

**A NEEDS ASSESSMENT REPORT FOR
CONNECT VOLUNTEER FIRE
DEPARTMENTS AND LOCAL
GOVERNMENTS**

**Building
Collaborative
Capacity - 2022
Needs Assessment**



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The views and opinions expressed in this Report are those of the primary author and CONNECT staff and do not necessarily reflect the views or positions of any individuals, partners, or entities they represent.

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Executive Summary

Pennsylvania's volunteer fire departments (VFD) face a time of great change.

Declining volunteerism, budget shortfalls, and an increased need to respond to calls have negatively impacted VFDs. More pressure has been placed on municipal governments and its VFDs to respond to the alarming number of media articles on slower response times, recruitment issues, and the high level of apparatus in the region. Meanwhile the effects of COVID-19 on municipal and VFD budgets have caused further strain on the ability to fundraise and support the work of our first responders. Combined with shifting population demographics, these issues have culminated into a crisis. But meaningful change is occurring and the future of fire services can start today with leadership and vision from VFD chiefs and their elected officials collaborating together on these issues to form coordinated solutions.

This report is a culmination of the research from the Congress of Neighboring Communities (CONNECT) on the status of CONNECT VFDs.

Using a mixed-methods study of interviewing the region's stakeholders and analyzing the current level of apparatus, this report sets out key recommendations that municipal leaders can issue today to support their own communities and their neighbors. Allegheny County (which holds 130 municipalities) and CONNECT (which holds 42 municipalities) face the enormous task of bringing leaders from each of these communities together to collaborate and solve a regional challenge. But while there is a clear need for broader shared services for VFDs, there is also significant evidence that a coordinated model with regional support can be created while also maintaining autonomy for the region's VFDs. Whether through developing a municipal authority, or filing inter-municipal agreements, CONNECT's municipalities can act today to solve the challenges of fire services by collaborating regionally.

Many regions in the United States have been facing similar issues with fire service delivery.

The volunteer fire crisis in Pennsylvania has been a conversation topic since 1970, when the Governor's Commission on Fire Prevention and Control released "Pennsylvania Burning." The solutions for improving fire services are well-established. We have the skills, knowledge, and power to make the change.

We all just need to take that first step together.

Key Recommendations

These recommendations are based on the completed CONNECT needs assessment that surveyed collaborative capacity levels within CONNECT municipalities and fire departments. These recommendations were developed from extensive interviews with municipal and fire officials, as well as discussions with subject matters experts, county officials, and state officials. **The author of this report recommends municipal leaders:**

Institute the Public Safety Authority Model

Municipalities in CONNECT should negotiate to form a public municipal authority with the purpose of providing either coordinated regional fire service delivery or coordinated administrative support to volunteer fire departments.

Codify Future Collaboration through MOUs

Municipal leaders and fire chiefs should file and sign Memoranda of Understandings to commit towards greater collaboration through instituting regular strategic planning, quarterly reviews, and a willingness to share resources, information and capacity with an eye towards the future.

Develop or Reinstate Future of Fire Steering Committees

Municipal leaders and their fire chiefs should agree to meet quarterly to discuss operational challenges, opportunities, any potential threats, and current resources to build broader collaborative capacity for the future. This can be continued through the development of steering committees.

Engage in Strategic Planning

Municipal leaders should demonstrate commitment by engaging in continuous strategic planning with other municipalities, and undertake a regional strategic planning process.

Form Joint Cooperative Facility for Engagement and Innovative Training

Results from the needs assessment suggest many fire and elected officials would benefit from shared training. The coordination and implementation of a joint training facility to spur collaboration and connections between both fire chiefs and elected officials would support two key goals for the future of fire services

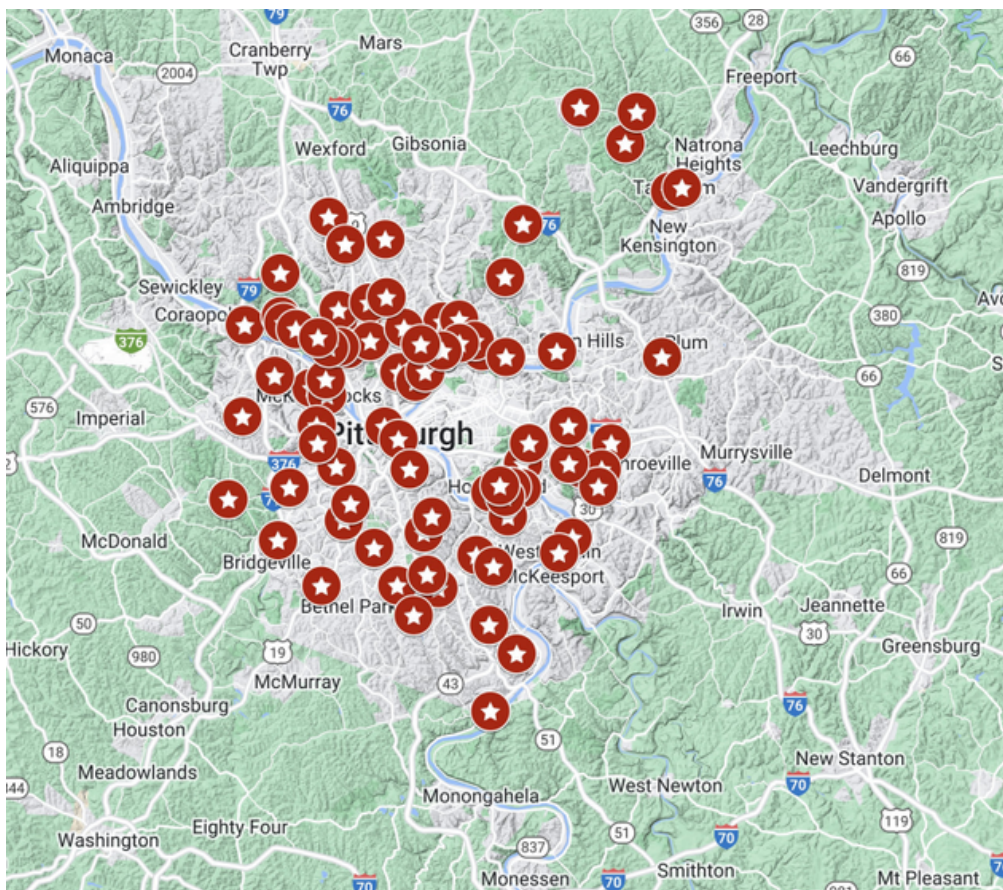
See Page 23 for Expanded Recommendations

About this Report

In 2020, the Congress of Neighboring Communities (CONNECT) officially resolved to better understand the difficulties facing CONNECT Volunteer Fire Departments (VFDs) within Allegheny County. This decision came from a 2019 CONNECT research report that found a surprisingly high level of fire apparatus within Allegheny County compared to other similar regions!¹ Further, in 2020, a separate report on collaborative capacity discovered a new trend of poor cooperation and trust between VFD chiefs and their respective municipal governments, which created a new need for greater opportunities to look into collaborative capacity within the region.²

Through funding from the PA Department of Community Economic Development (DCED) and the Jefferson Regional Foundation, staff from CONNECT – which comprises the City of Pittsburgh and 40+ surrounding municipalities – conducted preliminary research and a baseline needs assessment for its CONNECT members on the current levels of collaborative capacity within the region.

Figure 1: CONNECT Volunteer Fire Stations



Source: CONNECT Staff Estimates and data from Allegheny County. An active link of all current VFDs can be found at www.connect.pitt.edu/FIRE

About this Report

This report showcases the results of the needs assessment, sharing stakeholder perspectives, combined with in-depth research on the current number of fire apparatus, an updated list of CONNECT volunteer and combination fire stations, and the results of qualitative semi-structured interviews from fire chiefs and elected officials within CONNECT that provided an overall sense of the views, feelings, struggles, and concerns about the future of this region's fire services in 2022 and beyond.

Between December 2021-July 2022, the author of this report spoke to local government leaders and fire chiefs from 40+ municipalities. E-mail invitations for an interview were delivered to over 80+ fire officials and elected officials. The author interviewed 14 fire officials and 17 municipal officials, and received two written responses by two elected officials. The author also met with more than 40 elected official and fire officials in smaller discussions that highlighted similar results to the interviews. Two focus groups were also conducted to gain more results within a limited timeframe.

In addition, the author surveyed 80+ fire stations, utilizing publicly available information such as IRS form 990s, social media (predominantly Facebook), and fire department websites to account for the current apparatus and volunteer numbers of each available department, while also crosschecking with available fire chiefs familiar with respective departments. Municipal statistics were taken from the PA Department of Community and Economic Development's municipal statistics database.

While this study provides a snapshot of financial data from 2019 and 2020, it is not intended to serve as a financial audit of any volunteer fire department or municipality. It was taken with respect to better understand the status of CONNECT municipalities and its volunteer fire companies.

Finally, the report drew on the perspectives of more than 20+ relevant stakeholders that comprised the CONNECT Future of Fire Committee, which included fire chiefs and firefighters, elected officials, municipal managers, professors, private sector entrepreneurs, and subject matter experts on the topic of fire service delivery. This report would not be possible without the tireless work of this committee that provided counsel, technical assistance, and updates to the report.

KEY FACTS³

Allegheny County

- 130 Municipalities
- 1.2 Million People
- 180 Fire Departments
- 583 Number of Apparatus
- 745 square miles

CONNECT

- 42 Municipalities
- 634,781 People
- 61 Fire Departments
- 236 Number of Apparatus
- 182.9 square miles

Overview

Pennsylvania Fire Companies become All-Hazard Companies

Pennsylvania's volunteer fire departments (VFDs) face considerable challenges, from declining volunteerism, poor member retention, budgetary shortfalls, and other financial challenges that harm the quality of their fire services for their communities. 90% of PA's fire departments are composed of all volunteers, while only 7.4% are combination departments and 2.6% are fully paid.⁴ Yet today, fire departments have been relied on for even more difficult tasks, such as:

- Vehicle extrication
- Basic and Advanced Life Support
- Hazardous materials removal
- Fire/Injury Prevention
- Fireboat services
- Technical/Specialized rescue
- Code Enforcement
- Departmental training academy
- EMS Ambulance transport
- EMS non-transport response
- Fire Investigation
- Airport/Aviation

These services—apart from traditional fire-related services—could classify today's fire companies as all-hazard organizations rather than fire organizations alone.

These concerns are no secret to the many firefighters, elected officials, and experts in the field of public safety. Since the 1976 Pennsylvania Burning report sounded the alarm on some of these issues, numerous blue-ribbon commissions and reports have outlined the technical, legislative, and societal changes that have negatively impacted the status quo of fire services within PA.⁵

The impact of these trends is grave. In some instances, a “scratch” can occur where no volunteers are available to respond, and a department must rely on its mutual aid partners to provide services to its residents, such as the case in Schuylkill County.⁶ In South Strabane at a senior living center, a deadly fire caused a fatality as the nearest department took 18 minutes to arrive on scene.⁷ Unfortunately these issues are not new. While this report will highlight some of the major issues facing PA and CONNECT municipalities and offer solutions to better coordinate services, the future of fire services will require vision and leadership from both elected and fire officials to ensure their communities are provided effective services that minimize potential damages and loss of life.

Pennsylvania Key Facts

1970 - 300,000 Volunteer Firefighters

2018 - 38,000 Volunteer Firefighters

We have seen an 87% decrease over the past 50 years

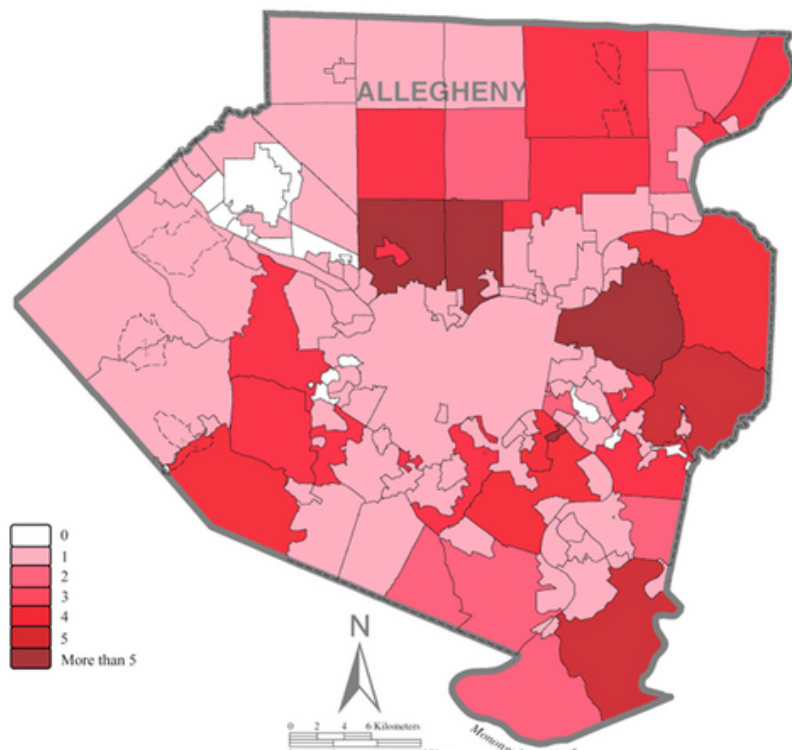
Overview

Crisis in Volunteerism

The decline in volunteers has been significant in the past 60 years, and Pennsylvania is no exception. The number of firefighters has shrunk by 87% between 1970–2018, from 300,000 volunteer firefighters to just 38,000.⁸ Many experts expect these numbers to continue to reduce without action to increase recruitment and retention among its volunteers. At the same time, there is now greater competition on a firefighter's time, as work shifts continue to expand while minimum training requirements to become a basic firefighter have increased to meet the new demand of services.

Yet Pennsylvania relies on its volunteers to support its fire service delivery model, as it saves taxpayers an estimated \$6 billion by allocating costs to taxpayers through other non-tax based mechanisms. in tax savings.¹⁰ The 2021 estimated value of a volunteer's time in Pennsylvania is \$27.98 per hour.¹¹ Averaging a volunteer firefighter's schedule at 8 hours per week, 52 weeks in a year, volunteer firefighters are estimated to contribute \$11,639.68 of their time to their municipality.¹² The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) found the time donated by volunteer firefighters saves localities \$46.9 billion annually. In other cases, transitioning to a fully career department could cost some municipalities upwards of \$1,000,000 in personnel costs alone.¹³ These cost savings cannot be ignored, and have remained the key component on the reluctance of leaders to push for a paid service model in the Commonwealth.

Figure 2: Allegheny County Fire Departments



Source: Allegheny County. (n.d.). Allegheny County municipality map.
<https://apps.alleghenycounty.us/website/munimap.asp>

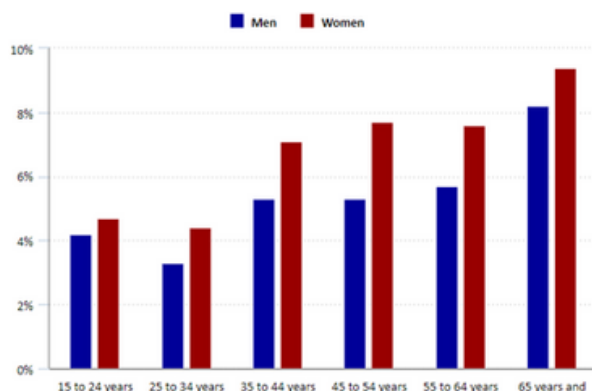
"It is the consensus of the Commission that a public safety crisis is unfolding due to the continuing decline in the ranks of our emergency service volunteers." ¹⁴

Box 1: Volunteerism in Decline

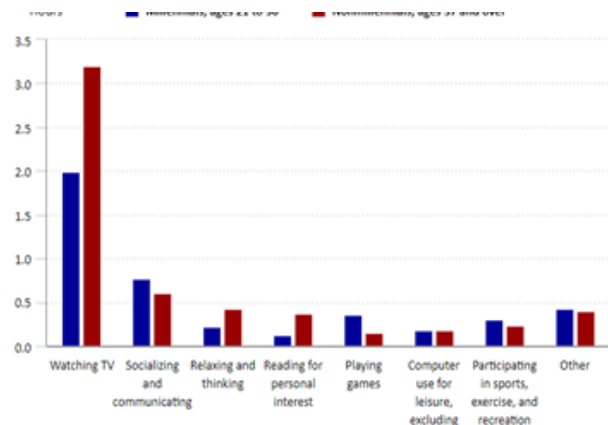
The challenges facing volunteer fire departments' capacity to retain volunteers is not unique to the public safety sector. Evidence suggests volunteerism in the United States has been steadily declining since the 1960's and continues to shift downward. Certain trends have been associated with this decline, such as the rise of suburbanization, increased access to technology, reduced leisure time, and differences in generational attitudes.¹⁵

As a snapshot, throughout 2018 only 25% of the adult working population committed to volunteer activities, compared to 45% of working adults in 1995. Moreover, throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, AmeriCorps reported the challenge of finding volunteers to support in-person events and social services.¹⁶ In addition, today's currently active volunteers represent new generational shifts, combined with competing factors to leisure time due to technology that influence volunteerism. Volunteers aged 35-44 and 45-54 were more likely to volunteer (28.9% and 28% respectively) compared to younger generations who were least likely to volunteer. Alternatives to leisure time—such as watching television, the internet, and other activities—have competed against volunteer activities. Retirees and students—compared to millennials who have entered the labor force—bring more capacity to volunteer due to their increased free time. This has placed VFDs in a difficult position to recruit younger generations of volunteers before they enter the workforce, as older populations may be unable or unwilling to volunteer due to health concerns, their employment or spending time with their family.¹⁷

Volunteerism by Age Demographic, 2011-2015¹⁸



Average leisure time between millennials and non-millennials in 2017¹⁹



Overview

The Challenges Facing Allegheny County and CONNECT

The statewide challenges facing Pennsylvania are especially relevant in Allegheny County due to the abundance of municipalities (holding 130 municipalities, making it the second most fragmented county in the country) and even larger abundance of fire departments (holding nearly 180 fire departments).²⁰ Meanwhile 96 percent of Allegheny County's fire departments are staffed solely by all volunteers. Pennsylvania's own history of decentralization has contributed to a large proliferation of fire departments, holding 12 percent of the nation's 20,000 all-volunteer fire companies, the highest in the United States.²¹

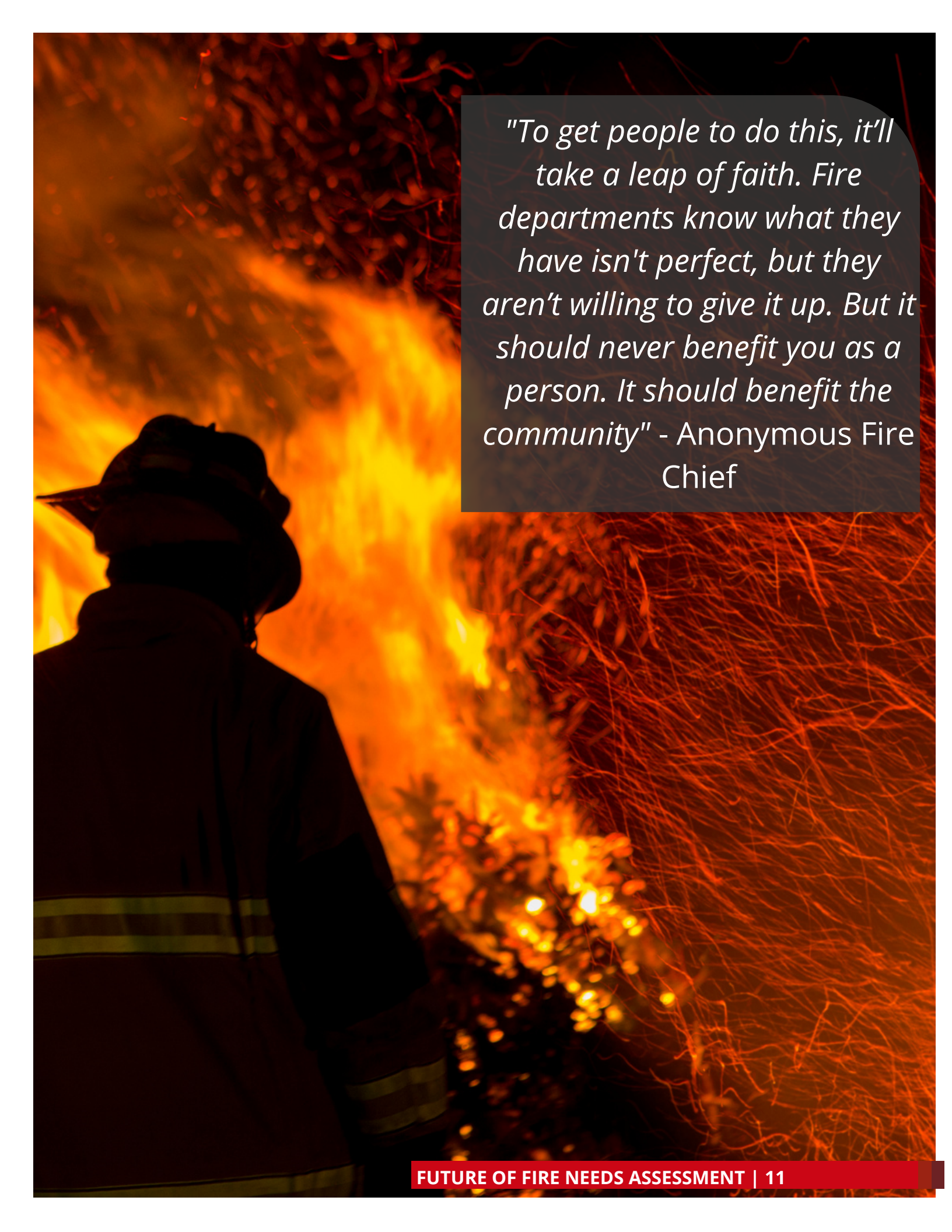
Abundance of Apparatus

The cost of fire apparatus continues to rise as many volunteer departments continue to rely on financial support from municipalities, fundraising and grants. But these funding streams may be inadequate due to rising operational and capital costs. For example, in 1972 a Class A pumper was roughly \$25,000; in 2005, the cost increased to \$350,000.²² As of 2019, the average cost of a fire truck sits closer to \$1 million.²³ Further, a 2019 report found over 200 pieces of equipment within Allegheny County, citing duplicativeness and redundancies of services primarily due to a proliferation of fire departments.²⁴

Declining Collaborative Capacity

New findings within Allegheny County suggest a decline in engagement opportunities between VFD chiefs and their elected officials outside of their annual budgetary meetings mandated by state law.²⁵ This breakdown in collaboration has resulted in a failure to negotiate efficient mutual aid practices along with an inability to agree on regional shared services, resulting in an overall decline in professional capital. Rivalries and resentment among municipalities are further evidenced in run card data, which highlights how some VFDs may be skipped during mutual aid calls due to perceptions of poor training or lack of effective human or physical capital.²⁶

Given these challenges, CONNECT was tasked with further analyzing the current levels of collaborative capacity—while also updating the apparatus inventory from 2019—to gauge whether a shared services model is applicable, and whether there is a need for greater opportunities to collaborate within the region in the absence of a legal framework to regionalize resources.

A firefighter in silhouette, wearing a helmet and jacket with reflective stripes, stands in the foreground facing a large, intense fire at night. The fire is bright orange and yellow, with thick smoke rising. The background is dark, and the fire illuminates the scene.

"To get people to do this, it'll take a leap of faith. Fire departments know what they have isn't perfect, but they aren't willing to give it up. But it should never benefit you as a person. It should benefit the community" - Anonymous Fire Chief

Needs Assessment

Needs Assessment Methodology

The purpose of this needs assessment was to provide a snapshot in time of CONNECT VFDs, its current level of apparatus, and most importantly, to better understand the intergovernmental relationships between the region's fire chiefs and elected officials. Utilizing form 990 data from 2019 and 2020 of all CONNECT fire stations, DCED municipal financial data, and an interview protocol featuring semi-structured and impromptu questions was conducted to answer the following key questions

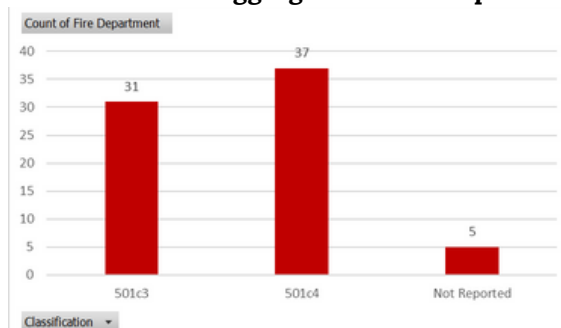
- To what extent is collaborative capacity (and the lack of it) relevant within CONNECT?
- What is the estimated level of fire apparatus in CONNECT? Has it changed since 2019?
- What are the perspectives and views of the region's fire chiefs and elected officials on:
 - Current trends within PA's volunteer fire service model
 - The challenges of collaboration
 - The Future of Fire Services for Allegheny County

The results of the interviews were recorded confidentially and transcribed using Otter.AI. The matrix was coded in MAXQDA using key themes from the conversations, that included topics on volunteerism, training levels, interaction between fire and elected officials, levels of collaboration, fundraising, apparatus levels, regionalization, and the future of fire services.²⁷

Box 2: CONNECT Tax-Exempt Status

One surprising result from the IRS Form 990 data is the amount of 501(c)4s within CONNECT. As per the IRS, a 501(c)3 is classified as a tax-deductible nonprofit organization while a 501(c)4 is classified as a social welfare group.²⁸ While usually this removes the tax exemption, 501(c)4 fire departments may be tax-exempt if they provide fire services to their community.²⁹ However, many grant funders have typically placed higher scrutiny on 501(c)4s when issuing grants. But a fire department may keep their 501(c)4 status to allow for minimum political activity for the express purpose of achieving a social well-being goal. Other departments may simply feel encumbered with filing new Articles of Incorporation, as converting to a 501(c)3 will have legal and monetary costs. Still, while not conclusive, there is evidence that 501(c)3 fire departments are offered more generous financial contributions.³⁰

CONNECT VFD Aggregate Tax-Exempt Status³¹

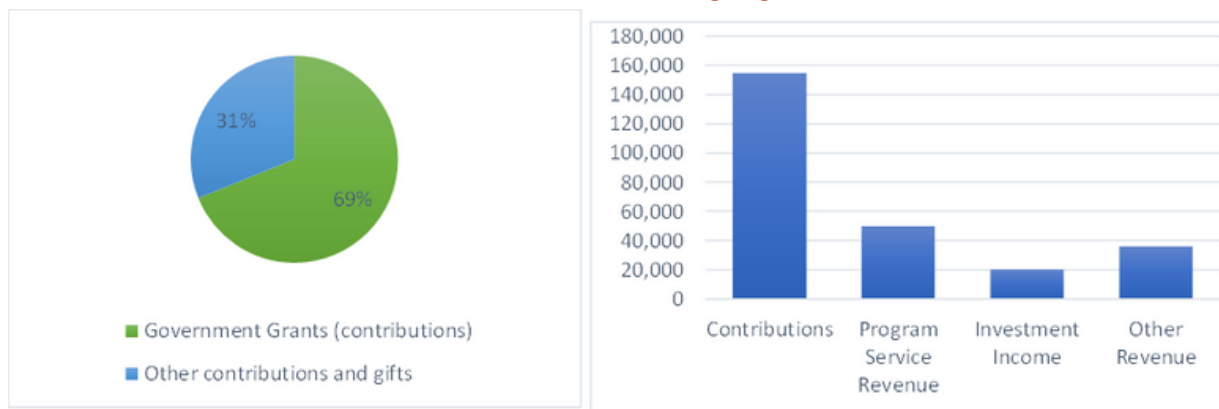


Needs Assessment

CONNECT VFD Financial Snapshot

The financial snapshot—including current revenue streams and cost—remains one of the largest concerns among many municipal officials. Taking financial data from the DCED’s municipal statistics, total budgets for CONNECT members range from \$2.9 million to upwards of \$100 million. Spending on fire can be costly—which ranged from \$100,000 to \$3 million depending on the needs and capital purchases of a municipality.³² In total, CONNECT municipalities in 2020 allocated \$144 million for the region’s fire departments.³³

Figure 3: CONNECT VFD Contributions and Average Revenue, 2019–2020³⁴



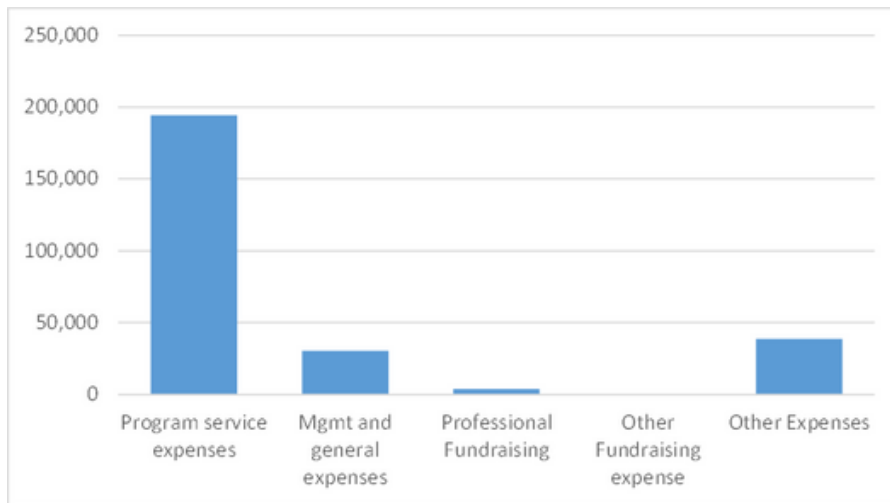
Meanwhile, fire apparatus continues to rise in price—in 1972, a Class A pumper averaged at \$25,000, today the cost depending on the layout and customizations is now roughly \$1.1 million.³⁵ The cost of equipment can also be significant, as the total cost to outfit a single firefighter in a CONNECT department can be approximately \$12,510.³⁶ While these costs are high, VFDs save local communities roughly \$37 billion per year—money that can be reinvested to improve local infrastructure, social programs and minimize the local tax burden.³⁷

Class A Pumper Cost Example

- 1972: \$25,000
- 2004: \$350,000
- 2022: \$1.1 million

Needs Assessment

Figure 4: CONNECT VFD Average Expenditures, 2019-2020



Aggregating the data of all IRS Form 990s from VFDs between 2019-2020, a majority of contributions were received from government grants and funding, at approximately \$6,580,411.³⁸ Funding reported by VFDs predominantly came from fundraising efforts and program service revenue, while a small percentage of money was generated from current investment income on their available assets.³⁹ Meanwhile average reported expenses were unsurprisingly spent on program services, along with general operational fees and in fundraising fees. Other expenses ranged from dues and social payments, to conference fees and other organizational costs.⁴⁰ While the data provided was limited, this signals the majority of fire departments are utilizing their funds on program costs to support their municipalities on service calls, and may have limited resources or capacity to support operational expenses.

CONNECT Apparatus

Based off the 2019 report, CONNECT surveyed nearly 300 pieces of major fire apparatus within its CONNECT region.⁴¹ As of 2022, 236 major fire apparatus was discovered from the 61 fire companies that are within each of the CONNECT municipalities.⁴² While Penn Hills was removed from the study, there is still reason to suspect there is a high level of apparatus within CONNECT and within Allegheny County.

Needs Assessment

Utilizing previously studied municipal benchmarks on the appropriate level of equipment, the national average is 1 pumper per 3,800 population; 1 aerial apparatus per 41,700 population; 1 fire station per 5,400.⁴³ Most cities with more than 100,000 people possess at least 10 pumpers. Cities with populations of 10,000 to 50,000 tend to have 3 or 4 pumpers, while cities of less than 5,000 people usually have 2 pumpers.⁴⁴

CONNECT's total population is 605,130 and covers 182.89 square miles within Allegheny County. The average population (excluding Pittsburgh) is 16,705 while the median population is 6,174; while the average sq. miles (excluding Pittsburgh) is 3.36 sq. miles and the median is 1.57 sq. miles.⁴⁵ The average number of apparatus is 6.74 for every CONNECT municipality. Given the national benchmarks, CONNECT does have a higher-than-normal apparatus level within the region (these figures do not include neighboring fire stations outside CONNECT that also contribute to mutual aid within CONNECT municipalities).

One piece of information that this study could not conclusively find is the minimum number of staff that respond to a call. While the form 990s provide a snapshot of all volunteers on a company's roster, this does not imply every volunteer responds to a call. NFPA 1720 can provide a useful benchmark for municipal officials on whether their volunteer fire departments are meeting the recommended benchmarks for their communities.⁴⁶ Most CONNECT municipalities would be classified as urban or suburban zones, given their population density. A fire department should be able to place at least one firefighting unit and a minimum of 15 firefighters at a scene within 9 minutes of dispatch in urban areas, and at least one firefighting unit and 10 firefighters at a scene within 10 minutes of dispatch in suburban zones.⁴⁷

Figure 5: NFPA 1720 Response Benchmarks for Volunteer Departments⁴⁸

Demand Zone	Demographics	Minimum Staff to Respond	Response Time (in minutes)	Meets Objective (%)
Urban	Greater than 1000 people per square mile	15	9	90
Suburban	500-1000 people per square mile	10	10	80
Rural	Less than 500 people per square mile	6	14	80

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As defined by the 2018 SR 6 Commission, Offensive Service Level 3 provides the lowest standard of cover with expectations to both extinguish a fire, save life and property. This requires at least two NFPA-rated pumpers, along with NFPA-rated personal protection equipment (PPE) and self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA).⁴⁹ This level of service can require significant investment in fire apparatus and related capital expenses. Despite the unique customizations for each apparatus, Bacha et al. (2019) found the average prices for three common fire apparatus were between \$250,000 and \$1.1 million.⁵⁰ Considering these facts, there are millions of dollars in additional apparatus within CONNECT.

Collaborative Capacity Interviews⁵¹

While there were limitations in discovering the full scope of each municipality's relationships and capacity to collaborate, significant progress was made in better understanding the relationship between collaborative capacity, the current issues within volunteer fire services, and what steps can be taken to improve fire service delivery. From the interviews, a few key themes emerged.

Volunteerism

All fire chiefs and nearly every elected official were aware of the decline in volunteerism, particularly during working hours between 9am-5pm. Additionally, many fire chiefs expressed concerns that the current volunteers were being underutilized in roles they did not actively want (in some instances, a greater burden was placed on grantmaking and fundraising rather than service calls). In some cases, this may have attributed to poor retention, as newer volunteers did not want to participate in fundraising or administrative work.

Training

One of the key questions asked in the interviews discussed current training levels, and possibilities for additional training. While some chiefs expressed some frustration over the increasing training demands placed on volunteers, others expressed a need for elected officials to take on more public safety training, including gaining a familiarity of the current standards that govern fire services

"I feel confident enough in their abilities to do their job. But none of them know anything about firefighting, cost of equipment, the operations of the fire service, or, you know, a fire department in general. So, I'd like to see them understand a little more on what we do"

-Anonymous Fire Chief

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Meanwhile there seemed to be a willingness to learn the roles of elected officials in order to gain an understanding of their decision-making process. One potential engagement program that scored high was a “walk-in-your-shoes” type event and a mentoring program that would allow both sides to gain some understanding of the work each party brings to their municipality.

"My council thinks all we want is money. They ask, how can I help? But it's hard to answer. What we really need is to get people interested in fire service and that's not something you can just buy"
- Anonymous Fire Chief

Understanding Collaborative Capacity and Interactions with the Other Side

One of the main tasks in this needs assessment had been to assess the current collaborative levels between fire official and their municipal officials (municipal managers, council members, or other leaders within the municipality). Collaborative capacity in itself is defined as the ability to form bonds between multi-agency leaders to accomplish a shared vision and address interdependent issues and opportunities. The results were mixed: some officials reported an excellent relationship, and kept quarterly or monthly meetings to keep each party updated on any public safety concerns.

But other elected officials and fire chiefs reported poor relationships as well. Three elected officials reported an adversarial relationship with their fire chiefs, and cited past experiences either in council meetings or in public that caused conflict.

Needs Assessment

The fire chiefs interviewed on the other hand stated concerns with the policy-making process and their municipality's funding decisions. One chief in particular hoped for more transparency from his council, while another expressed his frustration on the help needed, stating:

My council thinks all we want is money. They ask, how can I help? But it's hard to answer. What we really need is to get people interested in fire service and that's not something you can just buy" -Fire Chief

While there was no evidence to suggest a relationship exists between income level of a community and a positive or negative relationship, many fire chiefs stated in the interviews that their positive working relationship with their municipality helped their own success as chiefs of their departments. The difficulty for them was restarting this process when a new councilmember would be elected. Many elected officials asked for more feedback from their fire chief, and for more education on the issues affecting volunteer fire services.

The results on collaborative capacity were spurious and differed on a case-by-case basis with each municipality recorded. The general consensus had been that positive collaboration yielded a productive fire department, but one chief posited that good collaborative capacity could actually harm potential solutions involving regionalization, suggesting the elected officials would be reluctant to allow a merger or consolidation to occur due to their good working relationship with their fire chief, despite any financial troubles.

Regionalization

One of the key topics that was inevitably discussed was the concept of regionalization, a phrase specifically referred to as the systematic effort among independent fire companies to combine services, functions or to legally modify their organization in order to serve a larger geographic area. ⁵² This word (sometimes dubbed the 'R' word), along with consolidations and mergers, elicits many negative emotions among both fire chiefs and elected officials. While many suggested regionalization is a potential solution, nearly everyone expressed some reluctance that regionalization would occur without stakeholder buy-in from fire chiefs, fire leadership, municipal managers, and councilmembers.

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Two major complaints were recorded against a regionalized approach. The first was a general concern of a larger entity, such as the County or the State, mandating certain actions, such as training protocol or a fire district model, that would harm the autonomy of a VFD. The second involved a concern of administrative bloat, which could involve larger administrative duties that would harm the effectiveness of services while increasing response times due to less geographical presence.

Box 3: What are Public Safety Authorities?

The PA General Assembly is currently considering legislation on amending Title 53, Chapter 56 of the PA code, otherwise known as the Municipality Authorities Act of 1945. The legislation would establish public safety authorities to provide a vehicle with financing from the County on coordination and administration functions for fire and EMS departments.

Municipal authorities--which in other states are classified as service districts--are a governmental means towards providing and operating public works and programmatic activities for a community that a local government or independent operator could not adequately provide without additional resources, capacity, or labor. The governance of municipal authorities typically call under a Board of Directors, while staffing and administrative operations are managed by an Executive Director. Municipal authorities exercise certain powers that allow them to prioritize the needs of their municipality and neighboring municipalities, and in some cases have additional powers to enforce eminent domain to acquire real estate for the explicit purpose of the authority, issue debt, and charge user fees to raise revenue--however these must be stated in their scope of services prior to their formation. And unlike elected officials, Board members are not subject to elections, allowing them to make unpopular decisions that may benefit a community in the long-term.

The Municipal Authorities Act offers direct support for over 22 types of municipal authorities, including incinerator plants, utilities, airports, hospitals, lakes, and even swimming pools; it does not have codified language to support fire-related services or EMS. As a means to better consolidate resources at the county level while alleviating departmental challenges such as fundraising and grant writing, public safety authorities could provide a model for fire departments that may not have the independent resources to tackle fundraising demands, administrative functions, grantmaking demands, and the ability to recruit volunteers while also providing optimal services to its constituency. The legislation would thus establish county-wide authorities to provide these technical needs for struggling municipalities and departments.

Source: Senate Bill 1274. August 24, 20202. "Amending Title 53 (Municipalities Generally) of the PA Consolidated Statues.

Needs Assessment

Another issue involved the limited capacity of fire chiefs to handle the administrative tasks of a merger or consolidation. One fire chief in particular mentioned that a merger was being discussed with another department, but the need to run the operations of the department while handling calls caused the merger process to abruptly end. Overall, even in the process of considering regionalizing, this indicates a clear need for broader administrative and technical support to initiate these early conversations.

Future of Fire: Issues and Solutions

Many of the issues involved a lack of manpower, declining revenue streams, an increased need to fundraise, and an increase in non-fire services, both within their municipality and on mutual aid calls to their neighbors. Additionally, succession planning and concerns over the future of their organization's leadership worried many of the chiefs. Meanwhile, elected officials spoke of the news articles about 'scratches' or increased response times, and were frustrated about the lack of action on this issue from the state.

In terms of solutions, there was a willingness to look into the Authorities model and work together to form an inter-municipal agreement to collaborate, once funding and other logistical issues were better understood. Two chiefs brought up the idea of cross-training firefighters to take on broader public safety needs like EMS and police, while many others expressed interest in more training with their elected officials to improve their own skills while building effective networks as well.

One major topic addressed the need to collaborate at the committee level, and invite stakeholders from the public, fire services, and municipal officials to have a more robust role in the policymaking process at their local government. A few mentioned instituting a citizens' advisory board to look into future solutions, which has seen success in other communities in the Commonwealth.

"Just throwing money at the fire service will not fix the problems. Cooperation between agencies and local government must be established"
-Elected Official

Needs Assessment

Other Comments

Two questions this needs assessment attempted to address was whether a regional mediator would be a useful tool to support intraregional conflict, and whether a publicly available list of resources and financial information would be helpful for neighboring fire departments and municipal governments. Both were met with skepticism. The regional mediator was welcomed, but many stated—without any authority—it would be unhelpful or add no value to the region. Meanwhile, the public resource directory was met with worries that the information would paint a negative portrait of current VFDs' financials in the media without reflecting the nuances of a volunteer department's budget. One fire chief expressed concern that a public resource directory could be used as political ammo by their municipal officials if they were to make a new request to their municipality.

Finally, study fatigue became a noticeable trend in many of the interviews. The issue of fire services has been discussed in numerous reports over the past few decades, and some fire chiefs expressed their own frustrations with studies that “end up on a shelf”. Many chiefs pointed out that they were tired of talking about the problems, and wanted to specifically discuss potential solutions that would support the future of fire services.

"Municipal co-operation will get harder to do with a regional approach. There's no way we can expect each little municipality around us to have paid department, but getting us all to cooperate is not so simple either. The county may play a role, but this is politically charged stuff"
-Elected Official

Future of Fire

Conclusion

The results of the needs assessment has shown evidence of a need to adopt a coordinated approach towards this region's VFDs. However, regionalization has been met with skepticism and will require persuasion and leadership to achieve a goal of shared services. Building collaborative capacity will take vision from the fire services, elected officials, and the public to form a trifecta of good governance.

No matter what, the future success of volunteer fire service will depend on local government leaders and their fire chiefs. Without the support of local government, volunteer fire services may face far more difficult challenges, resulting in decertification and forced consolidations. However, through collaboration, there is evidence that volunteer fire departments can reduce their burdens, support their neighbors and maintain autonomy in these uncertain times.

The next page offers key recommendations that municipal leaders can take to their communities today, from forming comprehensive committees to develop an authority model, to working with other stakeholders to form agreements committing to working together.

"When somebody calls 911, they just want somebody to show up. You don't care what town they're from. You don't care if they're from somewhere that regionalized or not. You just want them to show up"

-Anonymous Fire Official

Recommendations



Institute the Public Safety Authority Model

Municipalities in CONNECT should negotiate to form a public municipal authority with the purpose of providing either coordinated regional fire service delivery or coordinated administrative support to volunteer fire departments.

The authority model is one significant tool that has the potential to enhance alignment between community leaders, elected officials, management and fire officials to promote effective coordinated fire service delivery. Utilizing the 8 EMS agencies for guidance, fire departments and their municipalities should work together to establish public authorities in order to provide effective shared services to its residents.

If an authority for explicit shared service delivery is difficult to obtain, alternatively a vehicle to share resources, grant writing and administrative capacity could also be created to provide regionalized support while also allowing fire departments to maintain autonomy. While legislation to develop public safety authorities is currently in the PA state legislature, municipalities can jointly negotiate and develop a comprehensive plan issued to Allegheny County that could establish a volunteer-driven authority themselves.



Codify Future Collaboration through MOUs

Municipal leaders and fire chiefs should file and sign Memoranda of Understandings to commit towards greater collaboration through instituting regular strategic planning, quarterly reviews, and a willingness to share resources, information and capacity with an eye towards the future.

The pathway towards building collaborative capacity starts with municipal leaders taking initiative by signing a municipal agreements to meet regularly and discuss operational issues, current equipment and budgetary status, and other topics that require joint cooperation of the municipal government and the fire department. A sample memorandum of understanding is provided in Appendix I, which should be modified based on the needs of any given municipality.

Recommendations



Develop or Reinstate Future of Fire Steering Committees

Municipal leaders and their fire chiefs should agree to meet quarterly to discuss operational challenges, opportunities, any potential threats, and current resources to build broader collaborative capacity for the future. This can be continued through the development of steering committees.

A steering committee should be created to provide support and establish legitimacy, composed of members with the authority and skills necessary for strategy implementation. This would ensure a sound transition towards more effective services, and will require competence and skill from this region's fire chiefs, elected officials, and experts in the field of public safety.

While outlined in the MOU, it is imperative fire chiefs and their municipal officials continue to meet regularly (recommended every quarter) to continue a dialogue towards long-term planning for the operation and effectiveness of their fire departments.



Engage in Strategic Planning

Municipal leaders should demonstrate commitment by engaging in continuous strategic planning with other municipalities, and undertake a regional strategic planning process.

Fire service delivery in Allegheny County continues to operate based on a model that is no longer effective at addressing the shifting needs of our communities. While fire service providers and elected officials acknowledge the gravity of the issue, maintaining the status quo is often the most politically acceptable course of action.

Initiating a strategic planning process will allow the region to contend with its fire service delivery issues in a collaborative, coordinated forum. The overarching goal of strategic planning is to increase public value through clarifying the vision, mission, and goals of involved organizations; forming strategies to meet the goals; and implementing the strategies. Strategic planning can build coalitions, improve stakeholder engagement, and refocus conversations around the common good.⁵⁵

Recommendations

Form Joint Cooperative Facility for Engagement and Innovative Training

·Municipal leaders and their fire officials should work together to form a joint facility for training with neighboring communities to share resources, data and human capital.

Results from the needs assessment suggest many fire and elected officials would benefit from shared training. The coordination and implementation of a joint training facility to spur collaboration and connections between both fire chiefs and elected officials would support two key goals for the future of fire services.

Adopt a 501(c)3s status where appropriate

Volunteer fire departments currently registered as 501(c)4 should consider reclassifying their Articles of Incorporation to become a 501(c)3 with the Internal Revenue Service.

While some volunteer fire departments are classified as 501(c)3s, a majority of fire departments within CONNECT are currently classified as 501(c)4s. 501(c)4s have been shown to receive less grant funding, and face increased scrutiny from potential funders. While fire departments are still tax-exempt under a 501(c)4, fire departments should consider changing their tax-exempt status to 501(c)3s to improve their grantmaking chances to receive additional funds.

Develop collaborative and inclusive programming with buy-in from the community

·Municipalities should work together to develop engagement programming with their volunteer fire departments, facilitated by the county or state government, or a third-party nonprofit dedicated to municipal training. One leading example is the formation of citizen fire academies that promote volunteerism and community engagement.

Collaborative capacity-building must start at the community level by municipal leaders. Results from the needs assessment suggest there is interest in mentoring and informal workshops, along with smaller in-person events and larger symposium or summit-styled events to facilitate conversations regarding the future of fire services. The platform for these discussions should be directed by an institutional entity larger than the respective localities, such as the county government, state government representatives or a third-party nonprofit dedicated to training and coordinating municipal officials.

"I just think—going back to collaboration—if everyone sits down and works together, you can have a more successful service. Because that's what this all is, a service"
-Elected Official



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Appendix I: MOU Template

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN [MUNICIPALITY] AND [VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT]

WHEREAS, the Town/Borough/City of _____ is a municipality under the laws of the
State of Pennsylvania with a principal location at _____.

WHEREAS, the [Volunteer Fire Department Name] of _____ is a volunteer fire
department that serves this municipality's residents under the laws of the State of
Pennsylvania.

WHEREAS, there is a greater need to work together to solve the challenges facing this
region's volunteer fire departments, and will require collaboration, vision, and leadership.

WHEREAS, the purpose of this Memorandum of Understanding ("MOU") is to
address mutual collaboration between Town/Borough/City of _____ and [Volunteer Fire
Department] to support greater cooperation on behalf of the community.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that Town _____ and [VFD] hereby agree to the
following non-binding terms:

TERMS

[Municipality] agrees to perform the following functions:

- Coordinate quarterly meetings with the fire department in order to better understand the department's needs and facilitate updates on any pending budgetary requests
- Provide updated information on legislative and budgetary objectives, short-term, intermediate, and long-term goals, and supportive instructions on future budgetary requests
- Agree to appropriately understand the needs of its fire departments and neighboring fire departments in order to assess the level of regional fire service delivery provided to its municipality
- provide feedback on Opioid presentation, curriculum, and process to assist in program and process improvement, as well as programmatic expansion
 - work with Adagio Health Inc. in any other way to assure success of the Opioid Project.

[Volunteer Fire Department] agrees to perform the following functions:

- Agree to meet with the municipality each quarter and provide an assessment of its services for its municipal officials
- Provide updated data on call volume, status of current apparatus, personnel, and other pertinent information requested by their municipality in a timely manner
- Agree to join the municipality in annual strategic planning processes in order to better assess the current status of its apparatus and volunteers, and look for future strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that Town _____ and [VFD] hereby agree to the above non-binding terms:

Name
Title
Organization

Name
Title
Organization

Seen and Agreed to this ____ day of _____, [YEAR].

Appendix II: 2020 CONNECT Municipal Budget

Municipality	Total Budget	Allocated for Fire	% of Total Budget
Aspinwall	6,033,168	80,922	1.34%
Baldwin Township	2,974,577	10,165	0.34%
Bellevue	10,445,198	376,996	3.60%
Brentwood	19,700,607	175,272	0.88%
Carnegie	9,970,006	260,937	2.60%
Castle Shannon	12,212,991	96,207	0.78%
Churchill	5,852,216	69,429	1.20%
Clairton	6,045,421	593,097	9.80%
Collier	16,360,694	397,477	2.40%
Crafton	9,255,627	178,538	1.90%
Dormont	14,573,291	923,979	6.30%
Duquesne	9,762,216	222,595	2.30%
Edgewood	5,651,289	301,261	5.33%
Etna	5,356,226	115,042	2.14%
Forest Hills	18,181,235	121,864	0.67%
Fox Chapel	14,386,814	150,301	1.04%
Green Tree	11,771,011	187,974	1.60%
Homestead	6,436,439	151,784	2.35%
Ingram	3,251,162	70,019	2.15%
Jefferson Hills	17,652,307	818,611	4.63%
McKees Rocks	7,057,752	189,989	2.70%
Millvale	5,327,938	68,618	1.30%
Mount Lebanon	97,553,992	3,211,201	3.30%
Mount Oliver	4,618,625	122,728	2.65%
Munhall	19,052,844	347,888	1.82%
Oakmont	9,910,304	158,447	1.60%
Pittsburgh	1,196,119,088	129,288,551	10.80%
Reserve	3,950,033	60,915	1.54%
Ross	50,273,890	1,329,561	2.64%
Shaler	28,319,070	348,298	1.22%
Sharpsburg	4,757,553	121,826	2.56%
Swissvale	12,738,635	985,400	7.73%
Turtle Creek	6,661,983	56,090	0.84%
West Homestead	4,487,464	110,718	2.46%
West Mifflin	21,459,116	717,713	3.34%
West View	8,683,375	142,131	1.63%
Wilkins	8,533,778	202,252	2.37%
Wilkinsburg	26,755,501	1,875,827	7.01%
CONNECT		144,640,623	

Appendix III: 2020 CONNECT Population & Apparatus

Municipality	Population	Area in Miles ²	Number of Apparatus	Fire Service	Fire Companies
Aspinwall	2,653	0.4	5	All Volunteer	1
Baldwin Township	1,924	0.5	14	All Volunteer	1
Bellevue	7,980	1.01	5	Combination	1
Brentwood	9,203	1.45	6	All Volunteer	1
Carnegie	7,752	1.62	6	All Volunteer	1
Castle Shannon	8,371	1.6	6	All Volunteer	1
Churchill	2,902	2.2	4	All Volunteer	1
Clairton	6,497	3	5	All Volunteer	1
Collier	8,247	14.2	6	All Volunteer	3
Crafton	5,731	1.14	5	All Volunteer	1
Dormont	8,224	0.76	5	Combination	1
Duquesne	5,531	1.8	5	All Volunteer	1
Edgewood	2,983	0.92	4	All Volunteer	1
Etna	3,284	0.79	4	All Volunteer	1
Forest Hills	6,256	1.56	7	All Volunteer	1
Fox Chapel	5,056	7.87	5	All Volunteer	1
Green Tree	4,749	2.08	7	All Volunteer	1
Homestead	3,133	0.64	4	All Volunteer	1
Ingram	3,175	0.43			
Jefferson Hills	11,136	16.59	15	All Volunteer	2
McKees Rocks	5,815	1.1	15	All Volunteer	1
Millvale	3,636	0.68	3	All Volunteer	1
Mount Lebanon	31,418	6.08	12	Combination	1
Mount Oliver	3,403	0.34	5	All Volunteer	1
Munhall	10,930	2.4	9	All Volunteer	4
Oakmont	6,563	1.58	5	All Volunteer	1
Pittsburgh	301,286	58.3		Fully Paid Company	1
Reserve	3,204	2	1	All Volunteer	1
Ross	30,362	14.47	17	All Volunteer	8
Shaler	27,527	11.07	15	All Volunteer	6
Sharpsburg	3,315	0.63	3	All Volunteer	1
Swissvale	8,590	1.3	6	Combination	1
Turtle Creek	5,104	0.97	2	All Volunteer	1
West Homestead	1,854	1.01	4	All Volunteer	1
West Mifflin	19,588	14.4	8	All Volunteer	4
West View	6,470	1.01	1	All Volunteer	3
Wilkins	6,092	2.74	12	All Volunteer	2
Wilkinsburg	15,186	2.25		Fully Paid Company	1
CONNECT	605,130	182.89	236		61
Allegheny County	1,218,000	745 sq mi			

Appendix IV: Apparatus

FIRE DEPARTMENT	Station	Vehicle Apparatus Roster**
Aspinwall Volunteer Fire Department*	102	5 pieces: Engine 102-1 1500 GPM Front Line Pumper (HMI-Toyote 2006); Rescue 102 Kenco 2000 rescue; Engine 102-2 HME 4 Guys 1997 pumper with ladder; Squad 102 squad ford f-350 custom 2012 built by keystone fire apparatus; 2014 Fire safety trailer
Avalon Volunteer Fire Company	103	3 pieces: Engine 103 - 2008 Pierce Velocity, Truck 103 - 2010 Ferrara HD-100; Squad 103 - 1995 International / Central States
Baldwin Independent Fire Company No. 1	105	5 pieces: 105 Command vehicle, 2019 Chevy Tahoe; Engine 105 Pierce quantum rescue pumper; Squad 1 105, 2011 Ford F-250 Super Duty; Squad 2 105 2011 Ford Expedition; Truck 105 2012 Resenbauer/Spartan
Bauerstown Volunteer Fire Department	259	4 pieces: Engine 259, 1999 American LaFrance Pumper; Rescue 259, 1996 HME Rescue Pumper; Air & Light 259, 2003 Ford F-550 Unit; Squad 259, 2006 Ford Expedition
Bellevue Volunteer Fire Company	108	5 pieces: Truck 108, 2011 Pierce XT 100 Midmount Aerial Ladder; Engine 108, 2012 Pierce Arrow XT Pumper; Squad 108, 2015 Ford Expedition; Squad 2 108, 2007 Ford Expedition; Rescue 108, 1986 Pierce Dash
Berkeley Hills Fire Department	247	4 pieces: Truck 247, 2012 Pierce Arrow XT Ladder Tower; Engine 247, 2016 Pierce Enforcer engine; Squad 247, 2018 Tahoe SSV/Ibis Tek Upfit; Command 247, 2019 Tahoe SSV
Blawnox Glenover Volunteer Fire Department	111	10 pieces (Truck 111 is owned by O'Hara Township); Engine 111-1 - 2005 Pierce Dash; Squad 111-1 - 2003 Ford F-350; Squad 111-2 - 2008 Ford F-350; Squad 111-3 - 2012 Ford Expedition; Boat 111-1 - 24' pontoon; Boat 111-2 - Avon inflatable; Boat 111-3 - 24' Rinker; Flotilla; Boat 111-4 - Creature Craft inflatable; Jet-Ski 111-1 - 2008 Sea Doo Wake; Jet-Ski 111-2 - 2009 Sea Doo Wake; Fire Station 2 - 2nd Street; Engine 111-2 - 1998 HME 1871 / Luverne
Brentwood Volunteer Fire Company	116	6 pieces: Engine 116-1 - 1991 Grumman (1500/?) Engine 116-2 - 1999 Pierce Dash 2000 (SN#10354) Truck 116 - 2001 HME / Smeal (?-/100' mid-mount) Squad 116 - 1996 Ford F-250 4x4 Command 116 - 2019 Ford F-150 4x4 Utility 116 - 2021 Ford F-550 4x4 / Deep South walk-around rescue (350/300/5F)
Broughton Volunteer Fire Department	270	6 pieces: Command 270, 2016 Chevy Tahoe; Truck 270, 2006 Sutphen aerial Ladder truck; Engine 270, 2001 Sutphen pumper; Rescue 270, 2001 international swab wagon; Squad 270, 2009 Ford-450 Super Duty; UTV 270, 2018 Polaris Ranger Crew All-Terrain vehicle

Appendix IV: Apparatus

Carnegie Volunteer Fire & Rescue Bureau	255	6 pieces: Engine 118-1 – Ferrara; Engine 118-2 - 2006 KME; Engine 118-3 - 2016 KME; Truck 118 - 2016 KME (?/?/100' mid-mount platform); Squad 118 - 2016 Ford F-150; Command 118 - 2015 Chevrolet Tahoe
Castle Shannon Volunteer Fire Department	119	6 pieces: Engine 119-1 - 2004 Pierce Quantum (2000/750/30F) (SN#15423); Engine 119-2 - 1997 Pierce Arrow (2000/750); Squad 119 - 2001 Ford F-450 / Sabre walk-around rescue; Truck 119 - 2013 Pierce Velocity (2000/300/100' rear mount platform) (SN#26167); Chief 119 - 2018 Ford Expedition; Utility 119 - 2008 Ford F-250
Cherry City Volunteer Fire Company	260	5 pieces: Truck 260, 2009 Spartan Aerial Pumper; Rescue 260, 2016 Ford F550; Engine 260, 1987 Mack CF/Pierce; Rescue Boat; Squad 260, 1998 Ford E350 Passenger Van
Churchill Volunteer Fire Company	122	4 pieces: Rescue 122, 2007 KME Custom Rescue; Engine 122, 2018 Darley WASP CAFS Pumper; Command 122, 2020 Ford Expedition; Squad 122, 2005 Ford F350 Crew Cab
Clairton Volunteer Fire Department	123	5 pieces: Engine 123-1, 2011 HME 1871; Truck 123, 2020 Rosenbauer; Engine 123-2; 123 Chief's Vehicle; Rescue 123 Truck
Crafton Volunteer Fire Department	128	5 pieces: Engine 128, 1996 Seagraves Pumper; Rescue 128, 2006 KME Rescue - Pumper; Truck 128, 2010 KME Quint; Squad 128, 1995 Ford 350; QRS 128, 2004 Quick Response Vehicle
Dormont Fire Department	130	5 pieces: 130 Chief's vehicle, 2017 Ford Explorer; Truck 130, 2018 Sutphen ladder; Engine 130, 2008 Sutphen; 130 Utility, 2013 Ford F-250; 130 Utility 2, 2008 Ford F-150
Dorseyville Volunteer Fire Department (Indiana Township VFC)	172	4 pieces: Engine 172, 2006 Pierce Enforcer; Rescue Engine 172, 2014 Pierce Impel; Squad 172, Ford-F250; UTV 172, John Deere Gator/Kimtex Medlite
Duquesne Volunteer Fire Department	133	5 pieces: Engine 133, 1995 Pierce Saber Pumper; Engine 133 2, 1994 E-One Pumper; Truck 133, 1997 Pierce Lance 105' Foot Ladder Truck; Rescue 133, 1996 Pierce Saber Pump and Tank; Squad 133, 2018 Ford Police Interceptor Utility
Edgewood Volunteer Fire Department	137	4 pieces: Engine 137, 2009 Spartan/Crimson Fire engine; Rescue 137, 2006 Pierce Dash Heavy Rescue; Service 137, 2006 Chevrolet Silverado 3500; Squad 137, 2004 Ford Explorer;
Emsworth Volunteer Fire Company Inc	148	4 vehicles: 148 Engine - 2019 Spartan Metro Star; Rescue 148-3, 2000 KME Rescue Engine; Squad 148-4, 2016 Ram 2500 Squad Truck; 148 Command, 2018 Ford Explorer PI
Etna Volunteer Fire Department	149	4 pieces: Engine 149 - 2012 Sutphen Guardian 4x4 (1500/500) Rescue 149 - 2012 Sutphen Guardian 4x4 (1500/500), 149 Brush and 149 squad pickup
Eureka Fire Rescue EMS	281	1 piece: Engine 281, 2008 HME/Ferrara Intruder

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Evergreen Fire Company	246	3 pieces: Engine 2, 2000 Smeal Pumper; Rescue Engine 1, 2014 Smeal Pumper; Utility 246, 1999 Ford F-250 Super Duty
Fairview Volunteer Fire Department	268	5 pieces: Engine 268, 1996 Pierce Quantum Pumper; Rescue 268, 2001 Pierce Quantum Pumper; Squad 268, 1999 Ford F-550; Utility 268, 2000 Ford F-250; Command 268, 2009 Ford Expedition
Fawn Township Volunteer Fire Department	150	7 pieces: Engine 150 - 2000 International 4900 4x4 / Pierce (1250/1000); Rescue 150 - 1983 Chevrolet C65 / E-One walk-in; Tanker 150 - 1996 Freightliner / OSCO (500/3000); Tanker 150-2 - 1987 Ford C (1250/1500); Utility 150 - 1988 GMC 4x4 walk-in Brush 150-1 - 1972 Chevrolet 4x4 (Ex-Sarver Volunteer Fire Company); Brush 150-2 - 1989 GMC TopKick 4x4 / S&S (?/1000)
Floreffe Volunteer Fire Company	178	4 pieces: Engine 17 - 1991 International 4900 / E-One; Brush 17 - 1971 Ford F-250; Engine 178 - 2009 Spartan / Precision; Brush 178 - 2009 Ford F-350
Forest Hills Volunteer Fire Department	153	7 pieces: Engine 153, 2001 American LaFrance Eagle Class A Engine; Rescue 153, 1994 Freightliner Combination Walk-in/around Heavy Rescue; Squad 143, 2005 Ford Expedition SUV; Truck 153, 2007 Pierce Dash Rear Mount 105' Heavy Duty Aerial; Utility 153, 2015 Chevrolet 3500 HD Utility Truck; Rescue 153, 2022 Pierce Arrow XT Rescue Pumper; Truck 153, 2022 Pierce Arrow XT 105' HD Ladder
Frazer Township Volunteer Fire Department	159	2 pieces: 1984 Duplex/Young Crusader Pumpger; 1964 American LaFrance Pumper
Fox Chapel Volunteer Fire Department (stations 1 and 2)	157	5 vehicles: 1994 1500 gpm Seagrave Class A Pumper; 1998 1500 gpm Seagrave Class A pumper; 2002 750 gpm Marion Class A pumper; 1998 Marion heavy rescue; Chevrolet Suburban Crew truck; 2013 Ford Squad truck
Green Tree Volunteer Fire Company	163	7 pieces: Command 163, 2006 Chevy; Engine 163 1, 2005 Pierce; Engine 163 2, 1989 Seagrave; Engine 163 3, 2009 Pierce; Rescue 163, 2012 Pierce; Squad 163, 1997 Ford; Truck 163, 2002 Pierce
Highand Volunteer Fire Department	186	4 pieces: Engine 186-1, 2004 Sutphen Attack Engine; Engine 186-2, 1984, Pierce Dash Attack Engine; Truck 186, 2010 Pierce Velocity Platform; Squad 186, 2005 Ford-F350
Homestead Volunteer Fire Department	171	4 pieces: Engine 171 - 1991 KME Renegade Squad 171 - 1989 Spartan / Saulsbury (1500/660/60F) (Ex-Pleasant Hills Volunteer Fire Company) Squirt 171 - 1973 American LaFrance (1250/300/50' TeleSquirt) (1998 Keystone refurb) Truck 171 - 1988 Pierce (1500/300/105' rear-mount)
Presston Volunteer Fire Department Stowe		N/A

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Ingomar Volunteer Fire Company	187	5 pieces: Engine 1, 2011 Sutphen Monarch Custom Pumper; Engine 2, 1989 Hahn Attack Pumper; Quint 187, 2004 Sutphen SP-70 mid-mount aerial platform with ladder; Rescue 1, 1994 Seagrave Heavy Rescue; Rescue 2, 2000 Ford F-350 Super Duty
Jefferson 885 Hills Fire Rescue	180	11 pieces: Rescue 180 - 2003 E-One / Saulsbury Truck 180 - 2010 Pierce Velocity 6x4; Tanker 180 - 1983 Mack R Boat 180; Engine 180-1 - 1995 Sutphen; Squad 180-1 - 2015 Ford F-350; Engine 180-2 - 2009 Spartan / Precision; Brush 180-2 - 2009 Ford F-350; Squad 180-2 - 2009 Ford F-350; Squad 180-3 - 2008 Ford F-550; Engine 180-4 - 1991 International 4900 / E-One
Keating Fire Company	252	2 pieces: Engine 252-1, 2018 Pierce Enforcer pumper; Salvage 252, 1997 Smeal
Kennedy Township Independent Volunteer Fire Company	181	7 pieces: Command 181, 2020 Ford Police Interceptor Utility; Engine 181, 2000 Spartan; Rescue Engine 181, 2017 Sutphen; Squad 181, 2015 GMC Sierra 3500 HD; Truck 181 1, 2017 KME 105ft; Truck 181 2, 2014 Sutphen SP70 Quint; UTV 181, 2019 Polaris UTV
Kirwan Heights Fire Department	124	4 pieces: Engine 124, 1997 E-One Pumper; Rescue 124, 2009 Spartan/Hackney truck; Squad 124, 2007 Ford Expedition; Utility 124, 2015 GMC Sierra
Laurel Gardens Volunteer Fire CO	253	1 piece: Engine 253, 2019 KME Panther
McKees Rocks Independent Volunteer Fire Department		4 pieces: Engine 189 1, 2006 Spartan; Engine 189 2, 1989 Pierce Lance; Truck 189, 2020 KME AerialCat 109'; Utility 189, 2005 Chevy Suburban
Millvale Volunteer Fire Company	191	3 pieces: Truck 191, 1962 American LaFrance; Engine 191-1, 1992 E-One Protector; Engine 191-2, 2005 American LaFrance Liberty Pumper
Moon Run Volunteer Fire Company	245	4 pieces: 245 Duty Chief, 2019 Chevy Tahoe; 245 Engine 1, 2003 American LaFrance/Top Mount Pumper; 245 Rescue, 2021 Pierce Enforcer; 245 Squad, 2019 Ford F-250
Mount Lebanon Fire Department	198	12 pieces: Truck 198, 2011 Spartan / Smeal Rear Mount Quint; Rescue 198, 2008 Spartan / Precision walk-around rescue; Engine 198-1, 2012 Spartan / Precision Pumper; Engine 198-2, 2002 Spartan / Precision Rescue Pumper; Engine 198-3, 2018 Rosenbauer Commander (1500/500/15A/15B); seven SUVs used for fire prevention, utility vehicles and chief's vehicle (Squad 198-1, 1997 Ford F 4X4; Squad 198-2, 2009 F350; Squad 198-3, Tahoe; Squad 198-4; Squad 198-5; Command 198, 2020 Ford Explorer; Assistance Chief 198, Tahoe

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Mt. Oliver Volunteer Fire Company	199	5 pieces: Engine 199 - 1990 Grumman AttackCat (1500/500) Truck 199 - 2002 American LaFrance (2000/300/100' rear-mount) Squad 199 - 2001 Ford F-550 / American LaFrance walk-around rescue QRS 199 - 2019 Ford F-150 Command 199 - 2015 Ford Expedition
Munhall Central Volunteer Fire and Rescue	201	N/A
Munhall Volunteer Fire Co. #1	200	2 pieces: Squirt 200 - 1997 HME / Smeal (1500/500/55' rear-mount) Rehab 200 - 2014 Ford / Valaro
Munhall Volunteer Fire Company #4	204	3 pieces: Engine 203 - 2002 Spartan / Saulsbury (1500/800) Rescue 203 - 1993 Spartan / Saulsbury walk-around Squad 203 - 1998 Chevrolet Suburban
Munhall Volunteer Fire Company #5	205	4 pieces: 204 Engine 1 - 2021 KME (2000/750) 204 Engine 2 - 2004 Pierce 204 Tower - 2009 KME (2000/300/100' mid-mount platform) 204 Squad - 2012 Ford F-550
Neville Island General Volunteer Fire Department	205	3 pieces: Engine 1 - 2008 American LaFrance Liberty Engine 2 - International DuraStar / Rosenbauer Squad 2 - Dodge Ram
Oakmont Volunteer Fire Department	216	5 pieces: 216 Truck 3; 216 Engine 1; 216 Engine 2; 216 Utility; 216 Squad car
Ohio Township Volunteer Fire Company	220	7 pieces: 2005 KME Pumper/Rescue; 2000 Sutphen Aerial Ladder Truck; 1993 Sutphen Heavy Pumper; Tanker; Brush Truck; Squad; ATV
Option Volunteer Fire Department (Baldwin)	107	4 Pieces: Engine 107, 2021 Spartan Pumper; Rescue 107, 2006 Pierce Pumper; Squad 107, 2016 Chevy Silverado; Command 107, 2020 Chevy Silverado Trail Boss
Parkview Volunteer Fire Department	180	3 pieces: Engine 218-1, 2014 Pierce, Freightliner 4x4 Engine; Engine 218-2, 2003 Pierce Dash 2000; Squad 218, 2006 Ford-F550
Peebles District Volunteer Fire Company	188	7 pieces: Truck 188, 2017 Pierce Enforcer Ascendent with 107' Rearmount Stick; Rescue Engine 188, 2013 Pierce Arrow XT; Engine 188, 1984 Pierce Arrow; Squad 188, 2014 Ford F-150; Command 188, 2018 Ford Explorer; UTV 188, 2010 Polaris Ranger 6X6; Boat 188, 2007 Water Rescue Trailer
Pleasant Hills Volunteer Fire Company	232	7 pieces: Engine 232, 2019 Spartan/4Guys Heavy Attack Engine; Rescue 232, 2007 Spartan/Precision Heavy Rescue Pumper; Truck 232, 1991, Spartan/Grumman Ladder Tower; Squad 232-1, 2012 Ford/Precision F-550 Utility Vehicle; Squad 232-2, 2020 Ford F-350; Command 232, 2015 Chevy Tahoe; Engine 21, 1949 Mack B Pumper
Quaill Volunteer Fire Department	249	1 piece: Engine 249-1, 2016 HME Ahrens-Fox

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Rennerdale Volunteer Fire Department	126	2 pieces: Rescue Engine 126, 2019 Sutphen; Engine 126, 2012 Rosenbauer Timerwolf
Reserve Volunteer Fire Department	317	1 piece: Rescue 317, 1979 Ford F-800 walk-in rescue
Seville Volunteer Fire Company	251	1 piece: Engine 241, 2016 Spartan Metro Star LFD/4-Guys
Shaler Villa Volunteer Fire Company	262	2 pieces: Truck 262, 2005 American LaFrance/LTI Quint; Engine 262, 1995 Seagrave Pumper
Sharpsburg Volunteer Fire Department*	265	3 pieces: Engine 265, 2016 Spartan Metro Star; Truck 265, 2020 Spartan ER Metro Star; Squad 265, 2004 Ford F-450
South Baldwin Volunteer Fire Department	104	5 pieces: Comman 104, 2007 ford expedition; Engine 104, 2013 E-One Typhoon rescue engine; Rescue 104 Pumper, 1992 E-one Hush recue pumper; Squad 104, 1997 Ford F350 with crew cab; Utility 104, 2013 Chevy Silverado
Stowe Township Volunteer Fire Department	275	4 pieces: Engine 275-1 - Spartan / Rosenbauer; Engine 275-2 - Ford F-550; Squad 275 - Chevrolet Silverado; Truck 275 - 1993 Pierce
Summit Hose Company	282	3 pieces: Engine 282 - 2012 Sutphen (2250/750/30A/30B) Squad 282 - 1986 Chevrolet Sport Van Utility 282 - 2003 Dodge Ram 3500
Swissvale Fire Department	278	6 pieces: Engine 278-1, 2017 Spartan/Toyne; Engine 278-2, 2017 Spartan/Toyne; Truck 278, 2009 Spartan/Crimson 103' Quint; Service 278, 2008 Ford F-350; QRS 278, 2014 Chevrolet Tahoe; Squad 278, 2004 Ford Explorer
Turtle Creek Fire Department	283	2 pieces: Truck 283, 2000 KME Execel; Engine 283-2, Pierce Dash
Undercliff Volunteer Fire Company	264	4 pieces: Truck 264, 2004 KME Aerialcat 100 ft Tower-ladder; Engine 264, 2000 Frieghtliner FL 112; Special Operations 264, 1992 Mack Saulsbury; Squad 264, 2002 Chevrolet 2500 HD Crew Cab
Unity Volunteer Fire Department	233	7 pieces: Engine 233-1, 2014 Pierce Impel; Engine 233-2, 1999 Pierce Dash 2000; Trucke 233, 2005 Pierce Aerial Truck; Rescue 233, 2000 Pierce Encore on a Freightliner FL80 Chassis; Squad 233, 1993 Ford F-350; QRS 233, 2008 Ford Expedition XLT; ATV 233, 2010 Kubota RTV900
Upper Saint Clair Volunteer Fire Department	284	7 pieces: Engine 284-1, 2018 Rosenbauer Commander; Engine 284-2, 2001 American LaFrance Eagle; Engine 284-3, 2009 American LaFrance Eagle; Truck 284, 2005 American LaFrance Eagle; Rescue 284, 2009 American LaFrance Eagle; Squad 284-1, 2012 Dodge Ram 5500; Squad 284-2, 2012 Dodge Ram
West Deer Volunteer Fire Department 1	288	1 piece: Engine 288, 1995 Ford L-8000/4 Guys
West Homestead Volunteer Fire Department	292	4 pieces: Engine 292, 2007 Smeal; Squad 292, 2008 Ford Expedition; Truck 292, 2016 Spartan Legend 75' Aerial; Utility 292, 2019 Ford F-250

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West Mifflin #1 (Homeville VFC)	293	5 pieces: 293 Truck, 2018 E-One Metro 100; 293 Rescue, 2010 Sutphen Rescue; 293 Service; 293 Engine, 1994 Quality/HME; 293 Utility, 2009 Ford Super Duty F250
West Mifflin #2 (Duquesne Annex VFC)	294	4 pieces: Rescue 294, 2018 Spartan 4; Engine 294, 1998 E-One; Air 294, 2019 Spartan Metro Star Air; Service 294, 2006 Dodge Ram 2500
West Mifflin Volunteer Fire Company #3	295	4 pieces: Tower 295, 2020 Rosenbauer Commander 85' Cobra; Engine 295, 2020 freightliner M2/Rosenbauer; Rescue 295, 2003 Saulsbury Heavy Rescue Pumper; Squad 295, 2020 Ford F250
West Mifflin Volunteer Fire Company #4 (Skyview VFD)	296	4 pieces: Command 296, 2006 Ford Expedition; Engine 296, 2001 E-One Engine; Ladder 296, 2009 Crimson 103' Ladder Truck; Squad 296, 1996, Ford F350 Crew Cab
West View Volunteer Fire Department	297	1 piece: Truck 296, 2015 Pierce Arrow XT
Wilkins Township Volunteer Fire Company #1	302	5 pieces: Command 302, 2021 Ford Explorer Interceptor; Rescue 302, 2014 Spartan; Engine 302-1, 2006 Pierce Enforcer; Engine 302-2, 1998 Spartan/General; Squad 302, 1997 Ford F-350 XL
Wilkins Township Volunteer Fire Company 3	303	4 pieces: Engine 303, 2008 Smeal Sirius; Attack 303, 2013 Ford F554; Truck 303, 2002 Sutphen 2P70 Mini Tower Aerial Platform; Squad 303-1, 1996 Ford F-350
Wilkins Township Volunteer Fire Company 4 (Allegheny County Station 304)	304	3 pieces: Engine 304, 2008 Smeal Sirius; Rescue 304, 1997 Freightliner FL; Squad 304, 1995 Ford F-350

Source: CONNECT Staff Analysis & Interviews

*Aspinwall and Sharpsburg merged to form Southern Allegheny Valley Emergency Services (SAVES). This inventory analysis was conducted prior to the merger.

**The apparatus analysis was conducted from related interviews and meetings, and current websites of each volunteer fire department or social media page. The accuracy of the inventory is subject to the accuracy of the information provided online and may not represent the latest figures.

Appendix V: Interview Matrix

	●Volunteerism is in decline. Not enough volunteers during the day. ●Some chiefs express concern that the current time of the volunteers is being either wasted or underutilized ●Lack of volunteers is more pressing than a lack of apparatus ● Lack of manpower available to respond to a call without requiring mutual aid is an issue some fire chiefs expressed ● A few chiefs mentioned the overlap of volunteers or "double-dipping" of current roster numbers, which implies current data is not accurate ●Many in the fire profession report joining at an early age, either knowing someone from their family or having a positive experience and then joining during their adolescent years, between 16-21	"Right now, all of our problems start with no volunteers from Monday-Friday, 6am-6pm" -Fire Chief "I see that a lot of places, older members of the fire department can't come on fire calls anymore and say they still want to do something for the town. They end up becoming elected officials." - Firefighter "Volunteerism has been declining for a number of years. But the demands we were putting on our folks to raise money was causing them grief in their personal lives, taking their time away from training. And then probably the thing that really resonated with me was instances where we had emergencies during fundraising activities, and we selected a specific set of members to respond to those events. Those members needed assistance. In one case, a civilian was trapped in a house and needed assistance. And the community saw the fundraising activity as more important than the emergency response" -Fire Chief "Our volunteers are getting abused climbing out of bed multiple times a day for every kind of call from a CO alarm all the way through water in a basement. And to solve that we're sending multiple fire departments because we don't know who's going to provide a crew or how many are going to show up. And that that significantly reduced the number of administrative units and the focus on our volunteers' time" -Fire Chief "We should let the elected officials to vote if they want to participate in a regional district and let them run on it independently. Right now, volunteer departments hold fish fries to make money. We have the apparatus, but not manpower, and the manpower is what suppresses fires. We need to look at this as a bigger picture" -Fire Chief "If volunteer companies can't handle one alarm without calling five other departments, then there is a problem." - Fire Chief "There is a lot of crossover between departments in terms of our volunteers. Many volunteers also report volunteering for other fire departments." -Fire Chief "Nobody works in fire and EMS for the pay. Sure, you can	"Volunteering is down tremendously. There's been a serious change in norms. Millennials volunteer a lot but for very different things. The fire service has not changed with the times" -Elected Official "How many volunteers belong to one company over another? I know a few folks who volunteer to multiple departments, so I wonder if the reporting is correct" -Elected Official "My issue is that the number of firefighters will diminish until a crisis occurs and the answer will be very costly. I wish there was a realistic examination of the situation with a plan for correcting a staffing shortage before a crisis occurs." -Elected Official

		<i>earn a living, but at the end of the day it's about saving lives. It's about helping people" -Fire Chief</i>	
Training	●Some expressed interest in training on the other side's work ●There is little training on public safety issues for council members. There is also an issue of high turnover with council members. ●One major concern from some chiefs was the limited working knowledge elected officials had, specifically on the general standards that govern fire services (such as NFPA codes)	<i>"One of the key takeaways I'm seeing is that there seems to be a lack of training of the other side, like for fire chiefs, there seems to be not be a full training on how budgets and the legislation works" -Fire Chief</i> <i>"I feel confident enough in like their abilities to do their job. But you know, none of them know anything about firefighting, cost of equipment, the operations of the fire service, or, you know, a fire department in general. So, I'm confident in the fact of them being able to do their job but I'd like to see them understand a little more on what we do" -Fire Chief</i>	<i>"I'm somewhat familiar [on the general standards] but I can't read cite them. I know that they're there. But I don't think that any of our new council people are aware or that it hasn't hit their radar yet. " -Elected Official</i>

Interaction with Other Party (council or fire officials)	●More elected officials have become aware of the challenges facing volunteer fire in Allegheny, but some chiefs feel more awareness is needed ●Many chiefs have stated that strong relationships with their local government lead to positive results for their department. While others have suggested a strong relationship could actually cause new issues with regards to regionalization. Finally, some elected officials and fire officials stated their interaction with the other party was limited	<i>"We have a great relationship, I meet with manager weekly, I do weekly and monthly and annual reports, we budget together. More successful fire departments have good relationships with their municipalities. Unfortunately, elected officials change often, so it's harder to keep them educated on what we do" -Fire Chief</i> <i>"It depends on the council. Isn't always practical to take the time it requires to build up solid relationship" -Fire Chief</i> <i>"My council thinks all we want is money. They ask, how can I help? But it's hard to answer. What we really need is to get people interested in fire service and that's not something you can just buy" -Fire Chef</i> <i>"I wish my council would offer more transparency into their decision-making" -Fire Chief</i>	<i>" I believed our VFD was a good company as there was no bad publicity, I had no personal contact and I took for granted that all was OK. However, I did attend some Council meetings where the firemen came in a group, usually for more municipal money and two chiefs acted badly and were dismissed from the meeting." -Elected Official</i> <i>"I don't meet with my fire chief that often. I would even say he has been avoiding me since I took office. We don't really discuss the details of his department." -Elected Official</i> <i>"It's been six years since we've been able to bring all our fire chiefs together in the same room. I think it happened once for our borough." -Elected Official</i>
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On Collaboration	● Some communities have positive relationships with their counterpart, while others have mixed results. ● No correlation between income level and collaborative capacity. Usually dependent on the current status of the relationships between council and fire officials ● Results are mixed—many communities suggested positive relationships. Only few suggested a negative working relationship. However almost all agreed on the need for more training, for more opportunities to collaborate. ● One chief posited that positive collaborative capacity can actually be a detriment towards a regionalized approach, and upsetting a department could either ruin a positive relationship or create electoral challenges	<i>"We meet regularly with our council--including a meeting to discuss budgeting every quarter that's improved a lot" - Fire Chief</i> <i>"They [Council] have lots of misconceptions about what we do, they have negative ideas but we have to win them over. Also, they think we are employees instead of volunteers and that we're just hanging out not doing stuff" -Fire Chief</i> <i>"I think it's community dependent on whether a merger happens. if there is a good relationship with the fire department, it'll never come from the local government because they like having that good relationship. And some of these communities, you're talking only a couple 100 people...if they make the fire department mad, that's gonna swing an election one way or the other" -Fire Chief</i>	<i>"There is next to no relationship between me and the fire fighters at any level" -Elected Official</i> <i>"I don't know any of the chiefs, have no ongoing discussions with any VFD members and apparently no interest from them for establishing any sort of mutual responsible communications. " -Elected Official</i> <i>"Just throwing money at the fire service will not fix the problems. Cooperation between agencies and local government must be established" -Elected Official</i> <i>"One issued I'd like to see addressed is for people who come into office, and there isn't any kind of relationship with the fire department. How do we build the relationship? What mechanism is out there that can build that collaboration?" -Elected Official</i> <i>"I'd like to see all of the council and the fire chiefs together in one room to have a powwow and hash out these issues" Elected Official</i> <i>"I'd really like more feedback from my fire chief and I'd like them to come and ask. I tell them, if you don't ask for things, you won't receive." -Elected Official</i>
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On Fundraising and money from the Municipality	● Money from fundraising should be spent on personnel, training, and human capital rather than new apparatus ● Some departments just cannot raise funds like they once could years ago, even after COVID ● One chief concern raised from elected officials was the lack of available information on service calls, mutual aid, and current available resources	<i>"It's not my responsibility as the fire chief to tell you where that money should come from. It's my responsibility, the fire chief to justify why I need that money. And then you as the municipal official, decide what pots of money you're getting, what amount of money based on what you prioritize is the most important services to the community"</i> -Fire Chief <i>"We need to stop spending money on a new firetruck and use it to build up our guys."</i> -Fire Chief	<i>"In 6 years, we've gotten four reports from the [fire department]. None of them provide what other resources they have, or how they spend their money, or the number of service calls, or mutual aid calls. I know we're providing mutual aid but I don't know how much we're paying for it. So we're blind"</i> - Elected Official
Apparatus	● Number of fire apparatus with a hose or pump in certain cases may exceed the number of fire-related calls in a municipality	<i>"There are many instances of funds being spent on equipment that is 'cool' rather than 'necessary.' There are no checks and balances."</i> -Fire Chief <i>"There's millions of dollars of fire equipment just sitting there, and nobody to take it anywhere. So it's kind of insane. To keep going down this route when everybody's not doing great. But I don't think anybody knows"</i> -Fire Chief	<i>"If I'm going to vote for a purchase, I'll vote in support of a purchase for all my fire stations. We have to treat out fire companies fairly and equally. "</i> -Elected Official <i>"The amount of trucks in some of these towns is insane."</i> -Elected Official
Regionalization	● Regionalization could support budget inefficiencies ● Regionalization, consolidation and mergers (dubbed the R, C and M words) have negative connotations and can cause resentment. ● Some were concerned about larger government entities overstepping (such as the state or even the county), and believe this is up to local governments to solve. Bad blood among departments can be a factor as well ● Funding is another concern on any regionalized approach, but it would require collaboration rather than a top-down approach. ● Mergers on its own can be a frustrating experience for a fire chief involved in the normal operations of their department. Minor administrative setbacks and a lack of time could snowball.	<i>"[From regionalization] we would gain by that is some budgeting efficiencies and that we wouldn't be over employing too many people just because we need four guys per pumper, or four guys per ladder truck to respond to every emergency and we'd be gaining respect of our volunteers' time, and that they can focus on training station shifts, and only do home response when there was a significant event like a structural fire or multiple calls or weather events. "</i> -Fire Chief <i>"I think one of the reasons you haven't seen change is they don't like the R word or the C word. We're allergic to consolidation and collaboration. And regionalization. I think that's why you haven't seen any push"</i> -Fire Chief <i>"This problem is NOT helped by the government structure in PA. This problem falls to lowest level of government, the state can't come in and tell us what to do"</i> -Fire Chief <i>"Blending the cultures is the hardest part. Cultures of each</i>	<i>"Municipal co-operation will get harder to do with a regional approach. There's no way we can expect each little municipality around us to have paid department, but getting us all to cooperate is not so simple either. The county may play a role, but this is politically charged stuff"</i> -Elected Official <i>"We should look at local governments as a starting point for regionalization. We need to educate other electeds"</i> -Elected Official <i>"We had a consolidation of services with a few of our neighbors a while ago. Unfortunately, after the study was released, our fire department blew it up."</i> -Elected Official <i>"I think when we look around the country on the future, it's regionalization. And I think</i>

	● One major complaint against regionalization is the potential for increased response times, and mandates or legislation that would encourage a regional approach would hurt morale of the current volunteer firefighters	<i>department are so different. Who decides? Who gets put in charge? But the message matters. It matters if members come to the realization of 'hey we should merge with our neighbors' versus being told by government. The seeds need to have been planted already by the time it happens for us to be ready. "</i> -Fire Chief <i>"I would entertain regionalization. But bad blood is real" -</i> Fire Chief <i>"To get people to do this, this is a leap of faith. It takes a leap of faith. They know what they had and they know it's not perfect, but they aren't willing to get that up. It should never benefit you as a person. It should benefit the community" -Fire Chief</i> <i>"We were receptive towards the idea of merging a few years ago. But it fell flat because I'm doing all the work while also running the fire department. It just becomes too much. There's not enough hands on deck." -Fire Chief</i> <i>"Regionalizing will do nothing but decrease our effectiveness and increase response times." -Fire Chief</i>	<i>that what's happened is we're trying to do it from the ground up. And I think we might not be wrong, that it may need to come from the county or the state level down, but that this isn't going to change." -Elected Official</i> <i>"It's going to have to come from the top down. I mean, we didn't willingly consolidate school districts, until the state forced them to do it. I think fire's gonna head in the same direction." -Elected Official</i>
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Current Challenges	● Perceived negativity from the media on personnel incidents (intoxication, harassment, and workplace conflict) has been heightened. Worried about saying anything online for fear of retaliation ● Lack of centralized decision-making on the day-to-day operations. Especially on strategic planning and business planning. ● All-hazard departments or organizations is new term many fire chiefs brought up. This is largely due to the shift in demand for non-fire calls, like hazardous waste removal or vehicle extrication. ● Sustainability was another chief concern among many elected officials ● Succession planning for some departments was another concern, especially in departments where the chief has strong ties to the community or the municipality	"I think one of the biggest flaws in the volunteer fire service is the idea that each member has voiced some direction and administration of the organization. And in my mind, there's tremendous benefit in having a distinctly different oversight board or board of directors" -Fire Chief "I think one of the things that volunteer fire chiefs in general struggle with is administrative ability and administrative support and things like that typically fall through the cracks" -Fire Chief "We don't want to offend anyone, we all have pride, we've been here for so long, but the service is broken right now" - Fire Chief "Fire departments are no longer just fire departments; they've become all-hazard departments" -Fire Chief "The Fire Service has become like the catch all for everything today. It's not just fires anymore. Now we got to do rescue. Now we got to do hazmat. Now we got to do you know, we're jumping in to help out all the mess in the world. And now we're doing code enforcement, fire inspections, you know, things like that" -Fire Chief	"My opinion is that we have a mutually dependent situation where the interaction is minimal and a hands-off attitude is the norm. I have second hand information that the trucks go out understaffed at times but there is no public concern and no complaints that I'm aware of. -Elected Official "There has to be a way there has to be a way forward, because we all know that it's it isn't sustainable, it's not sustainable. The fire department, it's not sustainable with our police, it's not sustainable with all these local municipalities." -Elected Official "Manpower is a big issue. If you can't get people to join, you have to get creative with how you're providing your staffing." -Elected Official
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Possible Solutions	●A few fire chiefs raised concerns on a transparent resource directory, suggesting many would be concerned about easily available and public information on financials ●A few commented on the positive response to third parties such as the Local Government Academy and the PA Fire & Emergency Service Institute that offered training courses for elected officials and fire officials ●A few chiefs and elected officials expressed interest in the Authorities model, similar to EMS. ●Another solution is the idea of cross-training first responders and form a Department of Public Safety, which could allow more functional personnel.	"We needed to be focusing on strategic planning, operations, training, administration, and certainly emergency response and services provided to the community and not raising money to provide those services" -Fire Chief "I'd like to see a Board of Directors take charge of the long-term strategic planning, so other departments don't make irrational purchases that hurts their town" -Fire Chief "A lot of rural communities down south have their police officers trained in firefighting, EMS, and police. And they might be covering an area of 150 square miles with a population of around 3000. So to have three separate departments, for all that, for such a small population, covering a large area would kind of be like ludicrous. There's no way they could afford to pay all three. So they cross train everybody into all of them. I love that idea. Personally, I think it's a great idea. I don't see the downside in it. Other than, you know, the, it takes jobs away thing, but okay, that's, that's something needs me" - Fire Chief "I'd like to see the county add more paid drivers to the county's volunteer stations" -Fire Chief	"The LGA does a nice job with the newly elected course. It addresses a whole bunch of stuff from water and refuge to police, EMS, Fire." -Elected Official "What we need is an administrator or an operation manager. You need someone to take care of the day-to-day stuff. Bill-paying, cleaning, working with other communities. And then we can let the volunteer firefighters do what they signed up to do" -Elected Official "I'd like to see more networking events, and more access to information on the age of fire equipment, staffing and current training levels" -Elected Official
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Future of Fire	●Regionalization, combination departments, and consolidation were a majority of the responses on what many thought the future of fire services would look like in 2050 ●Some responses were not optimistic, but many suggest police and EMS have worked on these same issues before, and that fire is next. ● While regionalizing at the county level seemed unlikely, a few officials expressed interest in a paid driver model. ●One major topic addressed is the need to collaborate at the committee level by creating or updating steering committees. Some suggested ideas included involving firefighters and fire leadership in the policymaking process, and creating an inclusive and collaborative committee to seriously look into future public safety issues	<i>"I think there would be several. And I mean, several like less than a dozen regional fire districts, with multiple stations within each of them, that are combination career and volunteer and focus on delivery of services to the communities" -Fire Chief</i> <i>"Fire is last domino to fall. School, EMS, other services have started regionalizing. But we need to convince our elected officials to work together to fix this" -Fire Chief</i> <i>"We need to bring everyone to talk about these issues. Get people together to sit down and talk about what the future of fire will look like in 20 years" -Fire Chief</i> <i>"We need to develop joint committees of elected officials and fire chiefs to steer decision making and improve policymaking" -Fire Chief</i>	<i>"I think you're going to see a transition to combination type systems" -Elected Official</i> <i>"My opinion is that if and when we have a VFD crisis it will be critical, sudden and costly" -Elected Official"</i> <i>I don't think we'll ever see a fully funded paid county fire department. While it could solve a lot of issues—it's not fiscally responsible" - Elected Official</i> <i>"I just think—going back to collaboration—if everyone sits down and works together, you can have a more successful service. Because that's what this all is, a service." -Elected Official</i>
Other Comments	● Study fatigue was noticeable. A few fire chiefs mentioned the number of studies without any action or follow-up. ●One question from the needs assessment asked their views on a regional mediator or ombudsperson to support regional conflict. There was no significant support. Many said it was a "nice idea", followed by it being "another tool in the toolkit" to many saying it would not address any of the structural issues ●Another question asked about the support for a publicly transparent list of available resources and financial information. This was met with skepticism, citing worries about it being used against the department	<i>"We do these studies, I've been involved in several. We get the answers and then we don't do anything. If they tell us we need to lose our station, I'm fine with that. We had 70 members, now we have 16. I would welcome anything " -Fire Chief</i> <i>"We need to stop spending money on studies looking into the issue and actually get something done" -Fire Chief</i> <i>"I don't know about a mediator but I don't think that would work. Let's not throw money at it since that won't fix the issues." -Fire Official</i> <i>"Full transparency is great, but I'm worried a resource list like that would be used against my department" -Fire Chief</i>	<i>"A regional mediator sounds nice. It would be like another tool in the toolkit." -Elected Official</i> <i>"My fire chief wasn't receptive to the latest studies from the state and the DCED since it essentially didn't address any solutions" - Elected Official</i>

Appendix VI: Logic Model

Logic Model and Theory of Change

Theory of Change: To improve fire service delivery of Volunteer Fire Departments (VFDs) within Allegheny County by building collaborative capacity at the municipal level between VFDs and elected officials to increase governance, raise awareness of challenges facing VFDs and enhance the knowledge base for elected officials and VFD chiefs.

Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes	Impact
Funding from nonprofit donors, state and foundation grants. Research and data collection to map out targeted members, including all VFDs and municipalities within CONNECT and Allegheny County. Professional staff such as a program manager and an intern to design, implement, and facilitate the fire program along with coordinating volunteers and stakeholders. Public Safety experts to assist in training and development. Infrastructure to facilitate workshops, trainings, and future collaborative experiences—including utilizing CONNECT resources and facilities with the University of Pittsburgh when available—to maintain as a neutral arbiter between elected officials and fire chiefs.	Design and implement a needs assessment to targeted communities to tailor programmatic needs. Maintain relationships with CONNECT leadership, the Fire Advisory Committee, and policy stakeholders to ensure smooth transition through the design and implementation of the program. Publicize program through newsletters, annual reports, and quarterly updates to raise awareness and communicate updates to targeted audience and stakeholders. Organize specific programming based on the results of the needs assessment. Provide technical assistance and consultation services on an ad-hoc basis to clients and audiences outside of the scope of the planned events. Develop indicators to track and analyze enrollment and impact through survey responses and follow-up. Recruit and train volunteers to help facilitate workshops and take notes to ensure efficient programming.	Developed 1-2 annual events (conference or training events) that can be replicated on an annual basis and in different regions. Built smaller engagement tools that can be utilized between fire chiefs and elected officials based on need. Communication outreach goal raising awareness of the program to 100% of CONNECT membership and 75% of Allegheny County participants to build attention to this program. Prepared and disseminated communications newsletters, quarterly reviews, and annual reports that can inform a majority of Allegheny County public safety workers and municipal officials. Provided technical assistance and educational services to interested clients outside of planned programming, to facilitate greater collaboration and allow for sustainable engagement practices outside the scope of this program.	Volunteer Fire chiefs would meet with their municipal leader multiple times outside their state-mandated budget meetings. VFDs and their respective elected officials would improve their working relationships and have a greater awareness towards the needs and requests of each other's services. Engagement events would create the development and implementation of various small-scale programs, such as a mentoring system between VFDs and elected officials; the creation of a regional municipal facility; and development of regionalized infrastructure that fosters greater cooperation Improves the efficiency of resources—including greater transparency on fire apparatus based off geographical location, and updates on mutual service agreements for all stakeholders. Generation of a program monitoring database to record current and future impact, along with adjusting programmatic activities as needed based off early responses.	Builds collaborative capacity between local elected officials and VFDs to increase trust and support overall governance. Increases understanding of stakeholder positions between elected officials and fire chiefs to foster sustainable dialogue on future technical needs during budget and appropriations negotiations. Empowers volunteer fire chiefs to be more efficient in resource use and understand municipal procedures. Empowers elected officials to make informed choices on future fire appropriations and requests. Improves trust and capacity between fire departments during mutual aid calls. Improves the effectiveness of fire services in Allegheny County.