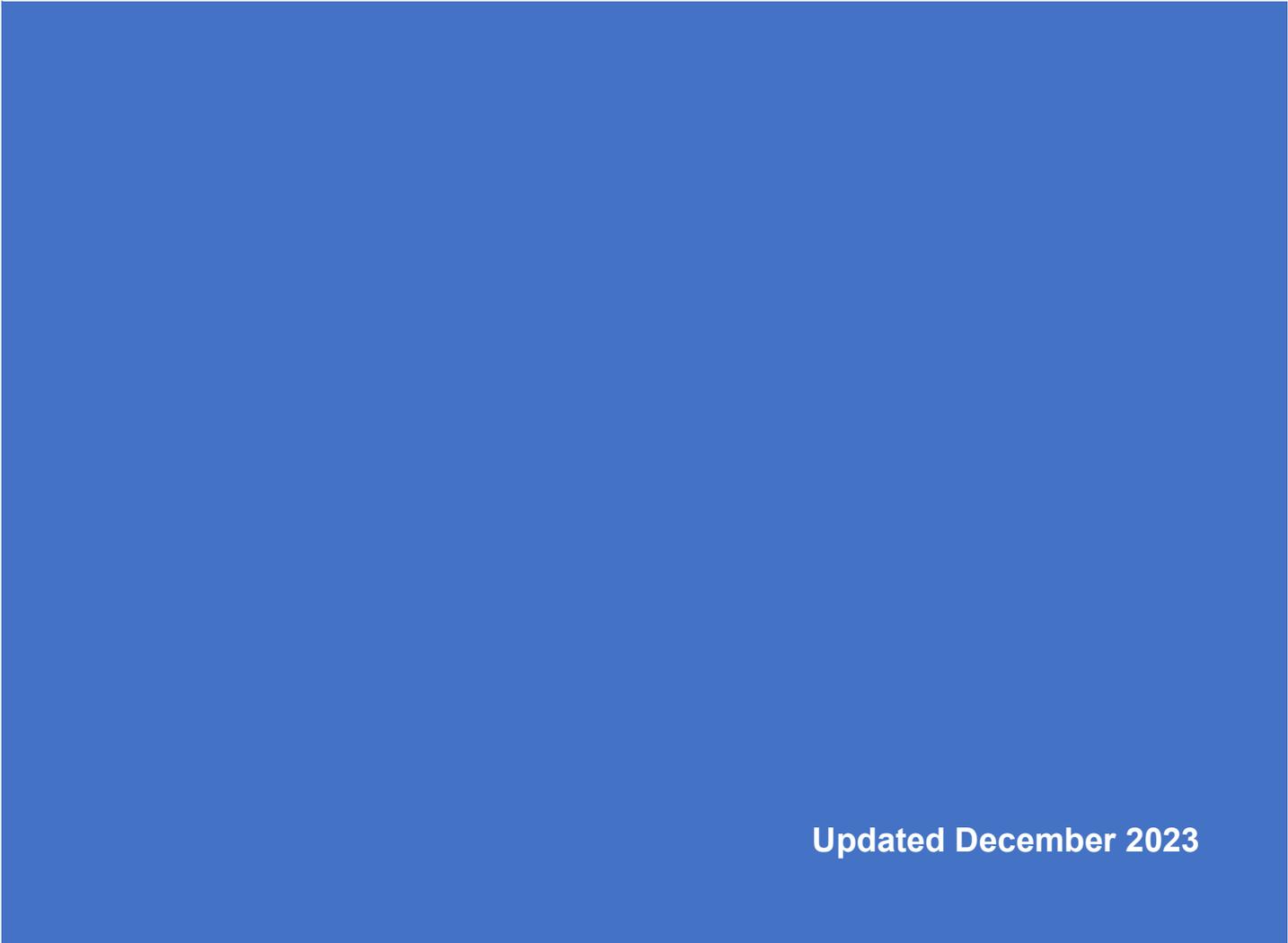




# **EXECUTIVE FIRE OFFICER PROGRAM HANDBOOK**



**Updated December 2023**



Dear Executive Fire Officer (EFO) Program participant:

Welcome! Whether you are new to the program or nearing its completion, your feedback and participation is critical to the success of this major U.S. Fire Administration (USFA) initiative. If we, as an agency and as a profession, are to achieve our goals of reducing risk and enhancing the fire service's ability to confront and deal with a variety of emerging organizational, leadership and community issues, your participation is vital.

The challenge that we extend to you is one of leadership. Through the EFO Program, the National Fire Academy (NFA) seeks to inspire, educate, encourage and empower current and future fire service leaders and create public service champions within communities. It is to lessen, if not prevent, emergency and catastrophic events; to provide information that reduces firefighter injuries and deaths; and to successfully mitigate fires, emergency medical operations and other disasters that result in human suffering and economic loss for each of our communities.

This document will categorize and present updates, modifications and current policies that govern the EFO Program. The intent is to establish a resource that provides information while it promotes equity and trust and establishes a high level of academic expectations inferred on each participant.

I encourage you to tell me if there is some way that we can serve you better. Likewise, if you are satisfied with the program, please communicate this to others.

Again, welcome! I wish you the greatest measure of success within the EFO Program.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Eriks J. Gabliks". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "E" and "G".

Eriks J. Gabliks, Superintendent  
National Fire Academy  
U.S. Fire Administration



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## **Executive Fire Officer Program Overview**

### **Executive Fire Officer Program ideal candidate**

#### **Experience:**

The ideal candidate should be a newly appointed department chief-level officer, or a senior/executive-level officer, selected by their department or organization. The candidate will have demonstrated progressive leadership roles and experience in various operational and administrative aspects of emergency services.

#### **Leadership:**

All applicants must exhibit strong leadership qualities, including the ability to inspire and motivate others, make informed decisions, and effectively manage personnel and resources. The ideal candidate should possess excellent communication and interpersonal skills to interact with diverse stakeholders and collaborate in a team-oriented environment.

#### **Education and professional development:**

All applicants must possess a baccalaureate degree from a nationally or regionally accredited institution recognized by the U.S. Department of Education. The ideal candidate has or is planning to further their formal education and can demonstrate a commitment to ongoing professional development and lifelong learning.

#### **Community engagement:**

The ideal candidate is an active member of a nationally recognized fire and emergency medical services (EMS) organization. They should demonstrate engagement with local community organizations, as well as a commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion in fire and EMS.

#### **Professional ethics and integrity:**

All applicants shall model and uphold high ethical standards and demonstrate integrity, professionalism and a commitment to ethical conduct.

### **Program mission, vision, values and beliefs**

The EFO Program is the pinnacle of the USFA's commitment to support the needs of fire and EMS agencies in preparing executive officers to meet the ever-changing demands of the dynamic communities in which they serve. Consequently, the USFA is focused on supplementing, not duplicating, existing programs of training, technology and research, data collection and analysis, and public education.

#### **Executive Fire Officer Program mission statement**

To create an environment and opportunities that foster individual growth, development and an appreciation for lifelong learning as a strategic community leader.

#### **Executive Fire Officer Program vision statement**

Executive officers providing bold, thoughtful and innovative solutions to create safe, healthy, prepared and resilient communities.

## **Values and beliefs of the Executive Fire Officer Program**

- Self-awareness through reflection
- Lifelong learning
- Integration of fire and EMS organizations into the whole community
- Development of sustainable partnerships beyond geographic and political boundaries
- Diversity, equality, equity and inclusiveness to build organizational and community strength
- Fostering environments that support open dialogue and respect for all opinions
- Recognition of the leadership role in the development of a vibrant and safe community

## **Program outcomes**

The EFO Program is structured to empower executive officers to develop, maintain and expand the following proficiencies throughout their careers:

- Demonstrate social responsibility within self, organization and community.
- Enhance personal and organizational ethics, integrity, accountability and performance to secure public trust.
- Apply effective communication skills and information technologies to express vision, strategy, policy, resource and incident-related determinations.
- Strategically plan to foster a safe, healthy, prepared and resilient community.
- Incorporate diversity, equality, equity and inclusiveness to build organizational and community strength.
- Prioritize personal and organizational growth through the pursuit and creation of education, mentorship and other learning opportunities.
- Exercise leadership to meet the technical and adaptive challenges within the organization and community.
- Employ political/strategic foresight and research-based analytical skills to propose, influence, adopt, implement and evaluate public policy.

## **Commitment to the Executive Fire Officer Program**

You and your department's engagement in the EFO Program over the next 2 (or no more than 4) years is a significant commitment. You will take part in learning opportunities presented in a variety of formats to include online mediated, self-study and in-residence elements.

For the on-campus sessions, you will be provided lodging and a travel stipend. You will be responsible for purchasing a meal ticket. You should anticipate the residential experiences to be full days, with possible weekend activities or requirements.

By applying to the EFO Program, you are acknowledging your understanding and willingness to meet the time commitments required within the program.

## Executive Fire Officer Program Curriculum/Design

The NFA is the instructional entity within the USFA, and as such, is focused on the supplementation, rather than duplication, of existing programs of education and training for career and volunteer fire and EMS personnel throughout the nation. Through the EFO Program, the NFA seeks to inspire, educate and empower current and future fire service leaders and create public service champions within communities.

**Self:** The first component is a resident course that focuses on self. This component provides learning and practice opportunities that foster the exploration of personal leadership philosophy, life-work balance, theoretical aspects of leadership, and the value of ethics and integrity. This course introduces research practices and communication skills amidst leadership challenges.

**Organization:** The second component of the EFO Program focuses on the organization. It is comprised of substantial self-paced, online pre-course work to provide students with theoretical, academic and foundational elements that are applied during a resident course focused on building organizational strength. This course will apply analysis and adaptive leadership components that result in building an internal culture that promotes a safer, healthier, more prepared and resilient organization. Students collect, evaluate and demonstrate the use of organizational data and research in their pursuit to achieve a diverse, resilient and safe organization.

**Community:** The third component of the EFO Program transitions the foundational elements previously addressed for the organization to focus on the community. This component is comprised of substantial self-paced, online pre-course work to provide students with theoretical, academic and foundational elements that are then applied during a resident course. The resident experience underscores the exercise of executive-level leadership in the context of the whole community, and the strategic role of the executive officer within both emergent and prospective events is considered. The central focus is relational interoperability between the many facets required to determine, evaluate and meet the needs of the community.

**Capstone:** The culminating portion of the EFO Program is comprised of independent research and public presentation to demonstrate bold and imaginative solutions to critical issues cultivated by the executive throughout the program. Students integrate, synthesize and apply the knowledge, skills and perspectives acquired throughout the EFO Program and demonstrate mastery of all program elements during an online, instructor-led course and a resident course. The following capstone projects are graded assignments:

- A **Capstone Research Paper (CRP)** is the culmination of theory and application where the executive displays both the vision and competencies highlighted throughout the EFO Program. The paper incorporates complex problem identification and exploration, research, data, and the ability to author solutions to multifaceted problems while presenting the information in a convincing, logical and academically sound format. Details can be found in Appendix A: Executive Fire Officer Program Capstone Research Guidelines.
- A **presentation** in the final resident course mirrors a real-life event, such as a town hall, council meeting or catastrophic event. This essential experience is designed to provide a complex and dynamic environment with both peer and expert feedback that uniquely informs each student's professional and personal insight.



Further details about the capstone research project can be found in Appendix A.

## Overview and sequence

<b>Self</b>	Resident 10-day	R5201	“Exercise of Executive Leadership: Self”
<b>Organization</b>	Resident 6-day and online pre-course work	R5202	“Exercise of Executive Leadership: Organization”
<b>Community</b>	Resident 6-day and online pre-course work	R5203	“Exercise of Executive Leadership: Community”
<b>Capstone</b>	Mediated online course	M5104	“Applications in the Exercise of Leadership: Capstone I” (12- to 24-week course)
	Resident 6-day	R5204	“Applications in the Exercise of Leadership: Capstone II”

## Course descriptions

### **R5201, “Exercise of Executive Leadership: Self”**

Students are introduced to the EFO Program during this 10-day resident course that establishes the foundation of the exercise of leadership. The first resident experience provides the executive officer an immersive, educational experience with facilitated discussion and introspection to address the relationships of leadership for self, organization and community. Students are introduced to research practices, expected communication skills, American Psychological Association (APA) style (2020) and writing expectations. Concepts relating to 21st-century emerging issues are introduced to initiate planning for “Applications in the Exercise of Leadership: Capstone I” (M5104).

### **R5202, “Exercise of Executive Leadership: Organization” (Prerequisite — R5201)**

Students access the learning management system (LMS) 6 weeks prior to the 6-day resident course and complete approximately 40 hours of structured, self-paced pre-course work. To provide consistency and facilitate student success, instructors are available to provide timely responses to student inquiries and grade assignments from the beginning of pre-course work throughout the resident experience.

During pre-course work, executive officers build an analytical framework to establish a holistic and objective view of their organization. Leadership considerations and introduction to diverse perspectives are provided through required reading and videos, while students conduct strategic research, data capture and analysis to determine their organization’s existing state.

During the residential experience, students delve deeper into leadership and diversity issues. Facilitated dialogue centers on needs assessment within an organization to develop, grow and sustain success. Through strategic analysis, students refine their organization’s existing state and propose an aspired-state vision of a safe, healthy, prepared and resilient organization.

### **R5203, “Exercise of Executive Leadership: Community” (Prerequisite — R5202)**

Students access the LMS 6 weeks prior to the 6-day resident course and complete approximately 40 hours of structured, self-paced pre-course work. To provide consistency and facilitate student success, instructors are available to provide timely response to student inquiries and grade assignments from the beginning of pre-course work throughout the resident experience.

During pre-course work, executive officers build an analytical framework to establish a holistic and objective view of their community to assess their community’s existing state. Students will review the literature and collect data to formulate evidence-based approaches to achieving an aspired state. Technology will be introduced as potential tools to help achieve a safe, healthy, prepared and resilient community.

During the residential experience, students will explore the culture of the whole community and the exercise of executive leadership to build trust and create inclusive community success. The self, organization and community are brought full circle as executive officers discuss and analyze defining moments in their careers. Students are provided a platform to question conventional approaches, enhance creativity, and strategically influence process and policies to ultimately create an aspired state of a safe, healthy, prepared and resilient community.

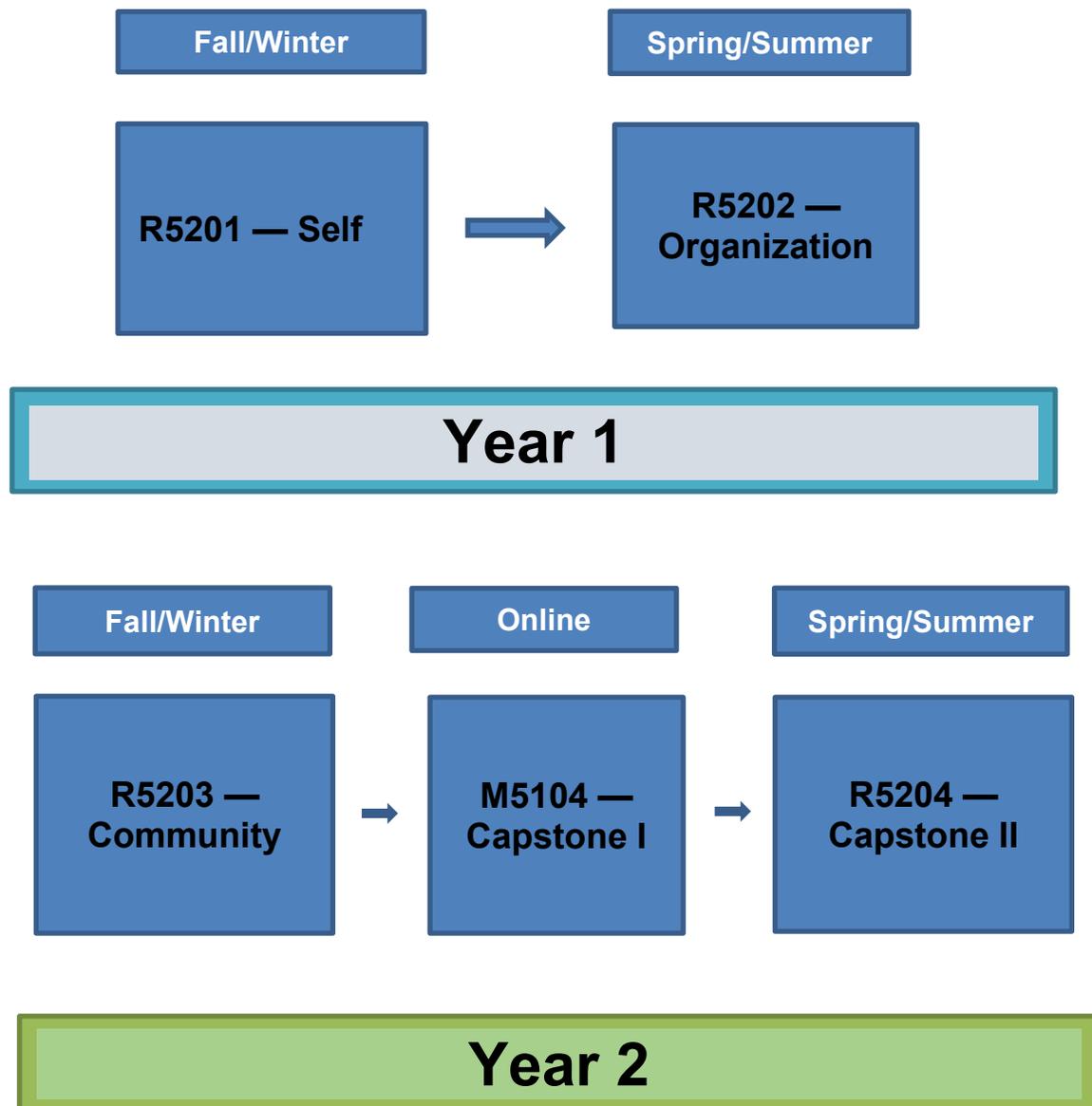
### **M5104, “Applications in the Exercise of Leadership: Capstone I” (Prerequisite — R5203)**

This online, mediated (instructor-led) course integrates program content and research topics and is the first step in the completion of the program capstone. The course provides analysis and interactive opportunities at a strategic executive level that leverage stakeholders, influencers and actors associated with serving a whole community’s public safety and risk management needs. Critical to successful program completion, instructors work with students through incremental writing assignments focusing on the capstone research synopsis, research proposal and research paper.

### **R5204, “Applications in the Exercise of Leadership: Capstone II” (Prerequisite — M5104)**

The final residential experience in the EFO Program requires the student to demonstrate quantifiable action as a catalyst for change while exemplifying the exercise of executive leadership for self, organization and community. This experience includes the submission of their final CRP and a presentation to mirror a real-life event, such as a town hall or council meeting, where the student attempts to convince the audience of the change they wish to enact. This essential and dynamic experience is designed to provide the executive with peer feedback and expert assessment that uniquely informs each student’s professional and personal insight. The capstone paper is uploaded approximately 4 weeks before course start and is graded before arrival. A day-long Gettysburg staff ride is incorporated into this 6-day course.

## 2-Year Program Completion Pathway



Students accepted into the program **must attend** a fall offering of R5201 during the year of their acceptance. Failure to attend during their year of acceptance will result in removal from the program and will require the student to reapply for future consideration into the EFO Program.

## Course Design Methodology

The goal of the design of the EFO Program learning environment is to provide cohesive and unique approaches to create a richer and more substantive executive learning experience. Thematic threads of terminology and thought that are applied throughout the curriculum include:

- Ethics and integrity.
- Strategic thinking.
- Integrated planning and execution.
- Political acuity.
- Inclusive community.
- Equity and diversity.
- Change/adaptability.
- Development of others and self.
- Creativity and innovation.

All courses are designed to meet the American Council on Education standards for graduate-level credit recommendation so that EFO Program students potentially qualify for credit at colleges and universities.

Learning methodologies employed throughout the curriculum include, but are not limited to:

**Socratic methodology:** Through responding to questioning, or deep inquiry, students gain understanding and draw on underlying assumptions. This method of dialogue allows for deeper learning on the part of the individual who employs it in their learning processes. This method is applied throughout online and resident courses.

**Professional reflection activities:** Reflection takes a thought, idea or opinion and uses it as a means of searching out further thoughts and ideas to form an opinion for personal growth. Without reflection, learning does not occur. Reflection activities occur at critical points throughout the program and are kept for portfolio submission.

**Professional writing:** Students prepare written work that conforms to accepted academic standards for professional papers. Papers reflect original work and give appropriate credit through citations for ideas belonging to other authors, publications or organizations. All written work is expected to be free of grammatical and syntax errors and should demonstrate critical thinking related to the subject matter.

**Professional speaking:** During virtual online sessions and resident courses, students practice how to comport themselves to establish trust and build partnerships. This skill is essential to effect change as an executive officer and recognized community champion.

**Data collection, research and analysis:** Throughout all courses, there are opportunities to collect, collate and analyze data in many forms. Students must employ both qualitative and quantitative research to employ evidence-based planning and action.

**Personal journaling:** Journaling is used as a means of reflection. This activity is a private process using a written journal. Students use a provided bound journal or an electronic equivalent in which to record private thoughts. Students receive and respond to journal prompts throughout the EFO Program to maximize this unique and powerful leadership development tool. Students maintain control of the journal throughout the program and are not required to share those thoughts and entries.

## Executive Fire Officer Program Conduct

### Executive Fire Officer and the National Fire Academy Human Dignity Statement

Executive officers should always show respect and dignity when interacting with others. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security and the NFA recognize the value and potential in all individuals. To support this recognition, the NFA Human Dignity Statement will serve to support a rich and meaningful experience for all.

The uniqueness of all individuals at the National Emergency Training Center (NETC) is recognized in their diversity, which can be a resource that enriches the working and learning environment through the sharing of differing perspectives. Equal opportunity is provided to all employees, students, contractors and visitors. This is supported by:

- Ensuring equal opportunity to all employees, students, contractors and visitors.
- Prohibiting all discrimination and harassment.
- Supporting affirmative employment policies and practices.
- Encouraging employees, students, contractors and visitors to communicate and behave in a manner that is sensitive to, and acknowledges, the viewpoints of others.
- Regarding diversity as a resource that enriches the working and learning environment through the sharing of differing perspectives, experiences and ideas.
- Removing barriers to teamwork through collaboration, problem-solving and the constructive resolution of conflicts.
- Continuing to identify and eliminate barriers.

Employees, students, contractors and visitors are expected to treat each other with respect at all times. Inappropriate behavior will not be tolerated and may result in appropriate administrative or disciplinary action, including removal and debarment from the facility and the program.

### Professionalism

The environment of the EFO Program is intended to be rich in respect, integrity, professionalism and comradery. Throughout the program, the executive officers, instructors and NFA staff are expected to demonstrate the stature and demeanor of individuals entrusted with the highest level of public trust.

The EFO Program has an enhanced dress code during all residential experiences. Business casual attire is the preferred dress. In addition, given the dynamics of the EFO Program, the executive officer should bring business attire or Class-A uniform each time they are on campus for a residential experience.

For on-campus or EFO Program-sponsored events, after-hours wear should always be appropriate for the event and reflect positively on the executive officer, their home organization and the NFA.

### Netiquette

Online learning promotes the advancement of knowledge through positive and constructive debate — both inside and outside the classroom. Forums on the internet, however, can occasionally degenerate into needless insults and “flaming.” Such activity and the loss of good manners are not acceptable in a professional learning setting; basic academic rules of good behavior and proper “netiquette” must persist. The rewards and excitement of learning do not include descent to personal attacks or executive officer attempts to stifle the forum of others.

## Academic honesty

As part of the NFA community, executive officers are expected to exhibit exemplary ethical behavior and conduct. Acts of academic dishonesty include cheating, plagiarism, deliberate falsification, utilization of ghost writers, papers authored by artificial intelligence (AI), and other unethical behaviors. Plagiarism software may be used to assess graded assignments.

Executive officers are expected to report academic misconduct when they witness a violation. All cases of academic misconduct shall be reported by the instructors to the training specialist and EFO Program administrator.

If an executive officer is found to have engaged in misconduct, and the allegations are upheld, the penalties may include, but are not limited to, one or a combination of the following:

- Expulsion
- Withholding of stipend or forfeiture of stipend paid

## Electronics in the classroom

Although useful and appropriate in many circumstances, electronics can also be a significant distraction and a deterrent to effective interpersonal communications. Appropriate use of electronics in residential experiences is essential. This program will take advantage of electronic devices in a controlled environment only when appropriate to program content, as determined by the instructor. Students are expected to turn off and put away all electronics, including cell phones and tablets, unless the instructor has indicated otherwise. This allows students to focus on the topics without the distractions of the electronic world. Executive officers are expected to discuss any exceptions with the course instructor.

## Executive Fire Officer Application Process

### Program application process

Applicants must submit a complete application to the [NETC Online Admissions Application](#) during the application window. A complete EFO Program application must contain all the items listed below. Applicants should use the checklist to assemble their package prior to beginning their online application.

1. A signed EFO Program participation contract indicating that the applicant has reviewed the program handbook and understands the demands of the program. **This attachment will be provided before the open enrollment period.**
2. A letter of recommendation from the head of the sponsoring organization (chief of department, mayor, city manager, etc.) discussing how the candidate fits the ideals described above. The letter of recommendation will be used in the rating process and must refer to the ideal candidate description. **Attach a PDF letter to the application.**
3. A resume for the applicant. The resume will be used in the rating process, so please review the ideal candidate description above. **Attach a PDF resume to the application.**
4. A copy of the applicant's organizational chart, specifically identifying the position on the chart that the applicant holds. The organizational chart should indicate that the applicant is a chief-level or a senior/executive-level officer, relative to the size of the organization. **Attach a PDF organizational chart to the application.**

5. A photocopy of the applicant's baccalaureate degree from a nationally or regionally accredited institution recognized by the U.S. Department of Education. **Attach a PDF copy of the degree to the application.**
6. An essay that meets the requirements below must be attached to the application. Applicants are strongly encouraged to review the ideal candidate description very carefully and incorporate discussion of as many attributes as possible into the essay, since this may be the only place to demonstrate some of the ideal characteristics.

It is important that the essay instructions are followed as it will impact the overall applicant rating. Applicants may use grammar software or identify proofreading or writing support; however, plagiarism software will be used to detect plagiarism and the use of AI-generated content. Essays that contain blatant plagiarism and/or AI-generated content will not be considered for acceptance to the EFO Program. **Attach a PDF essay to the application.**

Carefully craft an essay that demonstrates how you are an ideal candidate for the EFO Program based on the description above and following the below requirements:

- Limit the essay to 1,000 words or fewer.
- Make sure it is free from grammatical or spelling errors.
- Use clear, succinct and professional language.
- Avoid using repetitive language and cliches.
- Use transitional thoughts and sentences to tie ideas together.
- Use Times New Roman font with 12-point size.
- Format 1-inch margins on all sides of the document.
- Ensure the essay is double-spaced throughout.

Students accepted into the program **must attend** a fall offering of R5201 during the year of their acceptance. Failure to attend during their year of acceptance will result in removal from the program and will require the student to reapply for future consideration into the EFO Program.

## Maintaining Eligibility

Students have up to 4 years to complete the EFO Program from the time of successful completion of R5201 and may move through the program at their own pace. It is anticipated that a student could complete the program in as little as 2 years. The following conditions apply to a student's eligibility to remain in the EFO Program:

- Students must successfully complete at least 1 resident course per calendar year. (This is the minimum participation requirement to complete the program in 4 years; however, students may move through the program as quickly as course schedules and research writing permits.) The EFO Program administrator will identify and reach out to students who do not meet this requirement to determine an acceptable path

forward to ensure program completion within 4 years. This allows students to plan their coursework around their competing demands. Students are permitted 1 reschedule outside the scheduled semester. For example, if you are scheduled for fall 2024 and need to reschedule for fall of the following year, this will be your one-time reschedule. Failure to attend class without approval from the EFO Program administrator constitutes a no-show and will result in removal from the program.

- Students must score an 80% or above to pass each course. Failure to meet this requirement will result in the need to retake the class. Students will be provided the chance to retake 1 course throughout their time in the program. More than 1 required retake will result in removal from the program.
- Students are expected to notify Admissions at [crystal.arnold@fema.dhs.gov](mailto:crystal.arnold@fema.dhs.gov) and the EFO Program administrator at [tina.crevier@fema.dhs.gov](mailto:tina.crevier@fema.dhs.gov) of changes in contact information (e.g., email, phone number, mailing address, etc.).
- Students are expected to notify Admissions at [crystal.arnold@fema.dhs.gov](mailto:crystal.arnold@fema.dhs.gov) and the EFO Program administrator at [tina.crevier@fema.dhs.gov](mailto:tina.crevier@fema.dhs.gov) of any change to an employer or in position/title. The email must include an attached letter from the chief of department/agency head supporting the student's continued enrollment (Letter of Support).
- The EFO Program requires students to retain their service status. Students who do not hold one of the following ranks or positions within an agency will be removed from the program:
  - Chief of department or equivalent
  - Chief officers or equivalent who head major bureaus or divisions (e.g., suppression, prevention, training, EMS, etc.)
  - Chief officers and senior deputies of state governmental fire or EMS organizations (e.g., state fire marshals, state EMS directors, state directors of fire training, etc.)
  - Others who serve in key positions of authority or leadership
- Failure to notify Admissions or the EFO Program administrator of a change in rank or position may result in immediate removal from the program.
- Participants who cannot attend a course for which they are scheduled are required to notify the Admissions Office as soon as possible before the class begins; failure to do so may result in the future suspension of eligibility to attend NFA courses.
- Extension requests to the 4-year limit will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

## **Program Dismissal and Reinstatement**

Failure to maintain program eligibility, violation of student conduct or integrity standards, or failure to meet program completion criteria shall result in dismissal from the EFO Program. The student's sponsoring agency shall be notified when a student is dismissed.

Any student dismissed from the EFO Program for failure to maintain program eligibility, violation of student conduct or integrity standards, or failure to meet program completion criteria may request reinstatement from the NFA in accordance with the following:

- Request for reinstatement must arrive in writing at the NFA within 15 calendar days of the initial dismissal decision.
- The request should include the student’s justification for remaining in the program, supporting documentation and correspondence, and signed support of the student’s sponsoring agency. The respondent has the right to appear in person (at their own expense), have representation of their choice and present any witnesses. If the respondent elects to appear in person, notification must be included in the reinstatement request.
- The request will be reviewed by the EFO Program administrator, EFO training specialist and the branch chief of the Leadership and Partnership Branch. The NFA superintendent will render a decision as soon as practical based on the facts presented by the respondent and staff. The decision will be delivered to the student and the student’s sponsoring agency. The NFA superintendent’s decision is final.

## Executive Fire Officer Research and Writing

### Writing expectations: American Psychological Association style manual

Executive officers will follow the “Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association” (2020) as the sole citation and reference style used in written work submitted as part of course work to the NFA. Assignments completed in a narrative essay or composition format must follow the citation style presented in the APA style manual.

The NFA provides EFO Program students with a variety of resources and materials, to include comprehensive rubrics, guidance, instructions and the NETC Library and staff. The NFA’s academic programs are designed to be completed without students needing to engage in any external and expensive academic support services, but some students find that they want or need extra academic support. Accordingly, in addition to these free academic support tools, NFA policy allows EFO students to use outside services/vendors to proofread or format assignments prior to submission. However, it is important to note that according to NFA policy, contracted NFA instructors are not permitted to charge EFO students for academic assistance.

### Research integrity standards

The NFA is committed to maintaining and preserving the highest standards of integrity regarding the EFO Program. Participants and alumni are consequently affected when the EFO Program is associated with any unethical behavior committed by one of its participants.

The NFA enforces the appropriate standards of conduct for the completion of research and the potential penalties for engaging in any unethical behavior. **Plagiarism, falsification or misrepresentation in any writing assignments will not be tolerated.**

Research integrity, as explained in the Office of Research Integrity report referenced below, is the use of honest and verifiable methods in proposing, performing and evaluating research and includes (Steneck, 2007, p. 3):

Honesty — convey information truthfully and honor commitments.

Accuracy — report findings precisely and take care to avoid errors.

Efficiency — use resources wisely and avoid waste.

Objectivity — let the facts speak for themselves and avoid improper bias.

Individuals who engage in unethical behavior will be disciplined with one, some or all of the following actions:

- A return of all money expended or reimbursed by the U.S. government associated with the course, to include all travel expenses, room accommodations, books and an apportionment of the instructor’s salary.
- A return of the course certificate and (if applicable) the EFO Program completion certificate.
- A letter to the current employer with an accompanying explanation of the violation, stating that the certificate has been revoked.
- A 10-year prohibition on attendance at any residential NFA course.

EFO Program participants, graduates and others who discover suspicious work are strongly encouraged to report their findings to the EFO Program administrator or any NFA training specialist.

## Personally Identifiable Information

Do not include personally identifiable information (PII) within a CRP. Personal information refers to any item, collection or group of information about an individual or individuals that is maintained by an agency, including, but not limited to, education, financial transactions, medical history and employment history.

Examples of PII include date of birth, residential mailing addresses, residential telephone numbers, all or portions of Social Security numbers (SSNs), and vehicle identifiers, including license plate numbers. Authors are also cautioned not to include any other unique identifying number(s) or characteristic(s), or any information where it is reasonably foreseeable that the information will be linked with other information to identify the individual(s).

CRPs are considered government documents because they are completed as part of a federally funded and sponsored program. Therefore, due to requirements of Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (20 United States Code § 1232g; 34 Code of Federal Regulations Part 99), authors of CRPs are cautioned to ensure that a CRP does not include any PII.

## Supplemental Coursework

Executives who wish to expand upon specific skills, such as financial management or utilizing data management tools, are encouraged to consider supplementing the EFO Program required courses with the NFA courses listed below:

Course	Discussion
“Executive Planning” (R0506)	Course covers both strategic planning and project management. Tying both together provides value as they are mutually supportive concepts.
“Fire Service Financial Management” (R0333)	Course covers budgeting practices, best practices and presentation skills related to presenting to boards/commissions. Focuses on tying community expectations, priorities and outcomes to budget and how budget supports community needs.
“Administration of Public Assistance for Community Recovery” (R0335)	Discusses the Stafford Act and its processes, categories of funding, how to submit for funding, preparing documentation, and development of recovery and mitigation projects.

Independent of the NFA, executives who wish to improve on their writing skills may wish to consider the online [Center for Public Safety Excellence \(CPSE\) Advanced Technical Writing Certificate Program](#).

## **Executive Fire Officer Program Graduation**

Upon completion of “Applications in the Exercise of Leadership: Capstone II” (R5204), students will receive a graduate certificate and EFO pin at a formal graduation ceremony on the last day of class. Students will complete a graduation sheet that identifies their supervisor, U.S. senator(s), representative(s) and governor who shall receive notice of their achievement. This information will be provided to the supervisor that a participant specifies for official presentation of their graduate certificate. The congressional information will be used as a press release to notify members of Congress of the participant’s achievement. Graduates are listed in the graduate directory at [Executive Fire Officer Program Graduate Directory \(fema.gov\)](#).

## **Executive Fire Officer Program Graduate Symposium**

The Executive Fire Officer Program Symposium (R0120) is an annual event for alumni and EFO Program participants. While the symposium is open to all fire service leaders and related professions, priority in housing is given to EFO Program alumni. Current EFO Program students are encouraged to attend, and all fire service executives are welcome to bring their government management colleagues. Note: Each attendee must register through the Admissions process as they would for any course; however, there is no travel stipend for the symposium. Lodging is available. People using on-campus housing are required to purchase a meal ticket for the duration of their stay. Dates can be found on the NFA website.

The goals for this event are as follows:

- Provide a curriculum extension and update of the EFO Program.
- Recognize and spotlight outstanding and innovative research by select EFO Program students.
- Provide high-quality presentations by private and public sector representatives.
- Promote continuous dialogue among EFO Program graduates and USFA/NFA faculty and staff.
- Facilitate networking between EFO Program graduates and leaders in the fire and EMS profession.
- Officially recognize recent EFO Program graduates and research winners.

CRPs receiving a 95% and above will be submitted for the Manno Award. The winner of the Manno Award will be announced at the EFO Symposium.

## Executive Fire Officer Program Points of Contact

**Ed Kensler**, EFO training specialist, [edward.kenslerjr@fema.dhs.gov](mailto:edward.kenslerjr@fema.dhs.gov), 301-447-1158

- Course curriculum questions

**Tina Crevier**, EFO Program administrator, [tina.crevier@fema.dhs.gov](mailto:tina.crevier@fema.dhs.gov), 301-447-1107

- Program questions, scheduling concerns

**Dan Novak**, program support specialist, [daniel.novak@fema.dhs.gov](mailto:daniel.novak@fema.dhs.gov), 301-447-1069

- EFOHelp email inbox, data/analytics

**Crystal Arnold**, admissions specialist, [crystal.arnold@fema.dhs.gov](mailto:crystal.arnold@fema.dhs.gov), 301-447-1524

- Admissions/course scheduling



## Executive Fire Officer Program Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What if I cannot attend the assigned date?

A: If this is your first time rescheduling, contact Crystal Arnold in the admissions office at [crystal.arnold@fema.dhs.gov](mailto:crystal.arnold@fema.dhs.gov) requesting a new date. If this is **not** the first time to reschedule, contact Tina Crevier at [tina.crevier@fema.dhs.gov](mailto:tina.crevier@fema.dhs.gov).

Q: Can I book my airline reservation now?

A: You must wait until you receive official notification from the Admissions Office to book. This information was also provided in your welcome packet.

Q: When do I receive my graduate certificate?

A: Upon completion of your final course (R5204), a graduation ceremony will be held for graduate certificate presentation.

Q: How can I get a copy of the outstanding CRPs?

A: Contact the NETC Library at [fema-netclibrary@fema.dhs.gov](mailto:fema-netclibrary@fema.dhs.gov).

Q: Who do I notify if my flight is cancelled/delayed and it's the weekend?

A: Call Student Services (C Desk) at 301-447-1000.

Q: How do I get a copy of my NFA transcript?

A: Email [netcadmissions@fema.dhs.gov](mailto:netcadmissions@fema.dhs.gov).

Q: Who is my instructor for the class?

A: Within Blackboard, click on email heading followed by "All Instructor User." Here you can view who is listed as an instructor for your course.

Q: Can I get a course completion certificate reprint?

A: Contact Crystal Arnold at [crystal.arnold@fema.dhs.gov](mailto:crystal.arnold@fema.dhs.gov).

Q: Can you tell me how many students graduated from my state?

A: Visit [Executive Fire Officer Program Graduate Directory \(fema.gov\)](http://Executive Fire Officer Program Graduate Directory (fema.gov)).

Q: How do I link a social media account to my EFO graduate listing?

A: Email [FEMA-EFOHelp@fema.dhs.gov](mailto:FEMA-EFOHelp@fema.dhs.gov) with the requested information.

Q: Who do I contact if I cannot login to my course on the Blackboard LMS?

A: Email [nfaonlinetier2@fema.dhs.gov](mailto:nfaonlinetier2@fema.dhs.gov) confirming your user ID that you need reset.

Q: Who do I contact if I have questions with accessing course material on the Blackboard LMS?

A: Email [FEMA-EFOHelp@fema.dhs.gov](mailto:FEMA-EFOHelp@fema.dhs.gov) with your question.

Q: Can I have family members attend the graduation?

A: Yes, family members will have to fill out a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Access Form and return it to the EFO team. You can obtain this form by contacting [FEMA-EFOHelp@fema.dhs.gov](mailto:FEMA-EFOHelp@fema.dhs.gov)



## References

- American Psychological Association. (2020). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association: The official guide to APA style* (7th ed.).
- Steneck, N. H. (2007, August). *Introduction to the responsible conduct of research*.  
<https://ori.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/rcrintro.pdf>



## Appendix A: Executive Fire Officer Program Capstone Research Guidelines

### Introduction

This guide is designed to assist students enrolled in the NFA’s EFO Program to fulfill the research requirements of the program. The primary objective of the guide is to describe what is expected of students as they engage in the research process. In addition, it provides guidelines for students to follow in the preparation of the CRP.

Students perform original research, and foundational research considerations are provided incrementally throughout the program based on “Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches,” 5th edition, by John W. Creswell and J. David Creswell, 2018.



Research design components are embedded in the first 3 EFO Program courses and culminate in “Applications in the Exercise of Leadership: Capstone I” (M5104), in which instructors evaluate and provide detailed feedback on research elements through incremental writing assignments in preparation for the final submission.

Students must complete and submit the CRP prior to arrival on campus for the last EFO Program course, “Applications in the Exercise of Leadership: Capstone II” (R5204). The CRP must be submitted electronically. Upon successful completion of the last resident course, students are awarded the EFO Program certificate.

Subject matter experts and NFA staff review all CRPs to evaluate and potentially recommend exemplary EFO Program CRPs to be archived in the NETC Library. Students who demonstrate exemplary work are strongly encouraged to pursue publication in a peer-reviewed journal.

While examples from the Legacy EFO Program of Applied Research Papers (ARPs) may be helpful and are available by title or area of interest at the NETC Library, ARPs should not be cited in the CRP.

### What Is a Capstone Research Project?

The project selection for the CRP is designed to allow students to investigate a key issue or problem that has been identified as important to their fire service organization and community. The CRP is not intended to solve a task-level issue; **it must demonstrate strategic value to the organization and community.** To ensure relevancy, students are strongly encouraged to select a topic that falls within one of the critical issues discussed in the white paper “[21st Century Fire and Emergency Services](#)” (CPSE & International City/County Management Association [ICMA], 2020).

The capstone research process is designed to challenge and expand executive minds in relation to conducting thorough and responsible research to develop conclusions and recommendations based on empirical evidence. This process is intended to challenge executives to think strategically and more critically than they ever have before.

Note: The targeted community must be clearly defined within the parameters of the project and within the content of the paper. Typically, communities are defined in the context of physical or geopolitical boundaries, but the project should consider the impact of the selected topic on as many facets of the whole community as possible. FEMA identifies the whole community to include individuals and families, including those with access and functional needs; businesses; faith-based and community organizations; nonprofit groups; schools and academia; media outlets; and all levels of government including state, local, tribal, territorial and federal partners.

## **Selection of Research Topics**

Considerations for selecting a research topic:

1. The significance, originality, value and relevance of the topic or issue to the student's organization and community.
2. The relevance of the topic or issue to the critical areas within the white paper "[21st Century Fire and Emergency Services](#)."
3. The relevance of the topic or issue to the USFA's strategic goals. (Use the USFA website as the primary source when referring to the goal.)
4. The research depth, data collection and writing required for the selected topic must be manageable within 6 months to 1 year.

## **Research Proposal**

Students are provided preparation materials and have various opportunities throughout the program to solicit feedback from instructors on proposed research topics. Formal review of research proposals, preliminary literature searches and data collation methodology occur throughout the "Applications in the Exercise of Leadership: Capstone I" (M5104) course.

## **Evaluation Criteria**

The CRP will be evaluated based on the rubric provided in Appendix B: Capstone Research Paper Rubric (July 2023).

### **Evaluation/assessment policy statement**

Students will receive extensive evaluations on writing and research components during "Applications in the Exercise of Leadership: Capstone I" (M5104) and are expected to implement the feedback received for their final research paper submission in "Applications in the Exercise of Leadership: Capstone II" (R5204).

If a student does not pass the initial evaluation of the CRP made during R5204, the NFA will notify the student immediately. Issues that are easily remedied are adjudicated by the NFA and the student may be allowed to correct and resubmit the CRP while on campus if all other capstone elements are successfully met.

Students have only 1 opportunity for resubmission. Failure to pass the second review shall result in removal from the program.

## Capstone Research Paper Format

Executive officers will follow the “Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association” (2020) as the citation and reference style for the CRP. A CRP template is provided in M5104.

## Personally Identifiable Information

Do **not** include PII within a CRP. CRPs are considered government documents because they are completed as part of a federally funded and sponsored program. Therefore, due to requirements of the Privacy Act, authors of CRPs are cautioned to ensure that a CRP does not include any PII.

Personal information refers to any item, collection or grouping of information about an individual or individuals that is maintained by an agency, including, but not limited to, education, financial transactions, medical history and employment history.

Examples of PII include date(s) of birth, resident mailing addresses, resident telephone numbers, all or portions of SSNs, personal email addresses, ZIP codes, account numbers, certificate/license numbers, and vehicle identifiers including license numbers. Authors are also cautioned to not include any other unique identifying number(s) or characteristic(s) or any information where it is reasonably foreseeable that the information could be linked with other information to identify the individual(s). An example of a nuanced PII could be participation of 1 of only 2 individuals in a department.

## References

- American Psychological Association. (2020). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association: The official guide to APA style* (7th ed.).
- Center for Public Safety Excellence & International City/County Management Association. (2020). *21st century fire and emergency services* [White paper]. <https://www.cpse.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/21st-Century-Fire-and-Emergency-Services-White-Paper-Final-07.15.20.pdf>
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (5th ed.). SAGE.



## Appendix B: Capstone Research Paper Rubric (July 2023)

Chapter	Criteria category	Does not meet expectations	Approaching expectations	Meets most expectations	Exceeds expectations
		<b>0-1 Points</b>	<b>2-3 Points</b>	<b>4 Points</b>	<b>5 Points</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1</b>	<b>Introductory Research Criteria</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Problem statement is not present.</li> <li>References do not support the problem statement.</li> <li>Purpose statement is not present.</li> <li>Specific research methods are not identified:</li> </ul> <p>(A) Research questions/hypothesis are NOT clearly stated.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">AND</p> <p>(B) Hypothesis is not appropriate for research method identified.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Problem statement is not clearly and precisely defined.</li> <li>References do not support the problem statement.</li> <li>Purpose statement is not clearly and precisely defined.</li> <li>Specific research methods are not identified with sufficient detail:</li> </ul> <p>(A) Research questions/hypothesis are NOT clearly stated.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">OR</p> <p>(B) Hypothesis is not appropriate for research method identified.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Problem statement clearly and precisely defined.</li> <li>Utilized appropriate academic (peer-reviewed) references in support of the problem statement.</li> <li>Purpose statement clearly and precisely defined.</li> <li>Specific research methods identified.</li> </ul> <p>(A) Research questions/hypothesis clearly stated.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">OR</p> <p>(B) Hypothesis appropriate for research method identified.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All criteria from the previous category are met and exemplary.</li> <li>Identified deficiencies in existing studies.</li> <li>Demonstrates relevancy and is framed/communicated at the right level for the audience/reader.</li> <li>Research questions/hypothesis are focused, measurable and clearly articulated and able to address the research problem.</li> </ul>
	<b>Background and Significance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Background analysis of the stated problem is not clear or complete.</li> <li>Sufficient evidence is not provided to justify study from an organizational and community-level perspective, based on past, present and probable future impact.</li> <li>Relevant financial, cultural and ethical considerations are insufficient, or demographic and historical data are not present where necessary.</li> <li>Original research methodology is not communicated clearly.</li> <li>No clear, logical linkage established between the research problem topic and the literature and/or the critical issues identified in "21st Century Fire and Emergency Services" (CPSE &amp; ICMA, 2020) and the goals of the EFO Program.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Background analysis of the stated problem is not clear or complete.</li> <li>Sufficient evidence is not provided to justify study from an organizational and community-level perspective, based on past, present and probable future impact.</li> <li>Relevant financial, cultural and ethical considerations are insufficient, or demographic and historical data are not present where necessary.</li> <li>Original research methodology is not communicated clearly.</li> <li>Unclear linkage established between the research problem topic and the literature and/or the critical issues identified in "21st Century Fire and Emergency Services" (CPSE &amp; ICMA, 2020) and the goals of the EFO Program.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clear and complete background analysis of the stated problem.</li> <li>Sufficient evidence provided to justify study from an organizational and community-level perspective, based on past, present and probable future impact.</li> <li>Relevant financial, cultural and ethical considerations are sufficient, and demographic and historical data are present.</li> <li>Original research methodology communicated.</li> <li>Clear, logical linkage established between the research problem topic and the literature and/or the critical issues identified in "21st Century Fire and Emergency Services" (CPSE &amp; ICMA, 2020) and the goals of the EFO Program.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All criteria from the previous category are met and exemplary.</li> <li>Clearly links the research to critical issues contemporary to emergency services.</li> </ul>

<b>CHAPTER 2</b>	<b>Literature Review</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The minimum number of required peer-reviewed sources is not included.</li> </ul> <p>AND</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is no clear connection between the literature, the research questions and the methodology</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The minimum number of required peer-reviewed sources is not included.</li> </ul> <p>OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is no clear connection between the literature, the research questions and the methodology.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A minimum of 5 peer-reviewed journals.</li> <li>A minimum of 2 peer-reviewed journals cited in a discipline related to fire publications (e.g., public health, business, social science, psychology, etc.).</li> <li>Findings of others are incorporated.</li> <li>At least 3 of the peer-reviewed/scholarly sources published within the last 5 years.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All criteria from the previous category are met and exemplary.</li> </ul> <p>AND</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Citations are diverse, from a variety of authors and sources.</li> </ul>
	<b>Synthesis of the Literature</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The literature review lists sources but does not integrate or synthesize the literature. For example, the literature review may include relevant sources, but the literature review reads like a list of studies without critical evaluation of the source materials.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The literature review does not critically analyze the data. For example, the literature review may include relevant sources, but the literature review reads like a list of studies without critical evaluation of the source materials.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The literature review synthesizes the existing literature and a linkage from sources to the research questions/hypothesis, and methodology is clearly defined.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All criteria from the previous category are met and exemplary.</li> </ul> <p>AND</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Demonstrates a comprehensive review that involves associated research from at least multiple disciplines with logical linkages to the research topic.</li> </ul>

Research Approach and Ethics

<p><b>Research approach</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research approach is not scoped appropriately (e.g., too broad or narrow).</li> <li>• Research questions/hypothesis are not appropriate for the topic.</li> </ul> <p><b>Ethics</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conflicts of interest are not addressed.</li> <li>• Procedures to ensure subject privacy are not addressed.</li> <li>• Potential negative impact on participants and mitigation strategies are not addressed.</li> <li>• Does not address the security of data and integrity of analysis.</li> <li>• Ethical considerations are not sufficiently addressed.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Research approach</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research approach is scoped appropriately, but the scope of the study is not adequately described.</li> <li>• Research questions/hypothesis are not focused, measurable and clearly articulated.</li> </ul> <p><b>Ethics</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conflicts of interest are present but not adequately addressed.</li> <li>• Procedures to ensure subject privacy are described, but not adequately addressed.</li> <li>• Potential negative impact on participants and mitigation strategies are not adequately addressed.</li> <li>• The security of data and integrity of analysis is not described in detail.</li> <li>• Ethical considerations are not sufficiently addressed.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Research approach</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research approach is sufficiently scoped and detailed.</li> <li>• The selected data-gathering instruments/processes are provided and appropriate.</li> <li>• Field test is discussed if researcher is developing own instrument.</li> <li>• Research procedures (means of obtaining participants, means of collecting data and means for analysis) are sufficiently delineated to permit replication.</li> <li>• Variables and limitations noted to include explanation of data excluded from the study or statement that all data was used.</li> <li>• Explanation presented of considerations used to assure validity, reliability or trustworthiness during the data collection, analysis and interpretation.</li> </ul> <p><b>Ethics</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conflicts of interest (elements of coercion) and bias are addressed.</li> <li>• Addresses how subject privacy information is protected (confidentiality of participants)</li> <li>• Addresses potential negative impact on participants and mitigation strategies.</li> <li>• Addresses the security of data and integrity of analysis.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All criteria from the previous category are met and exemplary. AND</li> <li>• Research questions are focused, measurable and clearly articulated. AND</li> <li>• The selected data-gathering instruments/processes are appropriate and the process is explained thoroughly, allowing for the reader to replicate the work, should they wish. AND</li> <li>• Appropriate data collection type and thorough explanation of the choice as applicable to this study. AND</li> <li>• The variables are correct, with sufficient explanation of how they relate to the study. AND</li> <li>• Conflicts of interest, bias and confidentiality have been thoroughly explained and sufficiently justified.</li> </ul>
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<b>CHAPTER 3</b>	<b>Data Collection</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The selected data-gathering instruments/processes are not appropriate (e.g., will not measure what the study intends to measure).</li> <li>Procedures are not sufficiently delineated to permit replication.</li> <li>Variables and limitations do not include exclusion criteria (e.g., an explanation of data excluded from the study) or statement that all data was used.</li> <li>Explanation of considerations used to assure validity and reliability during the data collection, analysis and interpretation are not present in the document.</li> <li>Results and explanation of inferential statistics are not present. There is no clear relationship to the research questions/hypothesis is not included.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The selected data-gathering instruments/processes are appropriate, but not implemented properly.</li> <li>Procedures are only partially delineated to permit replication.</li> <li>Variables and limitations, while present, do not include a clear explanation of exclusion criteria (e.g., an explanation of data excluded from the study) or a statement that all data was used.</li> <li>Explanation of considerations used to assure validity and reliability during the data collection, analysis, and interpretation are not sufficiently described in the document.</li> <li>Results and explanation of inferential statistics are partially described. There is no clear relationship to the research questions/hypothesis is not included.</li> </ul>	<p><b>IF qualitative:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Types/strategies are appropriate for the research questions.</li> <li>Appropriate data collection type, with pertinent explanations.</li> <li>The selection/recruitment of participants is purposeful and of adequate numbers/sample size is defended.</li> <li>The research questions cannot be answered with a yes/no response.</li> </ul> <p><b>IF quantitative:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The population, sampling design and sample is appropriate and defended.</li> <li>Descriptive statistics of participant demographics, responses and/or observations are considered.</li> <li>Nonexperimental variables controlled (experimental only).</li> <li>The statistical test(s) is appropriate for the variables and purpose of the study.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All criteria from previous category are met and exemplary. AND</li> <li>Variables, limitations, and explanation of considerations ensuring validity, reliability or trustworthiness are thoroughly analyzed.</li> </ul>
<b>CHAPTER 4</b>	<b>Results Applied to Research Questions/Hypothesis</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Results/findings are not clearly and concisely stated in narrative form.</li> <li>Results/finding descriptions are not organized by research question.</li> <li>Detailed results of all procedures are not provided.</li> <li>Specific answers to original research questions are not provided, or the explanation of whether original hypothesis was supported by results, as appropriate, are not included.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Results/findings are in narrative form, but not clear or concise and do not describe the key findings with enough detail.</li> <li>Results/finding descriptions are disorganized or listed without appropriate explanations.</li> <li>There are missing procedures or inconsistencies between the methodology and reported findings.</li> <li>Specific answers to original research questions are not provided, or the explanation of whether original hypothesis was supported by results, as appropriate, are not included.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Results/findings clearly and concisely stated in narrative form.</li> <li>Results/finding descriptions organized by research question.</li> <li>Detailed results of all procedures provided.</li> <li>Specific answers to original research questions provided or explanation of whether original hypothesis was supported by results, as appropriate.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All criteria from the previous category are met and exemplary. AND</li> <li>Thorough description of relevant research results per research question.</li> </ul>

<b>CHAPTER 4</b>	<b>Data Findings</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Real data, in the form of quotes, tables and/or figures (with statistics) are not clearly presented, not correctly labeled, and/or contain inappropriate data.</li> <li>Themes not included in sufficient detail.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Real data, in the form of quotes, tables and/or figures (with statistics) are not clearly presented, not correctly labeled, and/or contain inappropriate data.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tables and/or figures are clearly presented, correctly labeled and contain appropriate data.</li> <li>Real data (statistics for quantitative study or quotes for qualitative study) are provided for support.</li> <li>Final product(s), such as instruments and study protocols, are included as an appendix.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Thorough evaluation and interpretation of the results as they relate to the original hypothesis or problem from which appropriate conclusions can be drawn.</li> </ul>
<b>CHAPTER 5</b>	<b>Recommendations and Conclusions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recommendations are not connected to the results.</li> <li>Recommendations are not supported by the data collected.</li> <li>Recommendations are not provided at the organizational level and for future readers.</li> <li>Recommendations for changing original assumptions or methods that can/should be made for future study are not included or sufficiently addressed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recommendations do not logically flow from the results.</li> <li>Recommendations are partially supported by the data collected.</li> <li>Weak recommendations are provided at the organizational level and for future readers.</li> <li>Recommendations for changing original assumptions or methods that can/should be made for future study are not included or sufficiently addressed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recommendations/ conclusions logically flowed from the results.</li> <li>Recommendations/ conclusions were supported by the data collected.</li> <li>Recommendations provided at the organizational level and for future readers.</li> <li>Recommendations for future research and policy (where applicable) are provided</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All criteria from the previous category are met and exemplary. AND</li> <li>Thorough discussion of the generalizability/ external validity of the study.</li> </ul>
	<b>Application and Limitations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limitations are not included.</li> <li>Application to the Field — Analysis focused on the “importance” of findings and the impact on the organization and community (APA, 2020, p. 91) is absent.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limitations are not clearly and thoroughly discussed.</li> <li>Application to the Field — Analysis focused on the “importance” of findings and the impact on the organization and community (APA, 2020, p. 91) is incomplete.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limitations experienced in the application or generalizability of the study are addressed.</li> <li>Application to the Field — “Reasoned and justifiable commentary of the importance of the study findings” and the impact on the organization and community (APA, 2020, p. 91) are provided.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Thorough discussion of the shortcomings, limitations or barriers within the study.</li> <li>Application to the Field — Thorough “reasoned and justifiable commentary on the importance of the study findings,” including the core contributions of the study.</li> </ul>

<b>GLOBAL</b>	<b>Overall Scholarship</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are egregious errors in grammar, punctuation, spelling, sentence structure and typing/editing style.</li> <li>• Reference lists and in-text references are not documented sufficiently.</li> <li>• APA style 7th edition guidelines are not correctly implemented.</li> <li>• Title does not reflect the nature of the study; correct NFA title page format is not followed.</li> <li>• Formatting is not aligned with the program handbook and guidelines.</li> <li>• Certification statement is not signed and included (may be built into the LMS).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project timeline was not adequately managed AND/OR feedback was not implemented/incorporated consistently across the entire capstone course.</li> <li>• There are errors in grammar, punctuation, spelling, sentence structure and typing/editing style.</li> <li>• Reference lists and in-text references are not documented sufficiently.</li> <li>• APA style 7th edition guidelines are not correctly implemented.</li> <li>• Title is not completely representative of the study.</li> <li>• Minor errors in formatting that are not aligned with the program handbook and guidelines.</li> <li>• Information and data are not accurate and current.</li> <li>• Minimum page requirements were not met.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Correct grammar, punctuation, spelling, sentence structure and typing/editing style (with few errors)</li> <li>• Reference lists and in-text references are documented.</li> <li>• APA style 7th edition guidelines are primarily correctly implemented.</li> <li>• Title reflects the nature of the study; correct NFA title page format followed.</li> <li>• Table of contents included all major headings; a list of tables provided if more than 1 is used; and appendices were listed and defined.</li> <li>• Certification statement signed and included.</li> <li>• All minimum page requirements were met.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All criteria from the previous category are met and exemplary.</li> <li>• Theories, principles and procedures were extensive and convincing.</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;">AND</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Very few errors in punctuation, spelling, professional/academic tone and/or capitalization. No word choice errors. Correct tense used throughout.</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;">AND</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All citations and references included, synthesized and paraphrased where applicable.</li> </ul>
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## Acronyms

AI	artificial intelligence
APA	American Psychological Association
ARP	Applied Research Paper
CPSE	Center for Public Safety Excellence
CRP	Capstone Research Paper
EFO	Executive Fire Officer
EMS	emergency medical services
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
ICMA	International City/County Management Association
LMS	learning management system
NETC	National Emergency Training Center
NFA	National Fire Academy
PII	Personally Identifiable Information
SSN	Social Security number
USFA	U.S. Fire Administration