



Training Strategy 2014-2018
Consultation Draft
October 2013

Element	Detail
Document title	NZFS Training Strategy 2014-18
Document owner	Max Hood
Document custodian	Karina Simeonoff
Version	Consultation version
Issue Date	30/09/13

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Introduction

The New Zealand Fire Service (NZFS) has a broad range of responsibilities all aimed at making communities across New Zealand safer. Our approach follows risk management principles; reducing risk where we can, making sure we are operationally ready, responding to emergency situations and then helping with recovery. **All of this means we need to have the right people across the organisation with the right skills.**

We have a rich mix of people across the service; we have almost 8,000 volunteers, 1,800 career firefighters, Regional and Headquarters based staff, staff in our three joint Communication Centres and of course training staff based across the country and in our National Training Centre in Rotorua. We work closely with colleagues in Rural Fire Authorities and have important operational links with other emergency services. We are very much a people organisation and investing in our people to make sure we are doing the best job we can for New Zealand, whilst keeping ourselves safe, is a top priority.

Training in all organisations is important but for a fire service it is mission critical. Unlike other organisations we don't have control over where our firefighters work. They work in other peoples' homes and workplaces and on our roads, almost always when something has gone wrong; a fire has started, a chemical has been spilled or cars have collided. Thankfully New Zealand is a relatively safe place; we don't have too many fires or other emergency situations, but this means that **unlike other occupations we spend little of our time doing the job we are here to do.** Our competence has to be developed, honed and maintained through regular, well designed and realistic training. We also need to ensure all other personnel in non operational jobs receive the training they need, whatever their role.

Over the years we have invested considerably in training. We have a world class training centre in Rotorua, we have excellent training staff and materials, but we also have areas where we need to improve. Fundamental to the delivery of high quality training are three things; competent trainers, appropriate training facilities and good quality training resources in the form of programmes, materials and content. If there is one area that stands out as needing addressing it is our trainer establishment. **We have too few fulltime trainers, too many casual or part-time trainers** and overall not enough training positions to properly deliver the high quality training the NZFS needs.

This strategy raises and seeks to address all of the key issues. Taking the time to talk to trainers, other staff and important stakeholders has highlighted a number of areas that we need to focus on. We very much value the role the New Zealand Professional Firefighters Union (NZPFU), United Fire Brigades' Association (UFBA), the New Zealand Executive Fire Officers Society and the New Zealand Public Service Association (PSA) have in shaping this strategy. Some things are already underway, however this draft draws together the issues we've identified or have been raised with us, to formulate a strategy that will take us forward over the next five years.

We want to hear your thoughts and views on what we've set out. Accompanying this draft strategy is a consultation document on the structure within NZFS Training. The proposed changes to the structure complement the content of this draft strategy. The outcome of this consultation, once we have reflected on the feedback you provide, will be in a finalised strategy document with an action plan setting out what we are seeking to achieve, year by year. Please find information about how to respond to this consultation at the back of this document.

Max Hood, Director Training

Purpose and key principles

Purpose

The purpose of this Training Strategy, when finalised, is to set the direction and approach Training will take in the 2014-2018 period. We can't do some of this alone; we need the support of the rest of the organisation to make some of this happen. It will ensure that our work is planned, relevant, consistent, structured, linked, and flexible, resulting in the provision of effective and appropriate training and development for all our people. As a result, this strategy will enable us to:

- ▶ Demonstrate how the Training function aligns with NZFS strategic priorities; alignment and collaboration with other Business Unit Strategies is critical to the achievement of goals set out in this Training Strategy. For example, the interface between Training and Human Resources in the development of the leadership and management capabilities of our staff.
- ▶ Outline strategic goals that Training will deliver to the NZFS over 2014-2018. Well expressed goals provide a sound foundation from which targets for the years ahead can be set and performance against those goals and targets evaluated.
- ▶ Outline the approaches that Training will be taking to realise its strategic goals. Our approach should reflect planned projects that are responsive to and focused on the strategic objectives.
- ▶ Guide Training business planning and the prioritisation of deliverables for 2014-2018. We want to show that Training resources are managed and implemented through processes that are planned, connected and transparent.

Key principles

The following principles underpin the NZFS's Training Strategy development. They will help ensure alignment with NZFS strategic priorities, and take account of key internal and external environmental factors which may impact on the Training Strategy.

- i. Meeting the NZFS organisational strategic priorities must underpin all planning decisions made within Training.
- ii. The most important resource of the NZFS is its people capability. Training must play a key role in developing and maintaining this capability.
- iii. Training will develop organisational knowledge and skills and will work to ensure that everyone can undertake their roles safely and with confidence.
- iv. Training will ensure that everyone is empowered to play an active role in their own learning and development.
- v. Training must be able to demonstrate the value of the significant investment of resources it uses. We must be able to demonstrate the effectiveness of what we do and the difference that makes to the organisation.
- vi. Training needs to develop capability through providing flexible learning using a range of approaches, such as new technologies, to maximise the benefits for learners.

So what is training? Within this strategy, **'Training'** (who we are and what we do) is defined as the NZFS business unit that provides services to the NZFS. These services include:

- ▶ training needs analysis and training prioritisation
- ▶ training materials development
- ▶ training delivery
- ▶ review, results monitoring and evaluation
- ▶ assessment, qualification development and moderation
- ▶ support for learners and trainers.

Whereas **'training'** (what we deliver) is defined within a broader educational context as:

- ▶ the development of operational personnel capability that includes knowledge, skills and behaviours so that staff can perform their roles to the required standard
- ▶ support for the professional development of all NZFS staff
- ▶ delivery of practical courses and distance education learning, support for learning in the workplace, and other learning support such as mentoring, coaching, blended and online learning.

Training and wider links

Our Training Strategy has broader strategic links such as to the Fire Service Commission and the NZFS strategy. Figure One demonstrates these key linkages.

The Fire Service Commission

The Fire Service Commission Statement of Intent outlines to Government what outcomes it intends to achieve over 2014-2016. These are:

- ▶ Reduced consequence of structural fire
- ▶ Contribute to reduced consequence of non-fire emergencies
- ▶ Reduced consequence of vegetation fire.

The Training Strategy needs to ensure that staff capabilities will support the achievement of these outcomes.

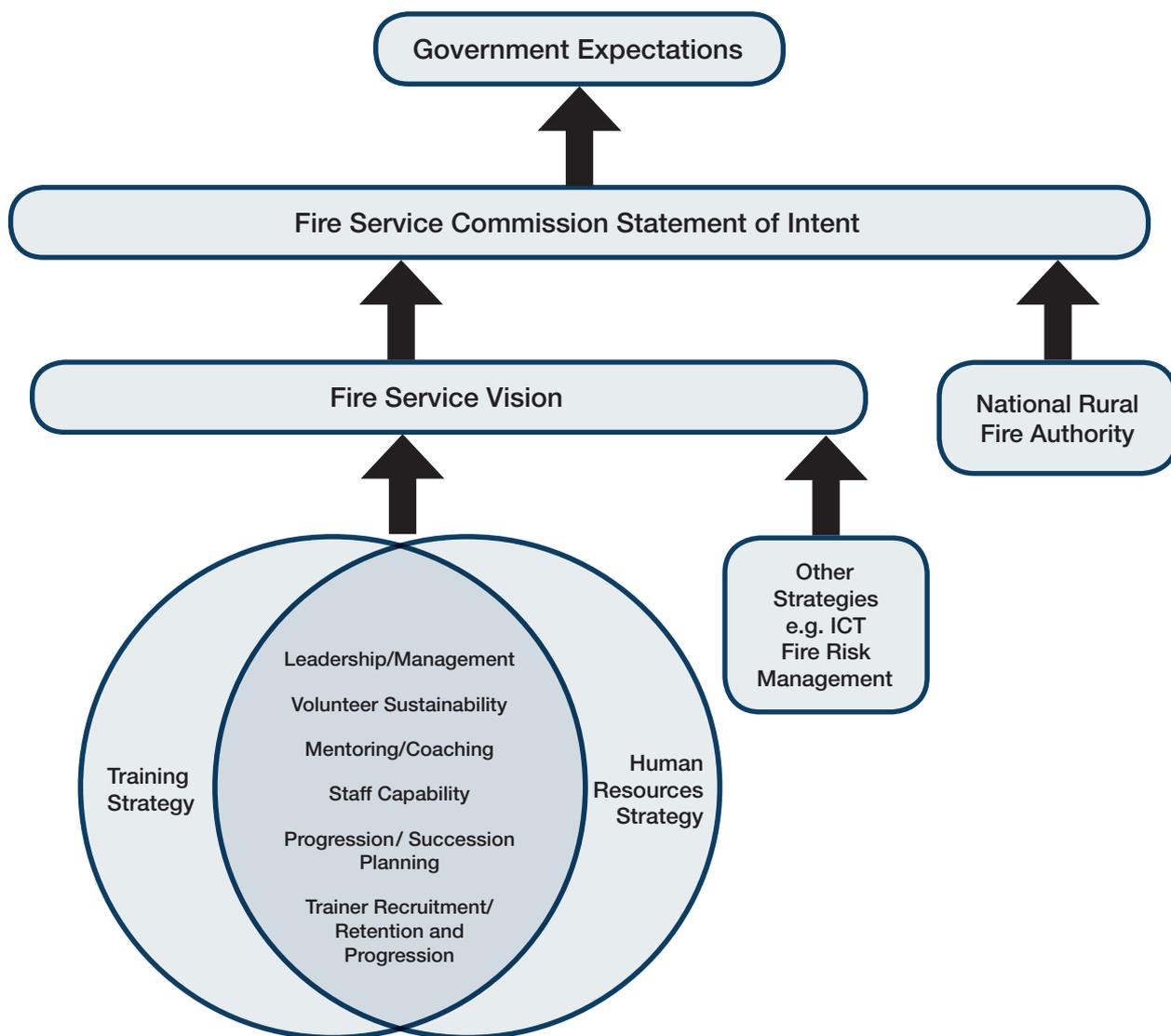
The NZFS Vision

Under review, to follow in the final version.

Other organisational strategies

All NZFS business unit strategies will contribute to the realisation of the NZFS vision. The Training Strategy has strong dependencies and links to many of the other functions such as ICT and Operations. Volunteer sustainability is also a key influence on how we should go about things.

Figure One: Other Strategy Links to Training



Training shares a common strategic space with Human Resources. This is a shared space where the strategies, business planning and results of Training and HR need to be fully aligned. The shared areas of commonality include:

- ▶ Leadership and Management
- ▶ Volunteer Sustainability
- ▶ Mentoring and Coaching
- ▶ Staff Capability
- ▶ Progression and Succession Planning
- ▶ Trainer Recruitment/Retention and Progression.

Our strategic context

Our context within New Zealand

As an organisation, we are a Crown entity, and NZFS is registered as a Government Training Establishment (GTE). A GTE is defined in section 159 of the Education Act 1989 to include any Crown entity or department as approved by the Minister of Education. GTEs are different from private training establishments in that they are Crown owned and Crown funded through their organisations, are not funded through the Tertiary Education Commission or student fees and are not registered directly by the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA). Training has responsibility for maintaining the Fire Service's registration as a GTE. Operating as a GTE, Training is accountable for developing and maintaining the required capabilities of its operational personnel over their full work cycle (from recruitment to executive level), rather than delivering pre-work courses that learners will use in other employment. In addition, Training has a role in supporting the on-going development of its non-operational employees.

Our context as a national emergency service

We are part of a broader community of organisations that help make New Zealand safer. We work with others such as Police, Ambulance, Rural Fire Authorities, Emergency Managers and a host of other partners. Like other organisations we are countrywide with over 400 fire stations and a mix of paid staff and volunteers. Volunteers are a key part of our organisation and our challenge in Training is to ensure they are properly trained in the limited time they have available. Recently we've been under the spotlight following the earthquakes in Christchurch. Crews there worked fantastically well but there are things we've identified that we could do better. This strategy will address some of those things.

Our context as a fire service

As was out-lined in the introduction to this Strategy, training in all organisations is important but for a fire service it is mission critical. We carry out community education and have expert Fire Risk Managers helping make buildings safer, but our biggest risks lie in emergency response. Unlike other organisations we don't have control over where our firefighters work. We can't make their place of work safe so we control what we can through the identification of Safe Systems of Work, our operational procedures We complement this through the provision of personal protective equipment, by supervising people working and finally by making sure everyone is confident in what they are doing by being well trained. Training is a key component of the Safe Person Concept, as we call this approach. **This is why training in the fire service is so important.**

The introduction also high-lighted that we don't have many fires or other emergency situations. Unlike other occupations we spend very little of our time doing the job we are actually here to do. Like all other fire services worldwide, we are resourced on the basis of risk, not demand. We are also called upon to do an increasingly wide variety of activities: Fire-fighting is at the core of what we do but is a reducing part of our role. We carry out rescues in a host of situations, from cars, in water, at height and we undertake rescues involving large animals. We make things safe after storms, we attend flooding incidents. There is a huge variety and the fire service is there to help. But this wider role means we have more things to practise, more procedures to learn and a wider range of sophisticated equipment to use. **This is why training in the fire service is so important.**

Firefighting remains our core business and it presents quite a few risks. Recent experience shows that the skills and experience we used to rely on aren't always enough. We have had a number of incidents where firefighters have been badly injured. We have to learn from these incidents and make sure we provide training to support the drive to eliminate them. Core skills such as using breathing apparatus and incident management are our main control measures to manage the risks associated with fires. **This is why training in the fire service is so important.**

Our strategic themes

Developing this strategy started with us talking with key stakeholders. We had many conversations, meetings and workshops with training staff. From these we distilled seven key areas that we thought the strategy should focus on. These strategic themes are at the heart of the Training Strategy. Together they describe how we intend to change things to ensure that we support the achievement of the NZFS's strategic aims. They will guide our planning, and work priorities and reporting over 2014-2018. The seven strategic themes are summarised below and expanded in the section that follows.

1 Trainer Recruitment and Retention
Training has a sustainable team of highly skilled training personnel sufficient and capable to meet organisational training needs
2 Training Facilities
Facilities and physical resources provided enable excellence in training and learning
3 Currency and Capability
The currency and capability of all personnel is maintained
4 Leadership
Credible and effective leadership at all supervisory and management levels is developed across the organisation
5 How We Deliver Training
Training delivery is accessible, timely and realistic to the context so that it best fits learners' roles and circumstances
6 Customer Focus
Customer needs are met through the adoption of a business-like approach
7 Education and Training Approach
Training and educational programmes provide learning that is flexible, planned, professional, learner centre, connected and realistic

So why do we think these seven areas are important to address? The context within which we operate dictates to some extent the changes we need to make, but we also learned a lot talking to stakeholders.

Main outcomes from engagement

We know that different people learn in different ways and that we need to vary our approaches to reflect this. There are lots of different ways we can train people and how people can learn and we need to make sure we are making the most of these different approaches to ensure we train people to the best of our ability with the resources available. We heard that we don't make the most of new technology and that with everyone spread across New Zealand it could really help us.

We also heard that volunteers have limited time to learn and train and that assessment can place an extra workload which we have to consider carefully. A lot of people said how important learning in the workplace was and how many more opportunities this could provide. We know that we have a dynamic organisation with lots of good initiatives going on. But we have finite resources and we need to use them to best effect, so we need to understand better what everyone really needs and make sure we are delivering it.

We heard loud and clear that people we train on joining NZFS or moving through TAPS programmes really benefit but that those who are in post for longer periods might not be getting the updates and refresher training they might need to maintain their competence. We all know the importance of leadership, and nowhere is it more important than in the fire service. For much of the organisation we have single tier entry so we have to identify and develop our future leaders. It's not something we have always done as well as we might but working with colleagues in HR we have much to offer now.

We had a lot of input from our trainers and people who used to be in Training. Everyone we spoke to loves the role but identified obstacles we need to overcome. Job satisfaction is one thing but we do need to make sure that being a trainer doesn't financially disadvantage anyone. We hear that Rotorua is not everyone's first choice to live so we need to look at that to ensure we have enough trainers for our world class training centre. We heard that people perceive it is difficult to return to operational roles after being in Training and that career progression isn't helped. We want Training to be a sought after career choice that boosts career options. We know that we have too many part-time trainers. We simply can't invest in their development as trainers or ensure consistency. Neither can we guarantee their availability due to operational priorities. When we do use operational staff they are paid more than our trainers, which is inequitable.

We heard that we have a host of facilities located all over New Zealand but some are not in a good state of repair and sometimes it is unclear who is using and maintaining them. We heard that we need to provide more resources to support station and brigade training locally and that we should cluster our trainers round modern purpose built training centres where they can really add value. We heard that trainers will still be needed to support stations and brigades when specific training needs are identified.

Making it happen – What we plan to do

Trainer Recruitment and Retention

Training has a sustainable team of highly skilled training personnel sufficient and capable to meet organisational training needs.

Make training attractive as a highly desirable career path or destination.

- ▶ Provide a salary scheme that attracts staff to fulltime trainer roles.
- ▶ Ensure that the training resourcing effectively manages trainer workloads.
- ▶ Promote Training as a viable specialist role as part of our communications strategy.
- ▶ Provide additional support to incentivise and attract staff to work at the National Training Centre (NTC) in Rotorua.
- ▶ Develop an induction and continuing professional development programme for trainers.
- ▶ Increase the number of fulltime trainer positions in Training and make appointments permanent promotions.

Integrate Training as a role with Operations and other organisation career paths.

- ▶ Amend the structure and processes to create a range of trainer career pathways.
- ▶ Work with Operations and HR to ensure that trainer expertise is recognised in the Career Board and the progression system.
- ▶ Develop an exchange or secondment programme with Operations to maintain trainers' operational currency.

Training Facilities

Facilities and physical resources provided enable excellence in training and learning.

Provide two centres of excellence appropriately resourced in Rotorua (NTC) and Christchurch.

- ▶ Maximise the use of NTC by developing procedures, processes, scenarios and support resources to best make use of our enhanced facilities.
- ▶ Build, working with Property, a new purpose built training centre in Christchurch.
- ▶ Adequately resource and deliver practical skills training in fit for purpose training facilities with professional trainers.
- ▶ Develop an incident management training suite at NTC.
- ▶ Review processes to ensure new equipment procurement programmes fully reflect Training's role and requirements.

Provide appropriate shared, local facilities available for training across New Zealand.

- ▶ Develop, along with Property, an agreed strategy for the use and upkeep of local training facilities.

Provide fit for purpose ICT facilities to support the requirements of online learning at each fire station.

- ▶ Ensure that the ICT strategy provides for the delivery of online learning at stations.

Currency and Capability

The currency and capability of all personnel is maintained.

Ensure that relevant skills and knowledge for operational staff is maintained

- ▶ Ensure that Operational Skills Maintenance (OSM) is up to date and relevant to all operational roles, and that it meets volunteers needs.
- ▶ Work with HR to arrange structured, regular refresher training and learning events to maintain operational managers' effectiveness and currency.
- ▶ Develop a library of training materials to support station and brigade training.

Support the ongoing development needs of all staff

- ▶ Support all staff by sourcing solutions to meet common identified training and professional development needs.
- ▶ Support the professional development of specialist staff such as HR professionals, legal advisors etc.

Leadership

Credible and effective leadership at all supervisory and management levels is developed across the organisation.

Develop individual managers' leadership skills and support their ongoing leadership development.

- ▶ We will review the Training and Progression System (TAPS) to ensure it develops leaders with the right skills and knowledge to undertake leadership roles in the organisation.
- ▶ Work with HR to develop a leadership framework to ensure that the development and ongoing professional growth of our leaders is supported.

Ensure that operational leaders are capable and confident in taking command of incidents and working within large scale operational command scenarios.

- ▶ Work with Operations to ensure that all operational leaders receive regular, realistic and challenging incident management training at all stages of their careers.

How we deliver training

Training delivery is accessible, timely and realistic to the context so that it best fits learners' roles and circumstances.

Deliver practical, up-to-date skills training and assessment online

- ▶ Work with Information Communication Technology (ICT) to develop the required infrastructure and a realistic roadmap to support online learning.
- ▶ Implement a fit for purpose Learning Management System (LMS).
- ▶ Develop Training staff capability to support online learning and assessment.
- ▶ Support learners to maximise the benefits of the flexible learning environment.

Modularise training for delivery in ways relevant to the needs of different contexts

- ▶ Adopt a tailored and modular approach to providing learning and assessment that can balance national consistency and flexibility to suit different situations particularly volunteer firefighters.

Support effective on-the-job learning and coaching/mentoring in the workplace

- ▶ Support the provision of realistic and relevant learning in the workplace through the production of a suite of online learning materials.
- ▶ Deliver programmes to improve coaching and mentoring skills within NZFS workplaces.

Customer Focus

Customer needs are met through the adoption of a business-like approach.

Professional and business-like relationships are adopted with the wider organisation

- ▶ Develop a range of processes and relationships that will improve our interaction with our customers.

The Training team will work together to deliver quality for our customers

- ▶ Build in quality checks for key staff at all key stages in the training cycle that will focus on delivering the best possible, consistent quality outcomes for our customers.
- ▶ Work is undertaken in a planned and business-like manner to ensure that all Training staff are working together to meet our customers' requirements.

Value for money is demonstrated from the investment in Training

- ▶ Make full use of evaluation techniques to inform the development and upkeep of all training programmes and products to ensure that our customers can see added value from what we do, and we can demonstrate value for money from the investment in Training.

Training communication strategies are effective

- ▶ Develop a communications strategy for Training to ensure that we effectively communicate all processes for gaining input and feedback from customers.
- ▶ Ensure that the right people are involved at the right time in all our processes.

Education and Training Approach

Training and educational programmes provide learning that is flexible, planned, professional, learner centred, connected and realistic.

Provide a flexible learning environment

- ▶ Utilise new technology to provide training and assessment at alternative times and locations wherever possible, with a particular focus on volunteers.
- ▶ Provide trainers with technologies to maximise learning within practical training.

Plan and evaluate learning programmes

- ▶ Apply and integrate all phases of the planning cycle - starting with identifying organisational and brigade level needs through to the evaluation of outcomes and making any improvements identified.

Encourage professional excellence

- ▶ Drive progress and continuous improvement by developing the educational knowledge and skills of all Training personnel.
- ▶ Plan for and support targeted research and innovation.
- ▶ Undertake regular external benchmarking with other similar business groups.

Support learner needs

- ▶ Ensure that the design and content of courses are aligned with learner needs.
- ▶ Provide extra support for learners when required.
- ▶ Encourage learners to be self-motivated and independent.
- ▶ Develop materials to help brigades and others to deliver their own training to meet local needs.

Connect with others both internally within NZFS and externally

- ▶ Connect with other NZFS staff, especially from HR, IT and Operations to ensure that materials are current with policy and other organisational projects.
- ▶ Engage proactively with external stakeholders to ensure that best educational practices are followed and that external educational standards are met.

Provide realistic learning environments

- ▶ Provide learning in the most realistic environment possible such as on-the-job, simulations or on-line scenarios.
- ▶ Maximise the potential of the National Training Centre resources for delivering realistic training.

Consultation

A strategy without an action plan is just some words on paper. Expectations on Training are increasing and the issues set out in this strategy need tackling. The issues identified are pretty well understood across the organisation but this strategy consultation exercise is important. We want to check we've got it right. Once this strategy is finalised and agreed as a result of this consultation, the actions in the previous section will be developed into a more detailed action plan for implementation.

We are keen to hear what you think about our draft strategy, so we can review what everyone thinks, make any changes necessary and then finalise it. We want to start implementing the actions set out in this document once we have an agreed strategy. You can email any comments you have to trainingstrategyconsultation@fire.org.nz and to help us collate responses we would like you to address the following questions in any response:

1. Does the strategy make the case for change sufficiently well?
2. Do you agree with the main areas for action in this strategy?
3. Is there anything else you want to see addressed in the strategy?

