

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this Evaluation Report is to relay process and the effectiveness of the WorkStrong® Partnership between Women Helping Women (WHW) and the City of Cincinnati (City), including evaluation and insights from Phase 1 Cincinnati Fire Department (CFD) training carried out for Department leadership.

WHW has had a strong ongoing partnership with the City over the years, and closely partnered in 2018 through engagement in the Mayor's Gender Equality Taskforce, with the purpose of conducting a two-year gender study across all City departments. Through that process, a CFD Workplace Environment Initiative survey was conducted examining the work environment and culture in which feedback on differential treatment, safety and response based on gender was evident.

Coming out of the study, The City first engaged WHW to deliver WorkStrong® training for City leadership and the Department of Transportation and Engineering.

WorkStrong® is a corporate certification program designed to create change in the workplace by building capacity of employers to empower leaders and employees with support, resources, and connections. The course focuses on identifying Gender Based Violence (GBV), an umbrella term for dating violence, intimate partner violence, domestic violence, sexual assault, including sexual harassment and stalking; ability to identify the signs of GBV in the workplace; awareness and application of bystander intervention techniques; and access to resources.

While we may not think GBV is a workplace issue, we know what happens at home, flows into the street, and walks into the workplace. Data shows us;

- 1 in 3 women and 1 in 7 men will experience domestic violence in their lifetime
- 96% of individuals who experience gender-based harm report **their work performance suffered.**
- 60% of intimate-partner violence survivors report **losing their job.**
- 87-94% of employees experiencing harassment **do not file a formal complaint.**

Planning and Preparation

In November 2022, City HR Deputy Director connected with the agency to explore training for CFD. WHW met with City and Fire Leadership on December 15 to outline goals and expectations for WorkStrong® training with the Cincinnati Fire Department (CFD).

A phased approach was presented with discussion on best mode of delivery to reach full workforce, beginning with an in-person phase for leadership spanning from Fire Chief to Lieutenants, 2) Online Modules for remaining workforce, 3) In-person training for each new recruit class 4) Train-the-trainer to equip key City leaders to lead the training in-house. At conclusion of that meeting, Phase 1 training was expected to launch in late March/ early April, which would position the agency to use the first quarter of 2023 to review policies and have informational meetings with key stakeholders to customize the training to Fire

Department, ensuring relevant scenarios, specific callbacks to policy, and direct resources. This process was disrupted by communication from Fire Chief expediting the timeline to the beginning of February, announced four working days before sessions were set to begin and before an agreement between WHW and the City had been fully executed. That short window did not allow for the intentional process of information gathering and building custom curriculum, and created urgency to gather the accurate resources that are a key takeaway from the training.

It also shifted the approach in the makeup of each session, differing from the proposed cohorts by rank, to all leadership integrated throughout the sessions without opportunity for discussion or thoughtful planning to understand what the composition of each session would be. Instead communicated as "we'll get whoever we get." This was projected to be eight people per session over 36 sessions in the span of three weeks, which in reality ranged with some sessions having up to as many as 21 participants, others having as few as 1 person, and 8 sessions with no attendees. WHW Team adjusted to meet the needs of this range.

Participant Learning and Feedback

Overall, participant learning had positive change in each of the three learning outcomes, with significant increase (82%) in individuals' ability to provide resources for survivors of gender-based violence. Echoing feedback in the affirmative was the direct and interactive nature of the training and its ability to promote an important conversation while keeping the environment free from judgement.

The most significant gap however, was with regards to the of the content's relatability to the fire department, with participants citing need for deeper understanding of department culture and policies. WHW team addressed that feedback by updating and re-designing course curriculum in real-time to incorporate videos and studies specific to fire departments that reflected the main curriculum areas and to more directly create a connection between concept and unique experience in firehouses. Those immediate shifts led to improved engagement and dialogue around the subject matter. This increased dialogue informed and supported continuous learning session over session.

More insight to participant feedback and learning are available in:

Appendix A- Phase 1 Summary

Appendix B- Raw Training Data

WHW Insights

Impacted by the short timeframe, there was initial misrepresentation of the engagement as sexual harassment training, which impacted the way some participants showed up in the space or their openness to engage in the content, feeling like it was punitive or that it was in response to actions others had engaged in, and now they were being disciplined for those actions. WHW trainers more intentionally framed the training at the beginning of each session, as well as the overall relationship with the City to counteract those initial impressions.

While written participant feedback we also received verbal and indirect feedback from participant experience. Throughout the three week engagement we heard substantial feedback about the relevance and impact of the training.

Throughout the sessions, there were key discussions by officers that fell into three main themes:

1. Realization of the impact of gender-based violence particularly for female firefighters in the workforce, and understanding that it's everyone's responsibility to hold accountability.

The curriculum presented statistics about GBV generally and specific to fire departments. Including data from the National Report Card on Women in Firefighting showing significant differences by gender in treatment, verbal and physical harassment, sexual advances and sexual assault. Through discussion of these statistics, conversations were raised where individuals, based on their own experiences and lens, varied from believing that the data was surprising or not surprising, and varied views on how they have seen those behaviors present in CFD. In one particular group, a male participant shared that they had never seen these behaviors play out in the Department, and that the majority response of the group to the statistics being unsurprising meant that there is a widely known understanding that these behaviors occur. A female participant in response shared that while he may not observe or be aware of these behaviors, she has experienced all of them short of sexual assault. Another male participant then shared how the prior year he had just learned of all the instances another female colleague had experienced despite working together for many years and having a close friendship. This discussion, and others like it, gave voice to the responsibility for all firefighters to recognize and be accountable for creating safe and inclusionary environments. And that while this is not exclusive to female firefighters, that there does need to be recognition of how shifting demographics in the Department disproportionately impact women.

2. Recognition that behaviors falling into the umbrella of gender-based violence are present in the Department, and that is an accepted part of the culture.

A number of groups, primarily those where no female participants were present, shared stronger sentiments and resistance to the idea that they needed to "police" what people say and do; one such statement in response to a bystander scenario of using language derogatory to women, noting that it happens everyday. We also heard examples of issues arising based on television content that some found to be inappropriate and others feeling like it is the individual's responsibility to remove themselves from the environment. Trainers used opportunities like these to refer back to behaviors in the "spectrum of violence" that range from annoying and bothersome to criminal and deadly, including exclusion, sexist jokes, comments about appearance, sexually explicit content, homophobic and transphobic comments, and more.

Themes also arose addressing the ineffectiveness of the current chain of command reporting structure that creates conditions where complaints and reports are not properly documented, reviewed, or addressed and where relationships and status determine the outcomes.

3. Sentiments that the problem lies with key leadership, namely Fire Chief, and that needs to be addressed in a comprehensive way before it can be modeled across the Department.

Through written survey feedback and communication post-training, participants shared their concerns and frustrations that such a training, while objectively effective, cannot be taken seriously when problematic behaviors are modeled by current leadership, citing examples (found in the raw survey data document) of language and actions that perpetuate "boys club" mentality.

There were also thematic mentions of misalignment with the the Assistant Chief in the HR Division.

Overwhelmingly, from female participants, we heard that their voices are not engaged or present in leadership decisions, including promotional panels, and a sentiment of zero confidence in issues of harassment being adequately addressed by City.

Following the training we received calls to our hotline and directly to staff for support.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, Phase 1 engagement met the intended learning outcomes of the training and engaged most of the projected workforce (202 out of 204 anticipated participants). Through direct survey feedback the benefit of the training was evidenced through increased skills and knowledge. Through indirect feedback, the benefit and need was heard and echoed by relaying how the information has applied to past and current experiences and the challenges in reporting and addressing those incidents, though there are still beliefs that this was a "checking of the box." We know through verbal feedback post training, that the content of the training is being minimized at times through jokes about use of bystander intervention methods, and that some female firefighters involved in the Women's ERG group being directly impacted by statements that they are creating this issue. While the training was effective, the conditions can best be met through systems and culture change.

The following is a summary of key recommendations for future actions:

- 1.Reinforce subject matter from the training by periodically incorporating health checks at command staff meetings.
- 2.Structure a recurring engagement with City leadership, Women's ERG group and Fire Department leadership to address workplace issues
- 3.Enact a policy to automatically enact City HR presence, for claims that fall into Administrative Regulations 25, 49, 55, and 52 as a way to provide additional oversight and accountability beyond internal Fire Department
- 4.With a workforce of thousands, the reality of GBV is statistically present. Building on training of DOTE and CFD, extend WHW engagement to reach all City employees through an online platform, or in-person by department as identified.