research would be necessary to address the varying nature of responses. One could conclude that any of the reported benefits could potentially be realized in Moorhead, with a greater statistical likelihood of receiving the benefits that more Agencies in the interviews reported.

*What Unforeseen Problems Have Other Agencies Encountered During Accreditation?*

Each Agency was also asked an open question asking them what unforeseen problems they experienced during the accreditation process. Covington reported no problems, and only two problems were common to more than one Agency.

Seven Agencies (58.3%) reported significant problems with not having accurate or complete call time data. The reasons varied. In Spartanburg and Wilmette, the dispatch center was not computerized, which led to very inaccurate data. Beachwood, Charlottesville and Lake Forest found that while they had been keeping response time data in a computerized records management system, they were not keeping detailed enough records to complete the required analysis for accreditation. Park Ridge had switched records management systems halfway between rounds of accreditation. It was extremely difficult to get data out of the older mainframe system and laborious to merge and process the combined data. They highly recommended the purchase of the program, Five Alive to run automated reports required by the CFAI. In Port Huron’s case, they had been set up to record complete and accurate data at the
dispatch center, but dispatchers had slowly migrated their work away from the established policy which led to inaccurate data.

Four Agencies (33.3%) reported problems with internal communications during accreditation that lead to a disconnect between line fire staff and those in administration. In each case, the firefighters, and at times company officers, did not understand why accreditation was important and what the benefits were. They did not buy into the program and did not support it, often viewing it as an outright waste of time and resources. This was the case in Coral Gables and Highland Park during their initial accreditation. Culver City suffered with this problem until a frustrated administration told those who were not involved with the work of maintaining accreditation to stop complaining about the process that was so sorely needed by management. They appeared to have come around. For Spartanburg, the problem appeared to be greater. Of the three original champions of accreditation, only one remained after the others took jobs with other departments and it appeared that internal support for accreditation was eroding to the point that re-accreditation was in jeopardy.

Five Agencies reported additional problems that they experienced exclusively. Beachwood not only had problems with call time data, but did not have clearly enough defined incident codes to analyze the data as they needed.

Coral Gambles experienced a problem with documentation during their second re-accreditation. They felt that the peer assessment team relied too heavily on SharePoint and did not communicate directly with the department enough. At times the data, standing alone, was open to misinterpretation without direct human interaction.

Highland Park experienced problems with technology during the peer visit. Small issues like differences in file formats, access to records and the programs to view them, and problems
with working wireless internet access caused hours of delays during the evaluation process. They have also heard reports from neighboring agencies that some of the peer assessment teams were becoming too critical of spelling, grammatical errors, and word choice in the documents of local agencies. They suggested that Rick Black, from CFAI was a good intermediary to work through such problems.

Hilton Head had difficulty in obtaining some of the legal documents they needed to establish their legal authority. They were merged from two previously separate departments founded at different times and finding the historical documents was a challenge. They also found that they often over-rated themselves during the self-assessment. The peer evaluation process helped to identify these areas, but it was hard not to take the constructive criticism personally.

Spartanburg encountered problems upon re-accreditation when they discovered that the requirements for accreditation had changed with a revision to the standards. The found themselves unprepared and had to put in extra effort to catch up with the standard. They also experienced problems with their own four-person accreditation team. Two of the members were very good and motivated, two were not. There was bitter fighting at times while preparing for accreditation that had led to a permanent rift between the members. They found it was important to choose team members that were open minded and committed to the process.

When considering the interview results for accreditation problems it was interesting to note that over one-half of the Agencies experienced problems with assembling the required incident time data. It indicated that this was one area that must require special attention during the process, and deserves the involvement of peer agencies to avoid the problem, or to more effectively overcome the problem.
While incident response data was a problem that appeared solvable, internal communication problems appeared to be more difficult to overcome. While only one-third of Agencies experienced this problem, it appeared that none of them had fully resolved the issue. It appeared that in each case, the problem had a potential to undermine the entire process both initially and for as long as an Agency choose to remain accredited. This appeared to also deserve special and continuous attention while pursuing and maintaining accreditation. The other problems seemed either isolated or of minor impact.

Discussion

The CFAI outlined and described their four step process to achieve accreditation on their web site. The first of these steps was to become a Registered Agency. This afforded an agency a three year window of opportunity to explore the accreditation process. During this time they obtained access to the CFAI network, received the CFAI newsletter, were given a copy of the current edition of the FESSAM, and had the opportunity to attend CFAI basic workshop training (CPSE, 2010c).

Eastman, Jones, & Stephenson, (2010) suggested that communication with and education of internal and external stakeholders should begin at this time as well as establishing the accreditation team.

The second step, Applicant Agency phase, involved the core of the preparation work. An agency would be assigned a volunteer mentor and would be given 18 months to create the compliance documents including the self-assessment, a community risk analysis, the standard of cover and the strategic plan (CPSE, 2010c). The self-assessment was driven largely by the FESSAM, containing 10 major categories, divided into 43 criteria with 258 performance
indicators, 82 of these being critical criteria that an agency must have met to qualify for accreditation (CPSE, 2009, pp. 20-23).

During the Candidate Agency phase, the agency’s documents were approved and the CFAI assigned a team of peer evaluators to conduct an on-site review of the actual practices, policies, procedures and plans, comparing them against the proof of compliance documents submitted for each category (Black, 2009; CPSE, 2010c; Purcell, 2005).

The final step involved a presentation of the peer assessment team’s findings and recommendation to the commission in the presence of agency representative(s) during the spring or fall meeting. The commission would then either grant, deny or defer the award of accreditation until further clarification was made. Awards of Accredited Agency status were valid for five years. During that time, annual complaint reports would need to be submitted and the agency would be required to reapply for accreditation at the end of the five year period, repeating the self-assessment and peer review processes (CPSE, 2010c).

The study confirmed overwhelmingly that these requirements were accurate and complete. What became clear, however, when reviewing some of the problems Agencies encountered was that the requirements told an agency what to do, but not specifically how to do it. Examples of this include the problems experienced with call time data by Spartanburg, Wilmette, Charlottesville, Beachwood, Lake Forest, and Park Ridge. The workshop training, working with your mentor and working independently with peer agencies would greatly assist an agency to determine how and to what degree to meet the requirements. MFD must take advantage of all of the help available to work efficiently and effectively at obtaining accreditation.
The CFAI also outlined the expected costs. These included initial accreditation fees totaling $5,775 (CPSE, 2010b). Each workshop training course would include $600 for registration in addition to airfare, per diem, local transportation and hotel for each person who attended training (C. Nelson, personal communication, July 22, 2011). The peer assessment would likely cost about $6,000 and the cost for travel to the commission meeting would likely cost an additional $1,000 - $1,500 (CPSE, 2010b). The study also confirmed the accuracy of these figures.

What the study could not confirm what was the expected labor costs and hours to complete initial accreditation. These appeared to vary by agency based on their background and ability to collect and manipulate data. CFAI (2009a) estimated the labor hours required to be between 700 and 1,000 hours. Using the 1,000 hour figure, and splitting labor costs between Assistant Chiefs and Captains, Moorhead would expend $34,340 on accreditation (COM, 2006; COM;2009).

The labor costs have minimal impact as they would be expended in any event. This would be a matter of directing the nature and priority of work assigned. The workshop fees could be absorbed by existing travel, training and conference line items, but the Applicant Agency fee and Peer Assessment Team fees would require special fund allocation by the city. This would require their buy-in and approval of the process.

The knowledge MFD obtained from CFAI workshop training, networking with peers and training and utilizing people with good organizational skills and knowledge in each of the component areas would decrease the time requirement.

When it came to benefits, there was an overwhelming amount of literature indicating that planning was a benefit that would be derived from obtaining accreditation. The CFAI classified
it as “creating methods and systems to address deficiencies” (CPSE, 2010a). Bruegman (2009; 2010) and Eastman, Jones & Stephenson (2010) placed planning among the lists of benefits they purposed. Cox’s 2008 research also indicated that 80% of respondents felt that the development of strategic plans resulted from their pursuits of accreditation.

The study conducted for this project did not return as high a correlation between accreditation and planning benefits, but the planning was listed as a benefit by the highest percentage of those interviewed (41.7%).

A body of the evidence discovered indicated that were Moorhead to pursue accreditation, they would likely see improved planning as a resulting benefit.

The literature review did not return on a huge body of evidence regarding problems with accreditation. Black (2009) reported that some people thought the work required as too great. Eastman, Jones & Stephenson, 2010) and Holt (2010) reported that there was the potential for hurt feeling to occur during the process. In the Study, Spartanburg had some experience with this, but other problems were more predominant.

The largest problem was in obtaining complete call time data (58.3%). This could correspond with the 44% of agencies that reported problems with the certification process in the Cox study (2008), but the reasons for their problems were not clear.

It also appeared that it would be important for Moorhead to not only prepare to store and retrieve the proper call time data, but to initiate clear communications throughout the department during the accreditation process to avoid the problems experienced by Coral Gables, Highland Park, Culver City and Spartanburg.
Recommendations

It is clear from the research conducted and the literature reviewed that completing the CFAI Accreditation process and operating within the accreditation guidelines to maintain accreditation produces a host of benefits, not the least of these is obtaining the ability to establish effective plans based on the collection of relevant data and a process of hazard and capability assessment. Similar sized agencies have achieved accredited status and the process can be completed in Moorhead with the human resources already available and with minimal financial investment from city leaders. Accreditation is, therefore, a viable planning option for the Moorhead Fire Department.

The department should begin by educating department members and building support for accreditation. Meetings should be conducted with senior staff to discuss the findings of this project and determine if the department agrees with the recommendations and wishes to continue. If so, meetings should be held with all fire officers to discuss the findings of the project and build support for pursuing accreditation. This should then be followed up by meetings with all department personnel to educate them about the accreditation process and begin the process of building support throughout the department. Conversely, meetings should be held with the City Manager to communicate the intention of the research that will be done to explore accreditation.

MFD should then further research the accreditation process. Existing department funds should be used to become a CFAI Registered Agency, utilizing the resulting access to documents and training to learn more about the process. An accreditation manager should be appointed and an accreditation team should be assembled to research, in more full detail, the requirements of accreditation and expected activities that will need to occur. Key staff should attend CFAI basic
workshop training and the team should network with peer agencies to gain a working knowledge of the process.

MFD should then decide if they wish to pursue accreditation. Follow-up meetings should occur with all department staff to inform them of what additional information has been obtained and outline what an accreditation process would look like for MFD. After final buy-in has been achieved, a work plan should be developed outlining how MFD would achieve accreditation and what hard and soft costs would be involved to initially obtain accreditation and to maintain it.

MFD should then obtain the support of the City Manager and the Mayor and City Council to pursue accreditation. Meetings should first be held with the City Manager to educate him about the process and outline the proposed implementation plan and costs. Jointly, a plan can then be developed to strategically introduce the idea to the Mayor and Council. Discussions are likely to occur for a period of time before the proposal is formally presented to the Mayor and Council for consideration and a motion of recommendation.

MFD should then implement their work plan, keeping in mind the recommendations of this project, applying for Applicant Agency status when it becomes advantageous to do so, and work within the current framework of the accreditation process to achieve and maintain accredited status.

It should be noted that these recommendations are likely to take several years to implement. The workload is going to be great, but MFD can expect to achieve accreditation and with that gain the ability to conduct thorough analyses of problems and organizational capabilities, prepare strategic and action plans to address the deficiencies observed, and build organizational success by operating in a professional and organized manner, using hard data to justify their actions and plans.
In the future, additional research should be conducted to explore the number of agencies that have considered the possibility of pursuing accreditation but ultimately chose not to do so. The lack of a comprehensive analysis of all parties that have explored accreditation may be resulting in a research bias toward accreditation. This is understandable, given the availability of information regarding agencies that have pursued accreditation, but still paints an incomplete picture of the subject.
References


Bruegman, R. (2010, September). This isn’t time to circle the wagons [Special insert]. *Fire Chief, 54*(9)(Suppl.) 3


I’ve talked informally with several F-M Ambulance personnel about accreditation in the past, but could you outline some of the benefits you think F-M Ambulance has realized as a result of becoming an accredited ambulance service?

The biggest benefit we saw was that in the past the success or failure of our organization was dependent upon one person or a few key individuals. Now, we have a process that is well documented and continues in perpetuity, so as staff changes, we can continue to provide a high quality of service regardless of who is here.

The problem is that you know what you need within the industry to do your job, but others who make the decision and write the checks don’t know what you need to do your job. When working within the processes we’ve come to operate in with accreditation, we can demonstrate what we need to do to meet the “gold standard,” and now we can communicate that with the decision makers. This has allowed us to justify what we need and get the tools necessary to perform at the level we want to.

This has also lead to the benefit of removing the ability of leadership to simply say “no,” to requests and initiatives proposed by staff. If we’re making decisions based on data, everyone is empowered to suggest ideas that will improve the organization and no one can simply say no if the idea is justified.

In the past we were following a Quality Assurance principle. We would wait until a piece of equipment would break. Then we would analyze why it broke and try to fix it, sometimes in a haphazard manner, just patching stuff together to get by. Now, we follow a Quality Improvement philosophy, we try to identify what is likely to break, and replace equipment before the failure point to maintain our operations. This is wonderful.
Fargo-Moorhead Area Accreditation Background Interviews
Fargo (ND) Fire Department
Firefighter Craig Nelson, Accreditation Specialist
07-22-2011  1300 hours

How long ago did you decide to pursue accreditation, and why?

Four years ago, Chief Bruce Hoover decided we needed to pursue accreditation, mostly to defend our budget.

Do you know how much staff time was spent working on accreditation?

Well, Assistant Chief Dean Meyer was the Accreditation Manager. Gary Lorenz and Ron Googisberg also helped a lot. Dean and Gary worked at it pretty much full-time (outside of other little things that would come up) for about two years. I’ll have to ask Gary about this. I think he kept some more detailed records.

E-mail follow-up 08-03-2011 0757 hours: I confirmed that we assigned two full-time personnel for two years to work on Accreditation status. After obtaining Accredited status we dropped to a little under one full-time position (about ½ to ¾ time for maintenance).

Do you know about how much money you ended up having to spend on accreditation?

There was the application cost, which is posted on-line. We also had to pay all the costs of the peer assessment, there are guidelines on-line on that too. We also sent three people to the two-day training seminar. We had some costs associated with initiating a credentialing program in-house through the ProBoard, and we sent three people out for the hearing at the end, which was a long weekend. That was it, outside of office supplies and incidentals which really didn’t amount to much.

E-mail follow-up 08-03-2011 0757 hours: We also sent a two people to the workshop training one to one session and the second to another. The cost was $600 each, not including airfair, and hotel, etc.

Were there any unforeseen issues that came up during accreditation?

We found that a lot of the things in the self-assessment manual are not as standardized as a person thinks. Performance indicators are not standardized. Our mentor was quite anal, so by the time we had all of our documentation down, we sailed through accreditation. We found our stuff was much more detailed than most. Some of the CFAI people were quite surprised by the level of detail in what we submitted. Ultimately it was a good thing for us. I’m glad we had a person who was the nit-picky on the front side of things.

We also ended up checking with a lot of other accredited agencies for assistance. This helped us out a lot. There are a lot of people willing to help. We didn’t know this would be a part of the process, but it was a great aid, and we found out that we needed it.
Did you run into any problems during accreditation?

We had a huge problem with communications. We didn’t communicate with the rest of the department the purpose of accreditation, the road map we were following, the implications, etc.

We still have a big disconnect between the administration and field staff on accreditation. They see it as a big waste of time and don’t even understand the basics about the process. This is still a problem that needs to be corrected.

We also found that Firehouse, and the AS400, and New World don’t allow us to get the kind of data we need for accreditation very effectively. It was a lot of manual work to try and get what we needed. We bought a program called 5 Alive and it takes the raw data and produces all of the performance reports we need, easily. If you consider accreditation, you need to get this program. It’s a huge time saver, and well worth the money. The program was not very expensive.

e-mail follow-up 08-03-2011 0757 hours: The 5Alive program we purchased to break down run times for the Standard of Cover and performance analysis was around $500 initially and is annually about $400.

What benefits do you think you’ve gotten out of accreditation?

We can quantify everything now. If someone asks a question about what we do or how well we do it, we can answer it now. We can justify plans, requests, and our performance. Without this, we can’t make justified decisions. It’s great, and I think we’ve only scratched the surface.
Appendix B

CFAI Spreadsheet of Accredited Agencies, Updated May 3, 2011

Sorted by Agency Type, Population Served, State/Province and Organization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>City</th>
<th>State/Province</th>
<th>Agency Type</th>
<th>Population Served</th>
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<td>10,000 - 49,999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huntley Fire Protection District</td>
<td>Huntley</td>
<td>Illinois</td>
<td>Combination</td>
<td>10,000 - 49,999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lincolnshire-Riverwoods Fire District</td>
<td>Lincolnshire</td>
<td>Illinois</td>
<td>Combination</td>
<td>10,000 - 49,999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mokena Fire Protection District</td>
<td>Mokena</td>
<td>Illinois</td>
<td>Combination</td>
<td>10,000 - 49,999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Westmont Fire Department</td>
<td>Westmont</td>
<td>Illinois</td>
<td>Combination</td>
<td>10,000 - 49,999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clay Fire Territory</td>
<td>South Bend</td>
<td>Indiana</td>
<td>Combination</td>
<td>10,000 - 49,999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Side Fire Protection District #5</td>
<td>Baton Rouge</td>
<td>Louisiana</td>
<td>Combination</td>
<td>10,000 - 49,999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maryville Fire Department, City of</td>
<td>Maryville</td>
<td>Tennessee</td>
<td>Combination</td>
<td>10,000 - 49,999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hartford Fire Department</td>
<td>White River Junction</td>
<td>Vermont</td>
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<td>10,000 - 49,999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Menasha Fire Department, Town of</td>
<td>Neenah</td>
<td>Wisconsin</td>
<td>Combination</td>
<td>10,000 - 49,999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Yavapai Fire District</td>
<td>Prescott Valley</td>
<td>Arizona</td>
<td>Combination</td>
<td>50,000 - 99,999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Des Moines Fire Department, City of</td>
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<td>Iowa</td>
<td>Combination</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Missouri</td>
<td>Combination</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington Township Fire Department (Dayton)</td>
<td>Dayton</td>
<td>Ohio</td>
<td>Combination</td>
<td>50,000 - 99,999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hillsboro Fire Department</td>
<td>Hillsboro</td>
<td>Oregon</td>
<td>Combination</td>
<td>50,000 - 99,999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Mount Pleasant</td>
<td>South Carolina</td>
<td>Combination</td>
<td>50,000 - 99,999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>City</td>
<td>State/Province</td>
<td>Agency Type</td>
<td>Population Served</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Kitsap Fire Rescue</td>
<td>Port Orchard</td>
<td>Washington</td>
<td>Combination</td>
<td>50,000 - 99,999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Combination</td>
<td>100,000 - 199,999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clackamas County Fire District #1</td>
<td>Milwaukie</td>
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<td>Combination</td>
<td>100,000 - 199,999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lincoln Fire &amp; Rescue</td>
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<td>Nebraska</td>
<td>Combination</td>
<td>200,000 - 499,999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tualatin Valley Fire &amp; Rescue</td>
<td>Aloha</td>
<td>Oregon</td>
<td>Combination</td>
<td>200,000 - 499,999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virginia Beach Fire Department</td>
<td>Virginia Beach</td>
<td>Virginia</td>
<td>Combination</td>
<td>200,000 - 499,999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Service</td>
<td>Rockville</td>
<td>Maryland</td>
<td>Combination</td>
<td>500,000 - 999,999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orange County Fire Authority</td>
<td>Irvine</td>
<td>California</td>
<td>Combination</td>
<td>Over 1 Million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defense Logistic Agency San Joaquin County</td>
<td>French Camp</td>
<td>California</td>
<td>Federal/Military</td>
<td>0-9,999</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Barstow</td>
<td>California</td>
<td>Federal/Military</td>
<td>0-9,999</td>
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<tr>
<td>NAVSTA Rota Fire and Emergency Services</td>
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<td>Not Applicable</td>
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<tr>
<td>Defense Supply Center Columbus Fire &amp; Emergency Services</td>
<td>Columbus</td>
<td>Ohio</td>
<td>Federal/Military</td>
<td>0-9,999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charleston Air Force Base Fire Emergency Services</td>
<td>Charleston AFB</td>
<td>South Carolina</td>
<td>Federal/Military</td>
<td>0-9,999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defense Supply Center Richmond (DSCR) Fire &amp; Emergency Services</td>
<td>Richmond</td>
<td>Virginia</td>
<td>Federal/Military</td>
<td>0-9,999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vandenberg AFB Fire and Emergency Services</td>
<td>Vandenberg AFB</td>
<td>California</td>
<td>Federal/Military</td>
<td>10,000 - 49,999</td>
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<tr>
<td>Air Force Academy Fire &amp; Emergency Services</td>
<td>USAF Academy</td>
<td>Colorado</td>
<td>Federal/Military</td>
<td>10,000 - 49,999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific Missile Range Facility Fire Department</td>
<td>Kekaha</td>
<td>Hawaii</td>
<td>Federal/Military</td>
<td>10,000 - 49,999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fort Drum Fire and Emergency Services</td>
<td>Fort Drum</td>
<td>New York</td>
<td>Federal/Military</td>
<td>10,000 - 49,999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>City</td>
<td>State/Province</td>
<td>Agency Type</td>
<td>Population Served</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DESSP Fire &amp; Emergency Services</td>
<td>New Cumberland</td>
<td>Pennsylvania</td>
<td>Federal/Military</td>
<td>10,000 - 49,999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hill AFB Fire Department</td>
<td>Hill Air Force Base</td>
<td>Utah</td>
<td>Federal/Military</td>
<td>10,000 - 49,999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fort Lee Fire &amp; Emergency Services</td>
<td>Fort Lee</td>
<td>Virginia</td>
<td>Federal/Military</td>
<td>10,000 - 49,999</td>
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<tr>
<td>Langley Air Force Base Fire Department</td>
<td>Langley AFB</td>
<td>Virginia</td>
<td>Federal/Military</td>
<td>10,000 - 49,999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navy Region Hawaii Fire &amp; Emergency Services, Federal Fire Department</td>
<td>Pearl Harbor</td>
<td>Hawaii</td>
<td>Federal/Military</td>
<td>50,000 - 99,999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navy Region Northwest Fire and Emergency Services</td>
<td>Keyport</td>
<td>Washington</td>
<td>Federal/Military</td>
<td>50,000 - 99,999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navy Region Mid-Atlantic Fire &amp; Emergency Services - Hampton Roads</td>
<td>Norfolk</td>
<td>Virginia</td>
<td>Federal/Military</td>
<td>100,000 - 199,999</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix C

CFAI Spreadsheet of Accredited Agencies Similar to Moorhead

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>City</th>
<th>State/Province</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>No of Stations</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Culver City Fire Department</td>
<td>Culver City</td>
<td>California</td>
<td>38,883</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coral Gables Fire Department</td>
<td>Coral Gables</td>
<td>Florida</td>
<td>42,871</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Covington Fire Department</td>
<td>Covington</td>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>11,547</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highland Park Fire Department</td>
<td>Highland Park</td>
<td>Illinois</td>
<td>31,365</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lake Forest Fire Department</td>
<td>Lake Forest</td>
<td>Illinois</td>
<td>21,300</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Park Ridge Fire Department</td>
<td>Park Ridge</td>
<td>Illinois</td>
<td>37,775</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilmette Fire Department</td>
<td>Wilmette</td>
<td>Illinois</td>
<td>26,300</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Port Huron Fire Department</td>
<td>Port Huron</td>
<td>Michigan</td>
<td>32,388</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beachwood Department of Fire-Rescue</td>
<td>Beachwood</td>
<td>Ohio</td>
<td>11,953</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shaker Heights Fire Department, The</td>
<td>Shaker Heights</td>
<td>Ohio</td>
<td>26,460</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hilton Head Island Fire &amp; Rescue, Town of</td>
<td>Hilton Head Island</td>
<td>South Carolina</td>
<td>37,099</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spartanburg Public Safety Department Fire Division</td>
<td>Spartanburg</td>
<td>South Carolina</td>
<td>37,013</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlottesville Fire Department</td>
<td>Charlottesville</td>
<td>Virginia</td>
<td>43,475</td>
<td>3</td>
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</table>

Cells in grey indicate the value that was used to determine a similarity to the City of Moorhead.
Appendix D

Moorhead Accreditation Viability Interviews

Moorhead Accreditation Viability Interview    Date:  7-26-2011          Time:  1335 hours

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Beachwood Department of Fire-Rescue</th>
<th>Ohio</th>
<th>11953</th>
<th>2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chief  Patrick Kearns Firefighter</td>
<td>Anthony Strazzo</td>
<td>216-292-1965</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Interviewee:** Lieutenant Anthony Strazzo

**Involvement during the accreditation process:**

Was the assistant accreditation manager.

**Department accreditation history:**

Original accreditation in 2007 and first re-accreditation in 2012.

a) What are the requirements of the CFAI accreditation process?

The CFAI publishes a very extensive set of requirements to complete the accreditation process. In your experience, did you find them to be accurate?

Yes. Everything is in the self-assessment manual.

**Were there any additional or unexpected requirements that were not found in the literature?**

Not really, but there are things that will make the process go easier. When selecting an accreditation manager, selecting a person with organizational skills is paramount. Also, please contact an agency that has already gone through accreditation. So many of us have received help during our process and we want to pay it forward.
b) What are the typical costs involved with accreditation?

*Outside of the published fees and expenses for training, site visits and presenting your application, and outside of regular fire department salaries, did you find any additional expenses or costs that you felt needed to be incurred to ensure a successful accreditation?*

We did not. After the site visit we did decide to have the CPSE facilitate a strategic plan for us in 2008. This cost us about $12,000 to $13,000.

c) How many staff hours are typically required to complete the accreditation process?

*How many staff hours did you expend to complete the accreditation process?*

I don’t know. We have 42 career people. Me and one other Assistant Chief worked pretty much full-time on it for quite a while with some ancillary duties. One EMS Captain and some fire prep people also helped a lot.

*Did you need to outsource any of the work or hire consulting staff or other workers to help complete the process?*

No.

*Could you explain what costs were involved with any of these?*

N/A

d) What are the potential benefits of accreditation?

*What were the most important benefits that your organization realized from becoming accredited?*

Two months after our initial accreditation, our ISO rating dropped from a 4 to a 3. For you to receive real benefits, you have to be honest with yourself and admit where you’re weak and try to improve on those areas.

e) What unforeseen problems have other agencies encountered during accreditation?

*What unforeseen problems did your agency encounter during the accreditation process?*

During our initial accreditation we had problems with how we were reporting information into Firehouse. We had to define exactly what we were looking for. This was especially true for time elements for response time analysis and with incident codes.
Charlottesville Fire Department  
Virginia  
43475  
3

Chief  
Charles  
Werner  
Captain  
Joe  
Hughes  
434-531-1995

**Interviewee:** Captain Joe Hughes

**Involvement during the accreditation process:**

I’m heading up the 2012 re-accreditation. During our initial accreditation in 2007, there was a mid-stream leadership change and I was asked to step in and rescue the process due to things not going well. Before that I was writing some criteria.

**Department accreditation history:**

Initially accredited, then one re-accreditation since then.

a) **What are the requirements of the CFAI accreditation process?**

The CFAI publishes a very extensive set of requirements to complete the accreditation process. In your experience, did you find them to be accurate?

Pretty much as stated.

**Were there any additional or unexpected requirements that were not found in the literature?**

The area that trips up most people is the development of the Standard of Cover. It is still a work in progress. The idea of “comprehensive risk analysis” and building covers is still tricky to define, or how to do it is not so well defined.
b) What are the typical costs involved with accreditation?

Outside of the published fees and expenses for training, site visits and presenting your application, and outside of regular fire department salaries, did you find any additional expenses or costs that you felt needed to be incurred to ensure a successful accreditation?

The above table costs are as defined. You have to complete documents and paperwork, so there are some materials costs there.

c) How many staff hours are typically required to complete the accreditation process?

How many staff hours did you expend to complete the accreditation process?

That’s a tough question. I’m not really sure. Overtime expenses can be considerable, especially during crunch time. We will be capturing this data next time around.

Did you need to outsource any of the work or hire consulting staff or other workers to help complete the process?

No, but many departments need additional assistance. Note: the creation of the CPSE Technical Team. There are often additional costs with developing the strategic plan depending upon how you do it. You may need outside consultants to help coordinate the strategic planning and standard of cover processes. GIS is often an area where people need help.

Could you explain what costs were involved with any of these?

N/A
d) What are the potential benefits of accreditation?

**What were the most important benefits that your organization realized from becoming accredited?**

This is hard to answer. There were so many benefits. We have better defined processes and procedures for daily admin and operations. We need to regularly review these. We’re still trying to get there. It’s a constant journey. You never quite get there. The next initiative we will be pursuing is creating a clear set of procedures and records for hose testing. We test hose now, but if you asked me for the records, I don’t think I could demonstrate the history of testing for any particular hose. I would like an annual report and review of the process as well.

e) What unforeseen problems have other agencies encountered during accreditation?

**What unforeseen problems did your agency encounter during the accreditation process?**

Capturing response times.

It’s not an easy process. A lot of things need to be uncovered to deal with the problems. There will also be technical issues that all departments will encounter.
Moorhead Accreditation Viability Interview  Date: 7-26-2011  Time: 1540 hours

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coral Gables Fire Department</th>
<th>Florida</th>
<th>42871</th>
<th>3</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chief</td>
<td>Walter</td>
<td>Reed</td>
<td>Division Chief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hope</td>
<td>Gibbs</td>
<td>305-460-5571</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Interviewee:** Division Chief Hope Gibbs, Professional Standards

**Involvement during the accreditation process:**

She is the accreditation manager.

**Department accreditation history:**


a) What are the requirements of the CFAI accreditation process?

The CFAI publishes a very extensive set of requirements to complete the accreditation process. In your experience, did you find them to be accurate?

Yes

**Were there any additional or unexpected requirements that were not found in the literature?**

No. We have found that the process gets more difficult each time around as the standards improve for the process. If you maintain your documents as you operate on a daily basis, re-accreditation is easy. It’s only a pain if you try to recreate the process every 5 years, which is not the intent anyway.
b) What are the typical costs involved with accreditation?

Outside of the published fees and expenses for training, site visits and presenting your application, and outside of regular fire department salaries, did you find any additional expenses or costs that you felt needed to be incurred to ensure a successful accreditation?

Not for us. The process was very familiar to us when we came back for re-accreditation. There are the soft costs of course, office space, office supplies, etc. We keep those to a minimum.

c) How many staff hours are typically required to complete the accreditation process?

How many staff hours did you expend to complete the accreditation process?

Unknown. We had one person full-time for about a year. Some agencies try to do the same kind of thing by assigning a shift person to the project. This only works if they have support people. One person cannot do it all, but they can be an effective project manager. The time an agency needs depends a lot on what kind of data you have been keeping and the capabilities of your records management system. Having the data you need readily available helps.

I’ve noticed that accreditation people are very Type A and O.C.D., and are therefore very detail oriented. The key to doing the process efficiently the first time is to network with accredited departments in your region.

Did you need to outsource any of the work or hire consulting staff or other workers to help complete the process?

No. The City had some specialists that helped us. Sometime the County would help as well.

Could you explain what costs were involved with any of these?

N/A

d) What are the potential benefits of accreditation?

What were the most important benefits that your organization realized from becoming accredited?

Accreditation gets you to really look at your organization from the top down, left and right. You overturn rocks that you’ve never touched before. When peers come in, you have to look hard at yourself. We do it. We created a footprint and a plan for the future and an objective measurement tool. We found there were disconnects between what we were doing and what we thought or said we were doing. We ended up creating a plan to improve.

If all the senior staff were wiped out and tomorrow an outsider had to come in and take the reins, they could by reading three documents: the self-assessment, the standard of cover and the master plan. They could hit the ground running.
e) What unforeseen problems have other agencies encountered during accreditation?

What unforeseen problems did your agency encounter during the accreditation process?

During the initial accreditation, the firefighters on the line were not kept in the loop about what we were doing and why. This created problems and a lack of buy-in.

During the 1st reaccreditation, the communications were great and there was a wonderful dialog between the peer assessment team and us. I can’t speak higher of that team.

During the 2nd reaccreditation, it was more difficult. The team relied too much on SharePoint. The data alone can be misinterpreted without human interaction. We need to keep an open dialog.

You will find that some peer evaluators will want paper copies of items as well even though everything is supposed to be supplied electronically.
Interviewee: April Draper

Involvement during the accreditation process:

I am familiar with past accreditation process. I am taking classes soon to become the new accreditation person here.

Department accreditation history:


a) What are the requirements of the CFAI accreditation process?

The CFAI publishes a very extensive set of requirements to complete the accreditation process. In your experience, did you find them to be accurate?

Yes.

Were there any additional or unexpected requirements that were not found in the literature?

No. Rick Black with the CFAI is a great resource.
b) What are the typical costs involved with accreditation?

Outside of the published fees and expenses for training, site visits and presenting your application, and outside of regular fire department salaries, did you find any additional expenses or costs that you felt needed to be incurred to ensure a successful accreditation?

There were no unexpected fees.

c) How many staff hours are typically required to complete the accreditation process?

How many staff hours did you expend to complete the accreditation process?

I don’t know. Most of the work was delegated to on-duty staff. One Saturday, all staff came in for about 4-5 hours. That was the only work we did outside of normal working hours.

Did you need to outsource any of the work or hire consulting staff or other workers to help complete the process?

No.

Could you explain what costs were involved with any of these?

N/A

d) What are the potential benefits of accreditation?

What were the most important benefits that your organization realized from becoming accredited?

The city is now a more favorable place for people to move. Having an accredited fire department is important. Also, we were able to reduce our ISO class rating to a 3 from a 4.

e) What unforeseen problems have other agencies encountered during accreditation?

What unforeseen problems did your agency encounter during the accreditation process?

Nothing, really. Three of our people were already peer reviewers, so that helped.
Moorhead Accreditation Viability Interview  Date:  7-26-2011  Time:  1625 hours

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Culver City Fire Department</th>
<th>California</th>
<th>38883</th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chief Christopher Sellers</td>
<td>Assistant Chief Dave White</td>
<td>310-253-5910</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interviewee: Chief Christopher Sellers

Involvement during the accreditation process:

I was heavily involved with each of the accreditation processes as were many other department members.

Department accreditation history:

They have been through one accreditation and two re-accreditations. The last one was finished in 2010.

a) What are the requirements of the CFAI accreditation process?

The CFAI publishes a very extensive set of requirements to complete the accreditation process. In your experience, did you find them to be accurate?

Yes.

Were there any additional or unexpected requirements that were not found in the literature?

No surprises at all.
b) What are the typical costs involved with accreditation?

Outside of the published fees and expenses for training, site visits and presenting your application, and outside of regular fire department salaries, did you find any additional expenses or costs that you felt needed to be incurred to ensure a successful accreditation?

No additional costs. We did everything in-house.

c) How many staff hours are typically required to complete the accreditation process?

How many staff hours did you expend to complete the accreditation process?

Not sure. For 6 months, we probably averaged 5 hours per person per week and had several people working on the project. The first time was extremely time consuming, but we didn’t have as many things on our plate. The re-accreditations took much less time.

With the last re-accreditation we struggled a bit more. Due to budget cuts, we no longer have any support staff. It is possible that we may not have the time available when the next re-accreditation comes due with staff shrinking and duties increasing. Politicians love to have that feather in our cap though, so we’ll have to see.

Did you need to outsource any of the work or hire consulting staff or other workers to help complete the process?

Not at all.

Could you explain what costs were involved with any of these?

N/A

d) What are the potential benefits of accreditation?

What were the most important benefits that your organization realized from becoming accredited?

We saw significant benefits from accreditation. Organizational and operational improvements were made based on the self-assessment we conducted. We upgraded vehicles and equipment and shortened our amortization schedules. We were able to retain staff during periods of budget reductions by being able to quantitatively demonstrate the impact of cuts as they would impact our standard of coverage.

There were also community and political impacts we saw. The process was objective, becoming a great tool for us. Having an outside agency involved made our claims credible. This led to buy-in from our City Council. We also saw an increase in the pride of not only our department members, but City Council as well for having a professional accredited department in our city.
We found all of these to be huge benefits because heartfelt arguments and scare tactics don’t work like they used to. The Council loves the accreditation and doesn’t want to let it go.

Not all department members feel the same way. Those who don’t see the value in accreditation are not involved and are not on any of the committees. We’ve reached a point now where the department administration feels that the tools help them, so we became vocal about telling them to let it be. It’s not causing them more work, so stop complaining. I think they’re coming around now.

e) What unforeseen problems have other agencies encountered during accreditation?

What unforeseen problems did your agency encounter during the accreditation process?

None. Since we’ve been through a few times now, it’s very familiar. Using peers for assistance the first time was invaluable.
Moorhead Accreditation Viability Interview  
Date: 8-30-2011  
Time: 1044 hours

<table>
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<th>Highland Park Fire Department</th>
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<tr>
<td>Chief Allan Wax</td>
<td>Battalion Chief Larry Amidei</td>
<td>847-433-3110</td>
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**Interviewee:** Battalion Chief Larry Amidei

**Involvement during the accreditation process:**

I assisted with earlier accreditations as the assistant accreditation manager and became the accreditation manager in 2008.

**Department accreditation history:**

We were initially accredited in 1997, and re-accredited in 2002 and 2007

a) What are the requirements of the CFAI accreditation process?

The CFAI publishes a very extensive set of requirements to complete the accreditation process. In your experience, did you find them to be accurate?

Yes, pretty accurate.

Were there any additional or unexpected requirements that were not found in the literature?

It depends upon what peer assessment team you get assigned to you. It won’t be anyone from your state. They could be easy, or picky.

I’ve been a peer assessor at many sites, but not a team leader.

The Standard of Cover is a problem for many, the format and how you get the numbers. Also you need 3 years of comprehensive data with stats for various call types, and the run requirements have changed lately.
Now agencies are assigned a team leader six months out, and the agency downloads documents to a SharePoint drive. This way, the evaluator can review the documents and fix problems before the site visit. It is kind of a pre-approval process. That way, when the evaluators come out, everything looks good.

b) What are the typical costs involved with accreditation?

Outside of the published fees and expenses for training, site visits and presenting your application, and outside of regular fire department salaries, did you find any additional expenses or costs that you felt needed to be incurred to ensure a successful accreditation?

No. Everything was pretty straight forward.

c) How many staff hours are typically required to complete the accreditation process?

How many staff hours did you expend to complete the accreditation process?

Not sure. Definitely hundreds and hundreds. Most departments put somebody on days to do it. Initially it’s a lot of work. We had one guy on days for two months for re-accreditation. Some departments take two to three years for their initial accreditation. It has to be pretty important to you.

Did you need to outsource any of the work or hire consulting staff or other workers to help complete the process?

No. We did it all in-house. We had a good person up-front. We use Firehouse and working with three years of data was potentially hard, but a computer savvy guy in the department wrote his own software. Firehouse is coming up with a new $3000 option to do all the work for you. It looked good at a demo I saw. It’s like 5 Alive, but we found 5 Alive hard for every-day people to use. Computer enthusiasts can use it well, but not the shift people.

Could you explain what costs were involved with any of these?

N/A

d) What are the potential benefits of accreditation?

What were the most important benefits that your organization realized from becoming accredited?

We’re trying to work on identifying that now. The last guy was a lone wolf. So, we have to dig into what happened in the past.

We found that we’re able to set long term goals now, and use the action plan system.
With our Standard of Cover, we identified some of our response zones that had deficiencies with response times. We were able to make adjustments and close those gaps.

Our ability to do internal evaluations has also been a big benefit.

e) What unforeseen problems have other agencies encountered during accreditation?

**What unforeseen problems did your agency encounter during the accreditation process?**

We did have a problem with the previous “lone wolf” accreditation person. We didn’t get department wide buy-in. I’ll bet we only have about 20% involvement right now. For the next re-accreditation, we intend to farm out parts of the project to our different specialty teams, the people who actually do the work.

Also, just about every site visit I’ve been on we deal with computer problems. The peer assessment team is unable to access all the records, some are in different versions of Word that are incompatible, or you need specialized software to make things viewable. I’ve even seen problems with getting wi-fi access for the team. Each of these things can delay the process for several hours while the team is on-site.

I’ve also heard that in recent re-accreditations in our area, some of the peer teams were getting pretty nit-picky about grammar in the documents, criticizing spelling and even getting into arguments about word choice. Rick Black with the CFAI is a good go between to help resolve these issues.
Interviewee: Chief Lavarn Lucas

Involvement during the accreditation process:

Accreditation: had a battalion chief handle most of the paperwork. Re-accreditation: he was a battalion chief and delegated duties. I was informed and involved with both processes.

Department accreditation history:

Accreditation and 1 re-accreditation. Next re-accreditation due 2012.

a) What are the requirements of the CFAI accreditation process?

The CFAI publishes a very extensive set of requirements to complete the accreditation process. In your experience, did you find them to be accurate?

Yes

Were there any additional or unexpected requirements that were not found in the literature?

No. Agencies should be aware that as editions of the self-assessment manual change, new and changed requirements will be encountered.

b) What are the typical costs involved with accreditation?

Outside of the published fees and expenses for training, site visits and presenting your application, and outside of regular fire department salaries, did you find any additional expenses or costs that you felt needed to be incurred to ensure a successful accreditation?
No. We did not even have to pay out overtime for work. The key here is whether or not you have internal staff that can spend enough time to do the work. We farmed out various sections of the self-assessment to people who had expertise in the various subject areas.

c) How many staff hours are typically required to complete the accreditation process?

**How many staff hours did you expend to complete the accreditation process?**

We have no idea. Obviously, our first time through took a lot more time. It took us three years to be ready to apply. We could have done it faster, but we stopped once in the middle of our preparations and started again a while later. With re-accreditation, we usually just end up making amendments to the existing documents.

**Did you need to outsource any of the work or hire consulting staff or other workers to help complete the process?**

No.

**Could you explain what costs were involved with any of these?**

N/A

d) What are the potential benefits of accreditation?

**What were the most important benefits that your organization realized from becoming accredited?**

The biggest benefit we found is that we are much more used to planning now. Anything we do, we now ask how it will affect the whole organization. Before we might institute a new training policy and it would have a ripple affect with other policies and with operations, but we were unaware. We now take a holistic approach to everything we do.

We might see ISO points awarded in the future for being accredited. We’ve heard from some ISO people that this will not happen, and from some who say it is in place now. We’ll just have to wait and see.

e) What unforeseen problems have other agencies encountered during accreditation?

**What unforeseen problems did your agency encounter during the accreditation process?**

We did have some, but I can’t remember what they were.

Some of our legal documents were hard to get, like our enabling legislation. Originally we were two separate fire departments, one founded in 1962 and the other in 1969. We merged together in 1993. We had some real problems locating our founding documents.
We also found that we often over-rated ourselves. Either outsiders or department members not on that particular functional team would ask, “do you really do that?” It was hard to step back and admit that we probably didn’t quite do what we said we did. We needed to be objective, but it was hard not to take personally when questions were asked. Asking questions was good.
Interviewee: Lieutenant Michael Gallo

Involvement during the accreditation process:

I was the assistant accreditation manager when the initial accreditation began, but became the accreditation manager part way through the process.

Department accreditation history:

We have been through only the initial accreditation. We’re not due for re-accreditation yet.

a) What are the requirements of the CFAI accreditation process?

The CFAI publishes a very extensive set of requirements to complete the accreditation process. In your experience, did you find them to be accurate?

Yes.

Were there any additional or unexpected requirements that were not found in the literature?

No, but we did need some guidance during the process.

b) What are the typical costs involved with accreditation?

Outside of the published fees and expenses for training, site visits and presenting your application, and outside of regular fire department salaries, did you find any additional expenses or costs that you felt needed to be incurred to ensure a successful accreditation?

No. Everything was explained up-front.
c) How many staff hours are typically required to complete the accreditation process?

How many staff hours did you expend to complete the accreditation process?

I really don’t know. It was a lot. I’m sure it was hundreds of hours. I’ll say 400 hours as a guess.

Did you need to outsource any of the work or hire consulting staff or other workers to help complete the process?

No. We did everything in-house, but the CFAI afforded us a mentor, so we took advantage of that.

Could you explain what costs were involved with any of these?

N/A

d) What are the potential benefits of accreditation?

What were the most important benefits that your organization realized from becoming accredited?

The accreditation provided us with a good self-evaluation. We found deficiencies we weren’t aware of. We had problems in our dispatch.

This also provided us a good objective view from peer evaluators. They made 14 strategic recommendations for improvement.

e) What unforeseen problems have other agencies encountered during accreditation?

What unforeseen problems did your agency encounter during the accreditation process?

We needed more detail in response time information. We were not clear enough with our baseline and benchmarks as a result. We found that our call handling times were skewed.
Moorhead Accreditation Viability Interview    Date:  8-25-2011          Time:  1550 hours

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**Interviewee:** Chief Mike Zywanski

**Involvement during the accreditation process:**

I have been Chief of this department for only 8 to 9 months, so my experience with the local department is not completely in-depth, but I also have 7 years of experience as the accreditation manager with my previous department.

**Department accreditation history:**

We’ve had one round of accreditation and 1 re-accreditation.

a) What are the requirements of the CFAI accreditation process?

The CFAI publishes a very extensive set of requirements to complete the accreditation process. In your experience, did you find them to be accurate?

Yes.

Were there any additional or unexpected requirements that were not found in the literature?

The criterion and core performance indicators were fine.

They were a little vague on the requirements for the Standard of Cover and the Strategic Plan. I also feel that the community risk analysis is a little subjective (You have to rate yourself, based on your own perception). These things were explained in much greater detail in the workshops, but not on the web site.
b) What are the typical costs involved with accreditation?

Outside of the published fees and expenses for training, site visits and presenting your application, and outside of regular fire department salaries, did you find any additional expenses or costs that you felt needed to be incurred to ensure a successful accreditation?

No.

How you choose to do and assign staff will make a difference in your overall costs, specifically in regard to overtime. This is subjective to your department and the choices you make.

You may also incur minor expenses like printing costs, costs for IT storage, etc.

c) How many staff hours are typically required to complete the accreditation process?

How many staff hours did you expend to complete the accreditation process?

I don’t know about the original accreditation, but I know we expended 1500 hours for the last re-accreditation. I have had a lot of previous experience and this is not off the mark. When I was with Naperville, we were one of the five beta testers in 1995 and we became accredited in 1996.

Did you need to outsource any of the work or hire consulting staff or other workers to help complete the process?

No.

Could you explain what costs were involved with any of these?

N/A

d) What are the potential benefits of accreditation?

What were the most important benefits that your organization realized from becoming accredited?

The opportunity to do community risk analysis.

We determined our response levels, so we can justify the number of resources we send to incidents (residential structure fire, multi-family, etc.).

Peer review provides very strong arguments for budget requests for the most part. Budget problems also play a part, however. In good years, it is easy to use justification to result in funding initiatives. In bad years, they still think these are good ideas, but sometimes, funding limitations override what you should do. It does seem to stick in the decision makers minds what you should do when the money returns, however. When we can, we would like to fund this thing or that, but for now, we can’t.
The value of having the process and evaluation in place is still worth it. We will always have to compete for the dollars.

e) What unforeseen problems have other agencies encountered during accreditation?

What unforeseen problems did your agency encounter during the accreditation process?

We had data retrieval issues. We switched RMS from a mainframe to Firehouse software, \( \frac{3}{4} \) of the way through the accreditation cycle. We couldn’t get the old mainframe system to output the analytics we needed in an efficient manner. It was very tedious to pull the data we needed for the standard of cover. This was a big problem for us in 2007.

I recommend you get the “5 Alive” program. It helped us download data from Firehouse (did not work well with our mainframe system) and gives you all the analytics you need for accreditation, very easily. It saved us a ton of time and gave us exactly what we needed.
Moorhead Accreditation Viability Interview  Date: 7-26-2011  Time: 1425 hours

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**Interviewee:** Chief Robert Eick

**Involvement during the accreditation process:**

I was involved, but not in charge of first accreditation and was in charge of reaccreditation.

**Department accreditation history:**

Initially accredited, then one re-accreditation since then.

a) What are the requirements of the CFAI accreditation process?

*The CFAI publishes a very extensive set of requirements to complete the accreditation process. In your experience, did you find them to be accurate?*

Back then (during initial accreditation,) outreach was on a very conditional basis. Now the communications are much better. There are some small adjustments in the process that have not been totally communicated. They weren’t major things and wouldn’t affect whether or not you could complete the process successfully.

**Were there any additional or unexpected requirements that were not found in the literature?**

We weren’t ready for re-accreditation because we became comfortable with our initial accreditation and had not been working on continuous quality improvement.
b) What are the typical costs involved with accreditation?

Outside of the published fees and expenses for training, site visits and presenting your application, and outside of regular fire department salaries, did you find any additional expenses or costs that you felt needed to be incurred to ensure a successful accreditation?

No. We did everything internally.

c) How many staff hours are typically required to complete the accreditation process?

How many staff hours did you expend to complete the accreditation process?

Unknown.

Did you need to outsource any of the work or hire consulting staff or other workers to help complete the process?

No

Could you explain what costs were involved with any of these?

N/A

d) What are the potential benefits of accreditation?

What were the most important benefits that your organization realized from becoming accredited?

The biggest benefit for us was the change in culture. We believe we can change through an established process. This has allowed me to be open minded to different ideas and investigate personal or professional ideas. Now if someone brings a problem or ideas to me I also want them to bring justification. I don’t just say “no” anymore. It makes us all think we can improve.

e) What unforeseen problems have other agencies encountered during accreditation?

What unforeseen problems did your agency encounter during the accreditation process?

A huge issue was exposed with our dispatch center and call handling times. The peer assessment team found that our data was invalid. The dispatch center had moved away from an established procedure and we didn’t know it. We got IT involved and had to hand correct a bunch of runs. The peer assessment team and the commission were great to work with. They have a real education feel to try to help you improve.
**Interviewee:** Lieutenant Chipper Wilkerson

**Involvement during the accreditation process:**

Lead accreditation person during last re-accreditation. I have been involved in accreditation efforts since 2005, previously focusing on the Standard of Cover and all of the efforts to support it.

**Department accreditation history:**


a) What are the requirements of the CFAI accreditation process?

The CFAI publishes a very extensive set of requirements to complete the accreditation process. In your experience, did you find them to be accurate?

Yes

Were there any additional or unexpected requirements that were not found in the literature?

No. Everything is as expected.

b) What are the typical costs involved with accreditation?

Outside of the published fees and expenses for training, site visits and presenting your application, and outside of regular fire department salaries, did you find any additional expenses or costs that you felt needed to be incurred to ensure a successful accreditation?

No
c) How many staff hours are typically required to complete the accreditation process?

How many staff hours did you expend to complete the accreditation process?

I have no clue. It was a lot of work. I spent a lot of time on both re-accreditation site visits. This is not a “project.” It must be considered a “process.” It will take a lot of work to change how you do business. It doesn’t end there, though. It is a continuous process, continuously crunching data. It requires more work on a daily basis and attention to detail in incident reporting and data collection along various fronts.

Right now, besides training, emergency calls, and morning PT, most of my time is spent on accreditation issues.

Did you need to outsource any of the work or hire consulting staff or other workers to help complete the process?

No. We did everything in-house. If you need help, CFAI has consultants available that do a great job, particularly with the public events like the community input needed for the master plan.

Could you explain what costs were involved with any of these?

N/A.

d) What are the potential benefits of accreditation?

What were the most important benefits that your organization realized from becoming accredited?

We have found a host of simple benefits from the process, including: the creation of a SOP Manual where we didn’t have one before, a full inventory of all apparatus and equipment, a focus in performance issues like turnout time (now we know why it’s important), and good consistent clean data to make decisions from and justify our actions and requests. It’s impossible to justify what we’re doing and what we need without good data.

We know why we’re doing what we’re doing (critical task analysis at residential house fire = needed apparatus and staffing = required time frame, etc.)

We now make better decisions.
e) What unforeseen problems have other agencies encountered during accreditation?

**What unforeseen problems did your agency encounter during the accreditation process?**

We have found some problems with changes in the requirements when coming up for re-accreditation that we were not prepared for.

We have had problems with our ability to track incident response times. We’re in the process of updating our records management software and MDC software to get away from voice logging of incident data and go to keyed and logged data.

We experienced a problem where the team leader and another team member on our fire department accreditation team for the initial accreditation could not get along. They are not on speaking terms to this day. We had two good people on the team, and two people who were difficult to work with and were not committed to the idea. The key players must be open minded enough to look at other options besides what you are doing now.

Now we’re running into a problem where most of the people out in the field have not taken accreditation seriously. They don’t feel it’s necessary, but they don’t have to deal with the management issues where you need to have the tools in place that accreditation gives you to answer the questions that are posed. Now all of the other champions of accreditation have left to take other jobs, and I’m the only one left. I don’t know if we’ll even be able to get enough support for our next round of re-accreditation.
Moorhead Accreditation Viability Interview  
Date: 7-26-2011  
Time: 1500 hours

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<tr>
<td>Chief</td>
<td>James</td>
<td>Dominik</td>
<td>Deputy Chief</td>
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**Interviewee:** Deputy Chief Mike McGreal

**Involvement during the accreditation process:**

Lead accreditation person.

**Department accreditation history:**

We were the 21st agency accredited. We re-accredited in 2001, 2006, and June of 2011.

a) What are the requirements of the CFAI accreditation process?

The CFAI publishes a very extensive set of requirements to complete the accreditation process. In your experience, did you find them to be accurate?

Yes

b) What are the typical costs involved with accreditation?

Outside of the published fees and expenses for training, site visits and presenting your application, and outside of regular fire department salaries, did you find any additional expenses or costs that you felt needed to be incurred to ensure a successful accreditation?

No.
c) How many staff hours are typically required to complete the accreditation process?

**How many staff hours did you expend to complete the accreditation process?**

I don’t know. A lot. The best way to do it is to shift a lot out to the shift commanders and to line staff. The documents should reflect what you *really do*. It forced us to create complete SOGs which was a great training tool.

Pretty labor intensive in the beginning. Very challenging.

**Did you need to outsource any of the work or hire consulting staff or other workers to help complete the process?**

We hired an administrative analyst full-time because we didn’t have the resources to do it ourselves. We kept the person on for about 2 years because it was so early in the accreditation process as a whole, and there wasn’t a lot of help. We tried an MBA seeking grad student. We had a lot of new policies to create. The person was good, but there was a big learning curve to get them up to speed on fire service knowledge. That was a big problem.

Now we employ one person part-time for 20 hours a week to do all the compliance work. This is an off-duty fire officer from another town.

**Could you explain what costs were involved with any of these?**

Not sure of the costs. We’ve liked the outside help so much that it’s become a regular part of our operations.

**d) What are the potential benefits of accreditation?**

**What were the most important benefits that your organization realized from becoming accredited?**

We’ve changed our operations and run a quint now. We’ve downgraded our fire alarm response to one rig hot and all others routing without credible signs of a fire. We found over 98% were false alarms. This method of response is safer without much added risk.

We found that we had overlapping calls almost 1/3 of the time. Accreditation has given us the tools, data and skills to survive cuts. We actually grew while other departments were seeing reductions.
e) What unforeseen problems have other agencies encountered during accreditation?

**What unforeseen problems did your agency encounter during the accreditation process?**

During the initial accreditation we had problems getting the accurate incident time information we needed. We were dispatched by PD without a CAD system, so no hard data. We almost got deferred for that.

Our reaccreditation went smooth because we’ve stayed at it. If you live it, it’s no problem.