

Arizona Center for Fire Service Excellence

Business Plan

04/08/10

Overview

It should be noted that there is no statutory authority with respect to the provision of fire service training within Arizona. By consensus of Arizona's fire service the fire service training and certification functions had been coordinated through the Arizona State Fire Marshals Office for many years but these functions were eliminated from the Fire Marshals Office on January 7, 2010 due to budget constraints. It was determined that Arizona's fiscal situation was such that there would be no opportunity to fund the training function through state government for the foreseeable future and Arizona's fire service, through AFSI, took immediate steps to establish an alternative mechanism to provide training and certification to Arizona's fire service. The Arizona Center for Fire Service Excellence (AzCFSE) is that mechanism.

The purpose of AzCFSE is to provide day-to-day management and coordination of the fire service training and certification processes within the State of Arizona. AzCFSE is responsible to the Arizona Fire Services Institute (AFSI) for governance, strategic guidance and policy direction. AFSI is a consensus body representing Arizona's fire service with participation from the Arizona Fire Chiefs Association, Professional Firefighters of Arizona, Arizona Fire District Association, Volunteer Firefighters of Arizona and the Metro Fire Chiefs. It is expected that AzCFSE will work closely with all stakeholder groups in establishing training programs and certification processes and that the transition from the programs and processes previously offered through the State Fire Marshals Office be as seamless as possible.

AzCFSE is established along corporate guidelines with the Executive Board of the Arizona State Fire Training Committee (ASFTC), an Arizona 501(c)3 not-for-profit corporation, serving as the Board of Directors for AzCFSE with respect to fiscal and management issues. The ASFTC Executive Board is responsible to AFSI with respect to overall program governance and policy direction. The ASFTC Executive Board, in conjunction with the full Arizona State Fire Training Committee, has the additional responsibility of managing the annual Arizona State Fire School, which responsibility is separate and distinct from any responsibilities associated with AzCFSE.

Assumptions

For purposes of planning and discussion the following assumptions were made in the development of this plan.

1. The fire service training and certification functions will remain separate from state government. While this is not intended to preclude the future possibility of returning these functions to state government it is felt that the complexities associated with that move were not appropriate for this plan.
2. Three planning terms are referenced within this document, short term, mid-term and long term. Short term refers to the period from plan implementation up to the 12 month point; mid-term refers to the period from 12 months up to 36 months; and long term refers to period extending past 36 months. It should be understood that the ability to move from one program phase to another will be dependent upon available funding.
3. The short term cost estimate indicated for funded positions is based on an hourly rate of \$21. This is comparable to the mid-point salary for similar positions as listed in the City of Avondale salary schedule and assumes that fully qualified individuals would be hired to fill the positions.
4. The organizational concept approved by AFSI at their regular meeting on March 10 is attached and considered an integral part of this document. It is expected that AzCFSE and AFSI meet in a special session no less than quarterly to discuss strategic direction and policy issues specifically related to the state training and certification program.
5. The Training Section of the Arizona Fire Chiefs Association (AFCA), has been a primary source for instructors and proctors and it is expected that AFCA will continue to be the primary source for the instructor cadre used to support the outreach training program

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and state certification process since AFCA will continue to provide errors / omission insurance coverage for instructors who are Training Section members. This is not intended to preclude instructors providing their own insurance or be covered by insurance provided by another Arizona fire service association which meets the coverage requirements of AzCFSE and lists AFSI and ASFTC as additional insureds for teaching/testing purposes.

6. AzCFSE will be able to continue to use the state Event Registration and Management Application (ERMA) for student record keeping purposes.

Funding

It is the intent of this plan to create a program that is self funded and relies solely on program generated revenue or appropriate grant funding. With that in mind it is recognized that over the short term significant volunteer assistance will be necessary to accomplish immediate program implementation and that contract personnel will be preferred as opposed to full-time employees. Over the short term, and in order to accomplish immediate program implementation, it will also be necessary to obtain initial start-up funding, in the form of no interest loans, from various Arizona fire service associations. These loans would be repaid as quickly as program revenue would permit with a goal of loan repayment over a period not to exceed two years. Over the mid to long term program revenue would be generated from course registration fees, administrative/certificate fees and grant support.

Staffing

Chief Executive Officer / State Training Director

The Arizona State Fire Marshal presently holds the additional title of State Training Director to maintain the state link to regional and national programs such as the National Fire Academy outreach programs and the Training Resources and Data Exchange (TRADE) network. The CEO / State Training Director is responsible for overall program management and serves as the interface between AzCFSE and Arizona's Fire Service. As there is presently no cost associated with this position the current arrangement should be continued for the short term. For the mid-term, once a stable funding stream has been stabilized this position should be funded and established within AzCFSE, most likely as a contract position. Over the long term the position should be created as an FTE with appropriate benefits within AzCFSE.

Short term cost - \$0.

Chief Operating Officer

The Chief Operating Officer is responsible for day-to-day office management and serves as the primary link between AzCFSE and the instructor cadre. The COO has overall responsibility for outreach program course coordination and managing the mechanics of course review and instructor and proctor credentialing. Over the short term this position is proposed to be filled on a voluntary basis by the Avondale Fire Chief until such time as a stable funding stream is established. For the mid-term the position would be funded on a full-time contractual basis and over the long term the position would be created as an FTE with appropriate benefits within AzCFSE.

Short term cost - \$0.

Chief Financial Officer

The Treasurer of ASFTC will serve as the CFO of AzCFSE and ASFTC will provide all necessary financial services including accounting and attorney services, bank accounts, and accounting software. Over the short term these services will be provided at no cost. For the mid-term the costs of these services associated directly with the operation of AzCFSE should be reimbursed to ASFTC. Over the long term it may be necessary to consider funding this position on a full-time contract basis.

Short term cost - \$0

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Executive Assistant

The Executive Assistant is responsible for management of all administrative aspects of the training and certification program to include record keeping and fiscal management. This position should be funded immediately and, over the short term, on a contract basis. Over the mid and long term the position should be created as an FTE with appropriate benefits within AzCFSE.

Short term cost - \$43,680

Information Technology Support Specialist

The Information Technology Support Specialist is responsible for management of all technology aspects associated with the program including maintaining the fire training and certification portions of the Event Registration and Management Application (ERMA) system, on-line program registration system, program website and program e-newsletter. This position should be funded immediately and, over the short term, on a contract basis. Over the mid and long term the position should be created as an FTE with appropriate benefits within AzCFSE.

Short term cost - \$43,680

Regional Coordinators

The regional coordinator concept was being implemented prior to the changes at the State Fire Marshals Office. This concept utilizes volunteer coordinators to assist in program and instructor coordination within their respective region and is being effectively utilized by several state training programs. It is the intent of this plan to continue the implementation of the regional coordinator concept as a means of supporting outreach training. In the short term there is no cost anticipated to be associated with the regional coordinators. In the mid to long term it is expected that some travel or other support related costs may be necessary.

Short term cost - \$0

Instructor / Evaluator Cadre

Certified Instructors, Instructor/Evaluators, and Proctors would be used on a contract basis, as was previously the case, to present programs and conduct certification testing processes. A primary resource for these individuals would be through the Arizona Fire Chiefs Association Training Section however qualified resources from other state associations could be utilized as well. AzCFSE would work closely with the various associations in establishing instructor, instructor/evaluator and proctor qualifications and in reviewing instructor and proctor qualification packets. Instructor fees and travel expenses are program specific and would be covered by the registration fee charged for the program or covered by the host agency. Over the short and mid-term instructor liability errors / omissions insurance would continue to be provided by the various associations or the individual instructor. Over the long term AzCFSE may need to consider obtaining an independent policy to cover its contract instructors.

Short term cost - \$0

Facilities

To support immediate implementation of the plan donated office space provided by Avondale Fire-Rescue will be utilized for the short term. While there would be no utility or facility use charges AzCFSE would be expected to fund any necessary office equipment, computers, telephone, phone/internet service, postage, office supplies or other office related expenses to support its operations. For the mid to long term separate office space should be indentified and the potential of sharing office space with AFCA or other state associations should be explored. AzCFSE will utilize the general mailing address for ASFTC for correspondence purposes.

Short term capital cost - \$8,000

Short term operating cost - \$4,000

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Records Management

The continued use of the state Event Registration and Management Application (ERMA) would be advantageous to both the student, since existing training records are housed there and ADEM continues to use the system, and to AzCFSE in that it would avoid the need to create an entirely new database management system and transfer existing records to a new system. The intent would be to use ERMA for student records management only. ERMA would be used in tandem with an on-line program registration system, such as RegOnline, which would be used to collect program registration information and fees.

Start up cost - \$20,000 (SFMO amount currently outstanding for initial program setup)

Annual operating cost - \$8,000

Program Types

AzCFSE Hosted Program

This is intended to be the primary method of program delivery and is a training/education program for which AzCFSE assumes responsibility for student registration and program costs. AzCFSE may work with a local agency to host the program. The type of certificate issued is dependent upon the specific course of instruction. Course registration fees will vary depending on costs associated with presenting the program but will include the cost of the appropriate certificate and ensure that each program offered is fully self sufficient.

Registered Program

A training/education program hosted by a local agency for which an AFSI Certificate of Completion is requested. This type of program would be an exception and most generally would restrict attendance to host department members only. The program must follow an approved curriculum with clearly established outcomes and be presented by a certified instructor meeting the qualifications to teach the course. Registered programs are hosted locally and the host agency is responsible for on-site coordination and instructor and program fees. Student registration will be conducted through ERMA. Student information will be forwarded to AzCFSE following completion of the program. Once received AzCFSE will verify student information in ERMA and will issue Certificates of Completion. The host agency is responsible for all program related costs, including instructor fees and travel if any. AzCFSE will assist the host agency in identifying appropriate instructors as necessary.

A fee of \$25 per student will be assessed to cover the administrative costs of record keeping and certificate issuance.

Certified Program

A formal course of instruction for which AFSI certification is requested. The program curriculum (lesson plan, audio/visual support and student text) must be reviewed and approved by AzCFSE and must comply with applicable national standards. The program must be presented or coordinated by a certified instructor. At the completion of the program a certification exam, which may include a practical skills evaluation, will be administered by AzCFSE. Students successfully completing all aspects of the course and evaluation process will be issued an AFSI certificate. Students will register for the exam process through the AzCFSE registration process and through ERMA for record keeping purposes.

A testing fee per student will be assessed to cover the administrative costs of curriculum review, record keeping, testing and certificate issuance. This fee is non-refundable should the student fail the evaluation process. The testing fee amount will vary depending on the testing complexity and number of proctors required (i.e. the fee to proctor a two hour written exam would be significantly less than the fee to proctor a two day, written and multi-station practical skills evaluation).

Accredited Program

An accredited program is an AFSI certified program which has been formally reviewed and approved for accreditation by the International Fire Service Accreditation Congress (IFSAC).

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An accreditation fee of \$25 per student (in addition to the certification fee) will be assessed for the issuance of an IFSAC seal. This fee will help offset the cost of the seals and maintaining the IFSAC accreditation process.

Sponsored Program

A training/education program or seminar for which AzCFSE partners with other entities for program presentation. AzCFSE may or may not participate in a cost/revenue sharing agreement with the partner agencies and an AFSI certificate of completion may or may not be issued to program participants.

Short Term Budget

A start-up funding loan request of \$12,000 would be made from each of the following state fire service associations: ASFTC, AFCA, PFFA, VFFA and AFDA to cover the ERMA start-up costs and the first 6 months of operation. A loan request of \$6,000 would also be made of the State Fire School to assist with the ERMA start-up costs. ASFTC would also be asked to submit a VFA grant request in the amount of \$20,000 on behalf of AzCFSE to support the outreach training program. Deadline for grant submission is April 9.

Start Up Funding

Association Loans	\$ 60,000
State Fire School Loan	\$ 6,000
VFA Grant	\$ 20,000
Total	\$ 86,000

Projected Budget – Year 1

Revenue

Certification certificates	\$ 30,000	(assumes 300 FF I/II students)
Completion certificates	\$ 25,000	(assumes 50 programs, 20 students each)
Fire school certificates	\$ 20,000	(assumes 800 students)
Course fees revenue	\$ 22,500	
Grant funding	\$ 20,000	
Total	\$117,500	

Accreditation	\$ 7,500
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Expenditures

Staff	\$ 87,360
Office capital	\$ 8,000
Office operating	\$ 4,000
ERMA operating	\$ 8,000
Total	\$107,360

ERMA start-up	\$ 20,000
IFSAC site visit	\$ 7,500
IFSAC seals	\$ 2,000

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Operations Plan

There are a number of issues relating to day-to-day operations that need to be developed into a comprehensive operations plan that would be a companion document to the business plan. The operations plan should be developed by the COO / Regional Coordinators / Association representatives within the next 30 days and should include an outline of the following as a minimum:

- Course development process
- Curriculum review process
- Instructor / Evaluator qualifications / review process
- Instructor insurance requirements
- Verification of existing instructor / evaluator status
- Course scheduling / Instructor assignments
- Regional schools
- Certificate design
- IFSAC Accreditation
- Website
- ASFTC equipment disposition / storage (audio visual and other support supplies)
- Other operations related issues

Uncompleted Certification Programs

When the state training program ceased operations there were 30 certification programs affecting 486 students that were left in limbo. All programs/students have been issued refunds but a process to address their incomplete status should be developed and communicated to these programs/individuals as quickly as possible. Evaluation processes should be re-established immediately for these programs using existing proctors who would be scheduled through AzCFSE. It should be made clear that it is AzCFSE's goal to re-establish IFSAC accreditation and that any evaluation would be completed in compliance with IFSAC guidelines and that accreditation seals would be provided to these programs as soon as accreditation has been re-established with IFSAC. These programs could be an immediate source of revenue for AzCFSE.

Accreditation

Arizona's accreditation status was suspended when the state training program ceased operations. A grace period until September 1 was granted by IFSAC and the CEO and COO should contact IFSAC prior to April 16 to discuss Arizona's accreditation status and determine the steps that need to be taken to re-establish the accreditation process within Arizona as quickly as possible. The specific impact the accreditation process may have on the short term budget is unknown at this time but it is anticipated that the costs for a site visit would be offset through revenue generated through the issuance of accreditation seals.

Implementation Schedule

- April 8 - Business plan reviewed by ASFTC Executive Board
- April 14 - Business plan presented by ASFTC to AFSI
 - Authorization to proceed from AFSI / initial funding requests submitted
- April 15 - AFCA Board Meeting
- April 16 - Meeting to develop draft Operations Plan
- April 23 - Staff contracts approved
- April 30 - Facility preparations complete
 - Discussion of Operations Plan with AFCA Training Section
- May 3 - Staff begins work
 - Press release on business plan implementation
- May 10 - Letters sent to certification programs in "limbo" advising of steps to follow to schedule exams
- May 12 - Operations plan / certificate design presented to AFSI
- May 13 - Press release on operations plan implementation
- May 21 - ASFTC meeting