NWCG CURRICULUM MANAGEMENT
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LEADERSHIP CURRICULUM DESIGN AND DELIVERY STRATEGY
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ISSUE

Identify a strategy for the design and delivery of the L-380 *Fireline Leadership* and L-381 *Incident Leadership* courses within the wildland fire leadership curriculum.

BACKGROUND

The intent of this issue paper is to propose the use of an existing model as a basis for an overarching strategy that will improve the quality of available leadership training and that will allow agencies the latitude to find their best source to do so.

The current strategy for the design of wildland fire training courses has been to utilize internal agency personnel as collateral duty subject matter experts working with an assigned training project leader to develop a standard training package. This training package then becomes part of the inventory in the NWCG Publication Management System. The current delivery strategy is to use internal agency personnel as collateral duty instructors and to assemble cadres on an "as needed" basis.

This model has worked when dealing with job specific technical skills training but has shown limitations when addressing complex affective domain (soft skills) subject matter such as human factors and leadership. These limitations include inability to access outside expertise; long revision cycles; and dependency on part-time cadres, which reduces instructor familiarity with complex subject matter and limits delivery capability. The difficulty of attracting and keeping quality instructors for cadres is being recognized in nearly every geographic area training center.

The current situation regarding leadership training within the NWCG curriculum is that the products available have been identified as inadequate by several sources (Wildland Firefighter Safety Awareness Study in 1998 and Leadership Taskgroup Report in 2001). Since 1999 several wildland fire agencies (both federal and state) have been utilizing vendor delivered leadership training especially designed for the high-risk work environment found on wildland fire incidents. This approach has gained a high level of acceptance from the participants and two federal wildland fire agencies have issued equivalency status for one such course, NWCG S-381 *Leadership and Organizational Development*. It is estimated that over 2000 wildland firefighters have gone through a vendor delivered fire leadership training course in the last three years.

This successful approach to providing quality training for the field can provide a better model for the design and delivery of wildland fire leadership training products. The

model of partnering with outside expertise offers several advantages. Development and delivery cycles are shorter; full-time cadres provide better prepared instructors; and most important is the effect of leveraging outside expertise to assist the wildland fire service with the complex subject matter of leadership development.

This model is not without barriers. Some stakeholders have expressed a reluctance to adopt vendor-delivered courseware due to expense. Superficial analysis of the expense in designing and delivering training will reveal a significant difference between vendor delivered training course costs and internal agency delivered training course costs. However, the tuition charged for internal delivered courses at geographic area training centers does not reflect many of the total costs involved. The result is subsidized training, including all course development costs and the salaries for agency personnel who are diverted from normal duties in order to fill part-time roles as instructors. This combination of hidden costs and part-time instructor cadres gives strong support for exploring a different approach to providing training.

Another concern raised by stakeholders is sole source vendor situations. A key aspect of this strategy is to insure there is flexibility for agencies to determine the best method for providing leadership development training to their personnel. An agency will have the option to contract with any vendor or develop their own training course if they decide that to be the most advantageous method.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Leadership Committee proposes the following strategy:

- Strategy: Provide a standard set of course criteria that will allow end users to identify a source for the training product that fits their organizational needs. The criteria will provide instructional design guidance that will meet the intent of the wildand fire leadership development program. Leadership training requirements will be identified for a variety of ICS positions; how agencies meet those training requirements will be up to each agency.

- Rationale: The proposed strategy will allow wider latitude for those organizations that seek to implement a complete leadership development program by avoiding a "one-size-fits-all" approach. The traditional NWCG design and delivery model does not allow wildland fire agencies the latitude to provide state-of-the-art leadership training within the NWCG certification and qualification system requirements.

- Method: Establish the following criteria for L-380 and L-381 courses:
  - Specify the target audience.
  - Set minimum duration in course contact hours.
  - Define subject areas and respective performance objectives.
  - Identify essential instructional strategies.

- Outcome: Multiple avenues for wildland fire agencies to meet wildland fire leadership curriculum training requirements for L-380 and L-381 courses.
  - Vendor designed and delivered courses with agency oversight.
  - Agency designed and delivered courses.
  - Vendor designed courses with delivery by agency personnel.

ACTION REQUIRED

The Leadership Committee recommends the above strategy be implemented beginning October 2004.

The proposed strategy outlined above will:

1. Communicate strategic course delivery changes and course criteria guidance to the end user (wildland fire agencies).
2. Allow multiple avenues for wildland fire agencies to obtain quality advanced leadership training for key incident command system positions (fireline decision-makers).
3. Provide wildland fire agencies the flexibility to meet the intent of the wildland fire leadership development program within their organizational constraints.
4. Eliminate impression that NWCG is dictating a certain method of course delivery.
5. Maintain a reference on the fireleadership.gov website of possible sources for course design and delivery.

APPROVED / DENIED
(circle one)

SIGNATURE

05/19/03

TWT Chair

Date

cc: Incident Operations Standards Working Team