

NORTHEAST KINGDOM CONSORTIUM
REGIONAL FIRE SERVICES FEASIBILITY STUDY
CONSOLIDATED LISTING OF RECOMMENDATIONS
APRIL 2021

Prepared by:



Municipal Resources, Inc.
66 Main Street, Suite B
Plymouth, New Hampshire 03264
mrigov.com
Phone 603-279-0352

CONSOLIDATED RECOMMENDATIONS



Chapter III

- III-1: Each town or a group of towns should develop a five-year plan to enhance training documentation and water supply inspection, and flow testing to move toward reclassifying the ISO ratings.***
- III-2: A group of towns should develop a ten-year plan to enhance training, documentation, water supply inspection, flow testing, and emergency telecommunications operations to move toward reclassifying the departments to an even lower ISO rating.***
- III-3: Each department should conduct a thorough Community Risk Assessment and use the assessment as a tool to move the department into the future. Over the next year, plan should be developed to utilize strengths to pursue opportunities and address weaknesses while mitigating threats. This should be an ongoing process that has member involvement and is moved forward by the officer core.***
- III-4: The Consortium should sponsor periodic workshops and focus groups to implement the recommendations in this report and identify opportunities for collaboration and review industry best practice regional initiatives.***

Chapter IV

- IV-1: Each community within the Consortium should evaluate response times and work to improve these times to save lives and prevent property damage.***
- IV-2: Each community within the Consortium should be asked to identify an appropriate service level/Standard of Cover and if service gaps exist these gaps should be quantified and addressed through a collaborative effort by the Consortium.***
- IV-3: Every effort should be made to preserve the primary responder role of on-call personnel and expand membership within each individual Fire Department.***
- IV-4: If the average response time to emergencies exceeds the industry standard of 14 minutes (other than to remote areas with a travel distance greater than 8 miles), this service deficit should be brought to the attention of the Board of Selectmen and the community as a whole.***

Chapter V

V-1: Fire Departments in the Consortium should require firefighters, and strongly encourage its fire officers, to obtain appropriate Pro-board certification levels. Examples of appropriate certification levels are listed in the table below:

Rank	Certification Level
Firefighter	Firefighter I/II
Fire Lieutenant	Fire Officer I
Fire Captain	Fire Officer II
Deputy Fire Chief	Fire Officer III
Fire Chief	Fire Officer IV

V-2: Fire Departments in the Consortium should require that all officers be certified as Incident Safety Officers (ISO). Additional personnel who may be interested should be encouraged to take this training and obtain this important firefighter safety certification.

V-3: As part of the succession planning process, the Fire Chiefs should work to implement a professional development program to ensure that all officers can perform their superior's duties, as well as identify the core future leaders of the department.

V-4: All Departments in the Consortium should continue to foster, support and incent any member to be trained and certified to the Firefighter I and preferably the Firefighter II level.

V-5: Working with the training officer, additional training should be planned delivered and documented. To keep members interested in training the department should be creative and offer training that is outside the normal programs. Making programs fresh, fun and to some degree competitive, may increase the participation by members. If it's the same old training, people will lose interest. Make it so they want to participate and at the same time meet training goals.

V-6: To increase training attendance and participation, Departments within the Consortium should consider providing meals as part of each training program.

V-7: Training content should be consistent and planned through the Consortium. Regional training with mutual/automatic aid partners should be scheduled bimonthly.

- V-8:** *If a member is unable to attend training in their local Department, they should have the flexibility to attend training in another Department. It is essential that the host department welcome participation from other departments.*
- V-9:** *In consultation and cooperation with its neighboring departments, all Fire Departments should enter into formal automatic aid agreements that specifies the number and types of resources that should be dispatched immediately to various types of reported emergencies, such as structure fires. These recommendations should be based upon a community-wide risk management process and/or pre-fire/incident plan.*
- V-10:** *Although more stringent than the requirements found in Table 4.3.2 of NFPA 1720 for rural communities, through the utilization of automatic aid agreements with neighboring communities, Fire Departments should consider the adoption of an SOC with the goal of attempting to have at least 16 personnel respond to any reported structure fire.*
- V-11:** *The Fire Departments should make it a priority to improve its first unit on scene response times, including the adoption of a SOC, for the town. The SOC should be based upon a hybrid of the NFPA 1710/1720 and Commission on the Accreditation of Ambulance Services (CAAS) recommendations.*
- V-12:** *The Fire Departments should work with the communities listed on each of the “run cards” to assure the number and qualification of staffing, that will be sent on the assignments. In order to be able to meet a safe level of on scene staffing, it will be important to know not only what the department will be receiving and how long it will take, but also to outline what each town will be sending, when these communities request resources from them.*
- V-13:** *Review the department roster and look to the members with low participation and find out what can be done to increase their involvement. Work with these members to increase their participation within a pre-determined time frame.*
- V-14:** *The Fire Department should set a minimum criterion for members to remain in active status. This criterion should include both minimum training and response to incidents for a determined time period (one year). This criterion should also allow for people to go into an inactive status for a period of time due to approved circumstances. It would be important for inactive-status people to make up any important training prior to being put back on active status.*
- V-15:** *The town should consider encouraging members of Police Departments that live in the area to become on-call firefighters.*
- V-16:** *The Fire Departments should work with their Road Agents to ensure that on-call firefighters are given preference when DPW personnel are hired. If on-call members*

are not interested and or qualified the town should hire personnel that are willing to become an on-call firefighter as a condition of employment.

- V-17:** *Unless critical DPW operations are underway, DPW personnel that are on-call firefighters should respond to emergencies to supplement staffing and assist in meeting the OSHA Two-in Two-Out Standard.*
- V-18:** *Towns either individually or jointly should apply for a federal SAFER grant for on-call recruitment and retention. This grant should be utilized to develop a comprehensive marketing program to attract new members, and provide incentives for the retention of those personnel, such as tuition reimbursement, health care benefits, tax abatements, etc. This competitive grant requires a lot of time and dedication to write and to be successful to obtain.*
- V-19:** *All Consortium Communities should recognize that the only way to develop a more active and properly staffed fire department in the absence of hiring a larger force of career firefighters is to determine what would motivate potential responders; and craft a program of investment that meets these extrinsic and intrinsic needs.*
- V-20:** *All Consortium stakeholders should jointly convene a focus group to determine what concepts and recruitment and retention strategies are feasible and most attractive to potential candidates.*
- V-21:** *Fire Departments in the Consortium should set a realistic goal of recruiting at least 6 to 8 new members over the next three years, and simultaneously set a goal of increasing the overall force by a minimum of 10%. These personnel should be required to be properly trained and certified to the Firefighter I/II level, and preferably to the minimum of EMR level.*
- V-22:** *All Departments should make it a priority to develop an active on-call recruitment program led by a Chief Officer. At a minimum, this program should consist of the following elements:*
- 1. Developing a recruitment brochure and mailing it to all residents*
 - 2. Holding periodic open houses at the fire station*
 - 2. Performing public outreach through the local media*
 - 3. Contacting community and service groups*
 - 5. Developing an eye-catching banner on the town's and fire department's web sites*
- 1. Placing signs recruiting call/volunteer personnel at the main entrances to town*
 - 2. Placing a temporary sign board at various locations within the community*
 - 3. Placing signs for call/recruiting volunteers in local businesses, particularly high-volume locations*

4. *Implementing a fire explorer program*
5. *Radio and media advertisements*
6. *Although time consuming, consideration should also be given to conducting a door-to-door recruitment campaign of every residence in the town.*
7. *The proposed SAFER Grant could be utilized to cover many of the above expenses.*

V-23: *The Fire Chief within each community should develop a social media presence and involve other members of the department in this endeavor. The use of social media like Facebook and Twitter are what the younger generation use and a very active social media account can reach out to this group of people for hiring.*

V-24: *The Fire Chief or his designee should create a quarterly "newsletter" that will highlight the positive things that the department has done the prior months. This newsletter should be posted on the town's web page, shared in social media, shared with the Board of Selectmen. It is important that the public is made aware of all the great people and all the good things the department does.*

V-25: *The towns and the Fire Departments should attempt to enter into partnerships with local businesses to allow their personnel to respond, when needed, to emergency incidents during working hours, without any financial penalty.*

V-26: *The towns should explore the feasibility of utilizing, and in fact encouraging, town employees to perform "dual roles" by serving not only in their full-time positions, but also serving the town as call firefighters and/or rescue personnel. Caution is needed here though as there are provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act that would be applicable, particularly if these personnel respond to incidents during times when they are not working.*

V-27: *Fire Departments should develop a series of team-based activities that build involvement in the organization. Once established on the local level, program should be developed regionally within the Consortium.*

V-28: *All officer positions, from lieutenant to fire chief, should be filled based upon the person's firefighting/emergency services training, certifications, and experience, commensurate with the position being sought, along with successful completion of a formal, rank appropriate assessment process, and a basic practical skills evaluation.*

V-29: *The Consortium fire departments should ensure that all department members are trained certified to the minimal NIMS level required for their duties/responsibilities and ranks. In addition to the basic I-100/I-700 training mandated; it is MRI's recommendation that all officers should be trained to the ICS-300 level. All chief level officers should be trained to the ICS-400 level.*

V-30: *The Consortium should regularly access the National Volunteer Fire Council web site for cooperative programs they have posted. One of the newer programs is looking to attract returning or former military personnel into the fire service.*



Chapter IX

- IX-1:** *Each department should identify and prioritize its most critical equipment, training and/or operational needs, and apply annually to the Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) program. This should include making applications for apparatus capital replacement projects that will otherwise be funded through the town's capital budget and at town meeting.*
- IX-2:** *Towns should actively continue to search for other grant opportunities. Grants for fire protection, fire safety, fire prevention, domestic and emergency preparedness, and homeland security may be available from federal, state, corporate, and foundation sources.*
- IX-3:** *Towns should actively seek out businesses that may be interested in establishing public/private partnerships that could provide, or assist with, funding for various programs, projects, or initiatives.*
- IX-4:** *Towns should expand its formal replacement plan for equipment. The regular replacement of large cost items such as hose, ladders, PPE, portable radios, AEDs, and even SCBA on an incremental basis will avoid major one-time increases in the annual operating budget where such purchases should be funded. For instance, the hose and ladders on one vehicle can be replaced in one fiscal year, another the following year, etc. The life expectancy of these items can be estimated based on usage and manufacturer's recommendations. Items such as hose and ladders can remain in service indefinitely, provided they continue to successfully pass their annual tests.*
- IX-5:** *The Consortium should consider providing a regional reserve apparatus set including an engine, a tanker and a 4-wheel drive brush unit that could bolster the overall apparatus set and avoid duplication as these units could be used by a member community when one of their vehicles is out of service.*

Chapter XII

- XII-1** *Working collaboratively the Consortium should explore the feasibility of developing a pilot program to implement a regional-based Mobile Integrated Healthcare (MIH) program. The purchase of needed equipment could be accomplished through a lease in arrears. Utilizing this fiscal strategy, the first payment for vehicles or equipment would be one year after delivery enabling revenue to accumulate from MIH services. This program could be incrementally be expanded based on the proven success of the pilot program.*
- XII-2** *Initial staffing of this MIH unit should be Monday to Friday from 8:00 AM to 8:00 PM during peak hours. It should be staffed with one fulltime Basic EMT and one fulltime Paramedic who could be cross trained to staff a portion of the RRF.*
- XII-3** *The current emergency responders serving the 7 towns that makeup the Consortium are dedicated individuals who have provided an immeasurable service to their communities. This resource should not be overlooked. Any response from a regional resource should still incorporate the tiered first response from local responders to begin initial assessment, treatment, and care prior to the arrival of any MIH units.*
- XII-4** *The 9-1-1 Communications Centers should meet with the Medical Director and review all Computer Aided Dispatch cards and protocols. All emergency medical calls for service into the Communications Center are vetted through Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD).*
- XII-5** *The collaborating communities should establish a fund for collection of revenue for any response by MIH resources. These funds for service should be available to be put towards future operations of a possible fire-based EMS system and not back into the general fund of any one community.*
- XII-6** *Any EMS providers who are not doing third party billing for MIH or EMS services should implement a policy to do so ASAP, in order to provide a revenue offset to their operating expenses.*