

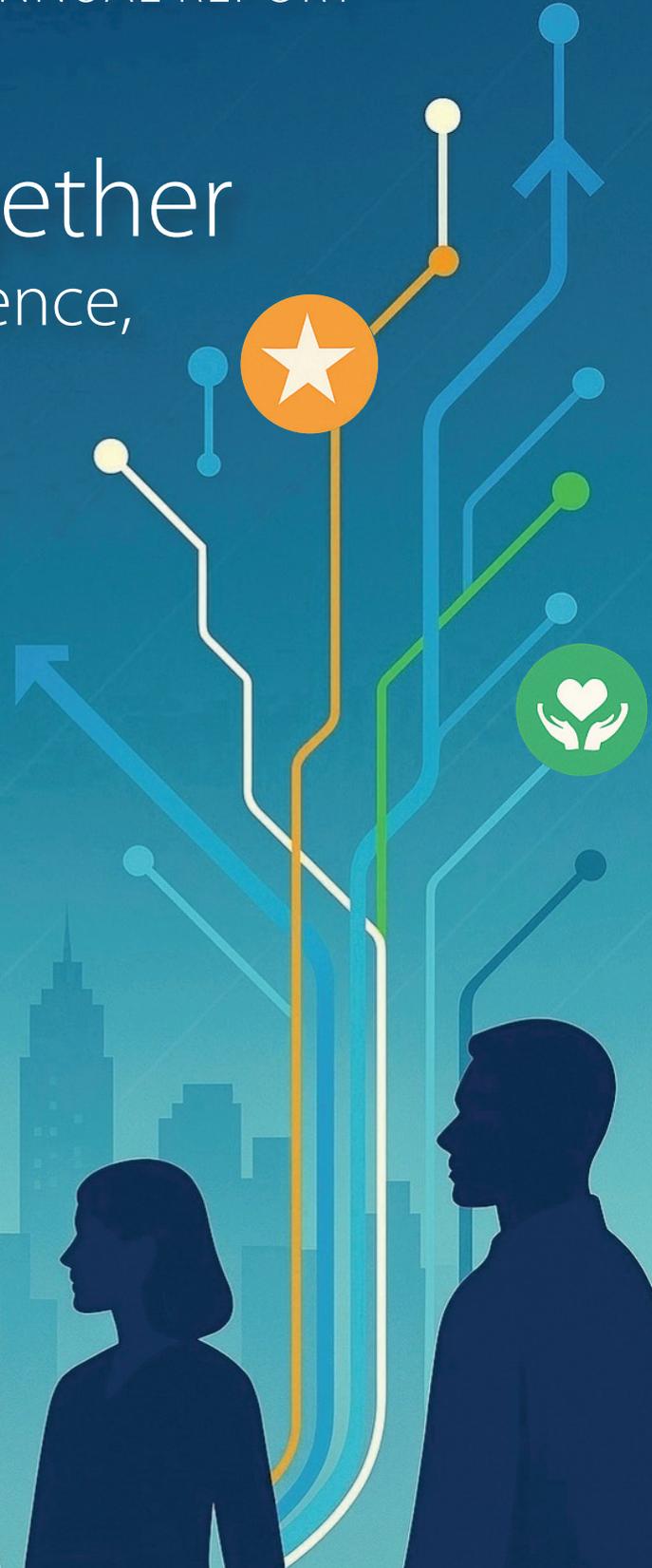


Center for  
Public Safety  
Excellence®

2025 CPSE ANNUAL REPORT

# Leading Together

Innovation, Excellence,  
and Community





Center for  
Public Safety  
Excellence®

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## Dear Colleagues,

It is my honor, as President of CPSE, to present the introductory message for the 2025 Annual Report. As I begin my first year in this role, I reflect with pride on the accomplishments and progress highlighted throughout this report. Guided by our 2025 theme, *Empowering Excellence through Innovation and Engagement*, this past year has been both a privilege and a responsibility as we worked collectively to strengthen the organization and broaden our impact. I am sincerely grateful for the dedication, creativity, and collaboration of our agencies and designees, volunteers, staff and contractors, partners, and board and commission leadership. Their shared commitment continues to advance CPSE's mission and position us for a strong, innovative future.

2025 was full of remarkable moments – from achieving 4,000 CPC designees and releasing the 11<sup>th</sup> edition of the CFAI FESSAM. Last year, we also began incubating the Association of Fire and Emergency Services Analysts. In 2025, the CPSE Center for Innovation, our wholly owned subsidiary committed to catalyzing innovation in the fire and emergency service, hit the ground running, publishing its first Strategic Scan and launching a virtual Innovation Museum. Work continues on our 2024-2027 Strategic Plan which you can read more about in this 2025 Annual Report.

Engagement with those organizations that are also working to advance our industry is critical to our collective success. The CPSE Board met with representatives of the IAFC, IAFF, and Metro Chiefs during our March 2025 Excellence Conference. In September 2025, I joined CEO Preet Bassi and Chief Mary Cameli for an impactful meeting with the IAFF at their headquarters. Multiple opportunities for collaboration were discussed.

In early 2025, we welcomed Paige Duncan and Joshua Smith to the CPSE Board. At the end of 2025, Melissa Stevenson-Diaz stepped down from the board. Thank you to Paige and Joshua for their significant contributions during their first year and farewell to Melissa who brought the critical city manager perspective to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Fire and Emergency Services White Paper, the Commission on Professional Credentialing, and the CPSE Board during her time with us.

Mary Cameli is a true embodiment of leading the fire and emergency service to excellence. For the last three years, she has led the Board as President through times of growth and adaptation. I am so grateful to Mary for her many contributions to CPSE and am glad to have her continued guidance on the Board as I step into the President's role.

As we kickoff 2026, we are joined by a new Board Member, Heather McGuire. She joins an existing group of board members committed to governance excellence and CPSE's core values: Progressive Leadership, Outcomes, and Continuous Improvement.

Looking ahead to 2026, CPSE remains firmly committed to advancing excellence in the fire and emergency services through thoughtful leadership, meaningful collaboration, and continued innovation. The achievements outlined in this report are a testament to what we can accomplish together, and they serve as a strong foundation for the work still to come. I am confident that, with the continued engagement of all that encompass the CPSE community, we will build on this momentum and further strengthen our role as a trusted leader and catalyst for progress in our industry. Thank you for your continued support and commitment to CPSE's mission.

### **Derek Bergsten, CFO, CEMSO, PIO, CTO**

CPSE Board President

## Board of Directors

### **Derek Bergsten, CFO, CEMSO, CTO, PIO**

Fire Chief, Poudre Fire Authority (CO)  
President, Director-at-large

### **Alec Oughton, CFO**

Fire Chief, Aurora Fire Rescue (CO)  
Vice President, Fire Chief Representative

### **Paige Duncan**

Town Manager, Town of Foxborough (MA)  
Treasurer, City Manager Representative

### **Mary Cameli, CFO**

Fire Chief, Mesa Fire and Medical Department (AZ)  
Director, Fire Chief Representative

### **Reginald Freeman, Ph.D., CFO**

Executive Director of Fire and EMS, NEOM, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia  
Director at-large

### **Sara Jahnke, Ph.D.**

Director and Senior Scientist, NDRI-USA  
Director-at-large

### **Ben May**

Ret. Dir. of Global Business and Alliances, Walt Disney Co.  
Director-at-large

### **Heather McGuire**

City Manager, City of St. Charles (IL)  
Director, City Manager Representative

### **Joshua Smith, Ph.D., CFO**

Assistant to the General President, Training, Education, and Grants Administration, IAFF, Washington D.C.  
Director, IAFF Representative

# The CPSE Staff



**Preet Bassi, CAE**  
Chief Executive Officer

**Ruth-Marie Erskine**  
CFAI and Events Administrator

**Mike Higgins, CFO, CEMSO, CTO**  
CPC Program Manager

**Katie Jones**  
Systems Administrator

**Kelly Martin, FESA**  
Community Experience Manager

**Debbie Sobotka, CPSP™**  
Chief Operating Officer

**Ben Stone, Ph.D., CFO, CEMSO**  
CPC Coordinator

**Jim White, CFO**  
CFAI Program Manager



## In Memory of Brian R. Dean, CFO, EFO

In late 2025, the CPSE community mourned the loss of one of its earliest and most devoted champions, Chief Brian R. Dean, CFO, EFO, Assistant Fire Chief (Ret.), and CPSE Technical Advisor Program Manager, who passed away on November 20, 2025.

Brian brought deep curiosity, generosity of spirit, and genuine heart to every aspect of his work. Those who worked alongside him—agencies, peers, and mentees alike—were better for having known him. He was known for his welcoming nature, thoughtful guidance, and the simple but powerful way he signed every message: “Stay Safe.” It is a reminder we honor in his memory.

Chief Dean became active with CPSE in the late 1990s and dedicated more than 25 years of service to advancing accreditation and professional excellence in the fire and emergency services. During that time, he served in many roles, including accreditation manager, peer assessor, team leader,

mentor, conference presenter, instructor, technical advisor, and ultimately as the Technical Advisor Program Manager. In 2014, he played a pivotal role as process lead for the Reimagining Accreditation Project, helping shape the future of CPSE.

Brian will be remembered for his ever-present smile and his ability to bring warmth and perspective to every conversation. He was a trusted colleague, a valued mentor, and a dear friend to many within the CPSE community.

In recognition of his lasting impact, Brian received the Ray Picard Award in 2015 for championing the self-assessment and accreditation process and helping foster a culture of continuous improvement. He often shared the phrase “Excellence Never Stops,” a belief he lived by and encouraged in others through education, professional development, and service.

Brian’s fire service career began in 1982 as a Firefighter/EMT with the Winter Park Fire-Rescue Department in Winter Park, Florida. He retired in 2010 as assistant fire chief for administration, having risen through the ranks of engineer, lieutenant, and battalion chief. A lifelong learner, he earned an M.S. in Leadership from Grand Canyon University, a B.S. in Business Administration from the University of Central Florida, and an A.A. in General Studies from Valencia Community College. He was a proud graduate of the National Fire Academy’s Executive Fire Officer Program and a longtime Chief Fire Officer (CFO) designee through the Commission on Professional Credentialing.

Chief Brian R. Dean’s legacy lives on through the countless professionals he inspired and the enduring commitment to excellence he championed throughout his career.

## CPSE Contractors

Contractors are an essential part of CPSE's daily operations, providing valuable expertise and support across a range of functions. Regular contractor roles include ACR Reviewers, Technical Reviewers, CFAI Coordinator, TAP Advisors, and University Instructors. In addition to these ongoing positions, CPSE frequently engages contractors for specialized projects throughout the year, such as the 11th Edition Project Manager.

Thank you to everyone who contributed to CPSE's success.

### 2025 CPSE Contractors

- Cindy Bonham, CFO
- Alan Butsch, CFO, CEMSO
- Greg Chesser, CFO
- Ed Comeau
- Fletcher Dahman
- Rebecca Desch
- Steve Dubay, CFO
- Holger Durre, CFO
- Ralph Ensign
- Rick Fagan, CFO
- David Farnum, CFO
- Alex Fisher
- Sarah Flores
- Terry Ford, CFO
- Ken Horn
- Matt Jacoby, CFO
- Mike Kressuk
- Shanna Kuempel
- Rich Merrell, FO
- Bryan Norris, CFO
- Jerry Nulliner, CFO
- Thomas O'Brien, CFO
- Stephen Olson, CFO
- John O'Neal, CFO
- Ernst Piercy, CFO
- Jodie Ramirez, FESA
- Karl Ristow, CFO
- James Mike Stallings
- Bill Stark, CFO
- Amy Valdez, CFO
- Trevor Wilson, CFO





# Commission on Fire Accreditation International

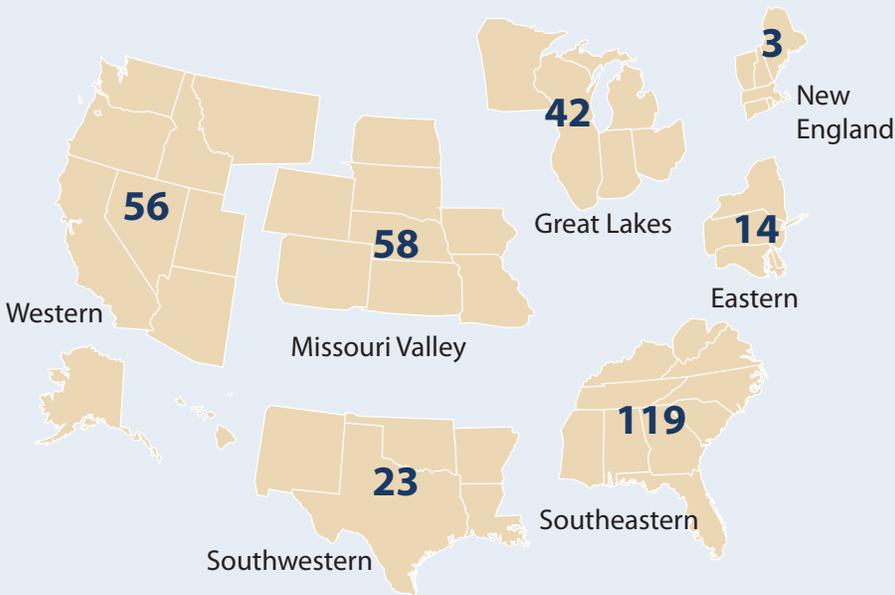
## Accredited Agencies by the Numbers

**334** Accredited Agencies

**234** Career **74** DoW **23** Combination **2** Volunteer **1** Industrial



Canada



International

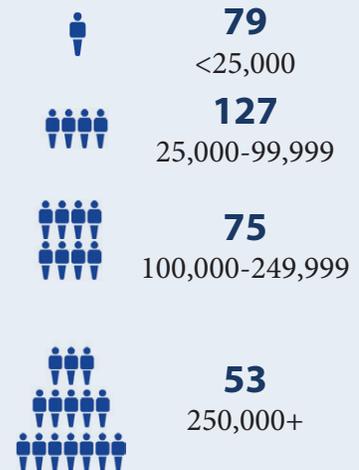
### Percent Protected

by a CFAI-Accredited Agency

<b>17%</b> Canadian Population	<b>14%</b> U.S. Population
--------------------------------------	----------------------------------

### Population Protected

by Agency



### Department of War





Board. Beginning in 2026, Chief Tim Sendlebach, CFO, CTO (Loveland, Colorado), will join CFAI representing agencies serving populations of more than 100,000.

The Commission held two hearings in 2025, during which 56 new and renewing agencies appeared before CFAI. By year's end, 329 agencies held accredited status, with a total of 519 agencies actively engaged with the model. CFAI anticipates a strong year in 2026, as another large group of agencies is scheduled to appear before the Commission during both hearings.

Chief Huber further reflected that 2025 marked a period of notable growth and modernization for CFAI. Looking ahead to 2026, planning is already under way for an in-person team leader symposium and the development of the highly anticipated CFAI Learning Pathways. Combined with ongoing updates to key documents and cross-marketing efforts with the Technical Advisor Program (TAP), these initiatives underscore CFAI's continued commitment to delivering value to member agencies and upholding the highest standards in the fire and emergency services profession.

CFAI Chair Chief Otto Huber, CFO, reported that the Commission on Fire Accreditation International (CFAI) experienced significant growth and development throughout the year. Key achievements included the release of the *Second Edition of Quality Improvement for the Fire and Emergency Services*, which incorporates the *Eleventh Edition of the Fire and Emergency Services Self-Assessment Model* (FESSAM).

This comprehensive update to the FESSAM reflects contributions from the largest number of fire and emergency services organizations and subject-matter experts to date. The 11th Edition introduces new criteria that place increased emphasis on emergency medical transport services and the role of agency public information processes. These additions, along with several other new measures, expanded the total number of performance indicators from 250 to 266. To support implementation, CFAI launched a significant-changes webinar in April 2025 and, throughout the year, updated dozens of program templates and educational materials to align with the new FESSAM.

CFAI staff also continued implementing recommendations from the 2024 Business Process Plan update. These efforts included migrating the Annual Compliance Report (ACR) process to the Cloud Generation platform and establishing a streamlined "one-invoice" process for agency peer team expenses. In addition, the commission successfully navigated several leadership transitions, including the selection of a new chair and co-chair, and adopted policies addressing the integration of artificial intelligence. Together, these initiatives position CFAI for continued expansion and enhanced delivery of services in 2026 and beyond.

The commission itself also experienced several membership changes. CFAI welcomed Chief Paul Hutt (Ottawa, Ontario) as its international agency representative and Chief Kevin Good (Fort Belvoir, VA) as the representative for Department of Defense agencies. In 2025, Chief Steve Dongworth completed his nine-year term with CFAI; Chief Steve Dirksen stepped down in August after eight years of dedicated service; and Heather McGuire transitioned to the CPSE

## **CFAI Commissioners**

### **Chair, Otto Huber, CFO**

Fire Chief, Loveland-Symmes Fire Department (OH)  
Volunteer & Combination Agency Representative

### **Vice Chair, Rick Potter, CFO**

Fire Chief, Shawnee Fire Department (KS)  
Agencies under 100,000 Representative

### **Kathy Ball**

City Manager, City of Johnson City (TN)  
City/County Managers Representative

### **David Coker, FO**

Captain, Greensboro Fire Department (NC)  
Labor President agencies over 100,000 Representative

### **Kevin Good**

Fire Chief, Fort Belvoir Fire & Emergency Services (VA)  
Department of War Representative

### **Paul Hutt**

Fire Chief, Ottawa Fire Services (ON) Canada  
International Fire Agencies Representative

### **Salvator Izzo**

Senior Risk Control/Fire Protection Engineer  
Insurance Services Office (ISO)  
Insurance Industry Representative

### **Robert McClintock**

Assistant to the General President for Technical Assistance and Information Resources, International Association of Firefighter (IAFF) Washington, D.C.  
Labor Representative

### **James (JC) Mitchell**

Battalion Chief, City of Carmel Fire Department (IN)  
Labor President agencies under 100,000 Representative

### **Chelsea Rubadou**

Senior Fire Protection Engineer, National Fire Protection Association (NFPA)  
Consensus Standards Representative

### **Salvatore Scarpa, CFO**

Fire Chief, City of Columbus Fire Department (GA)  
Accredited Agency Fire Chief - 350 or More Career Firefighters

### **Tim Sendelbach, CFO, CTO**

Fire Chief, Loveland Fire Rescue Authority (CO)  
Agencies over 100,000 Representative





# Commission on Fire Professional Credentialing

## Credentialed Officers by the Numbers

4,192 Credentialed Officers



2,189



968



306



46



268



330



85



### Department of War



9



23



6



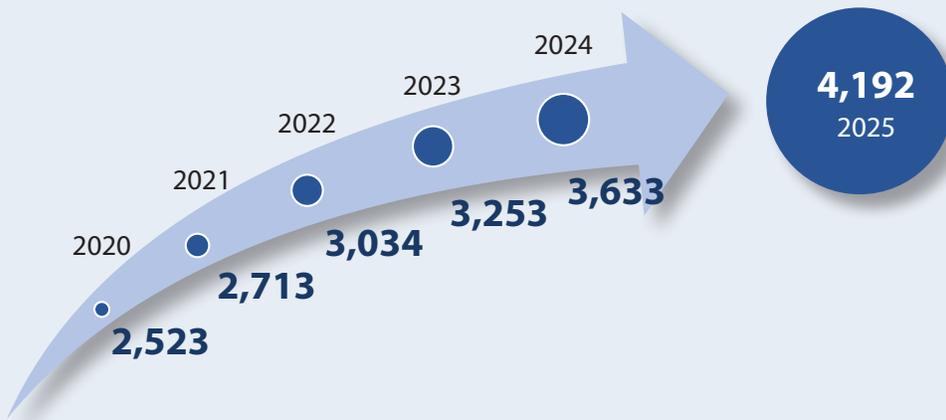
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3



7



**CPC efforts in 2025 included:**



**CPC® Mentor Program**

**Enhanced Mentoring Program**

The CPC Mentoring Program was designed and implemented in 2025 to provide increased support for credentialing candidates throughout the application process—from initial preparation through submission of completed applications. Whether candidates were beginning their credentialing journey or working to strengthen their application, the program offered expert guidance from seasoned CPC peer reviewers, tailored support, and valuable insights to help applicants submit stronger and more impactful application documents.

**Application Standardization**

In 2025, the CPC streamlined the credentialing application process through the introduction of simplified forms, clearer documentation requirements, and increased consistency in evaluation criteria. These improvements make the application process more user-friendly and transparent. Planned enhancements for 2026 will focus on further improvements to the online application system to increase efficiency and effectiveness and enhance the overall applicant experience.

**CPC Crosswalk Program**

The CPC introduced the Crosswalk Program in 2025 to foster partnerships with agencies that operate established education and certification programs. These collaborations create pathways to credentialing for professionals who complete programs aligned with CPC designation technical competencies, providing additional recognition for qualified individuals.

In 2025, the Commission on Professional Credentialing® (CPC®) embarked on a series of initiatives aimed at strategic advancement and growth. These efforts focused on enhancing credentialing processes, expanding pathways to credentialing, and strengthening professional recognition.

CPC Chair Alexander Henderson, CTO, noted that the commission “focused intently on strengthening the credentialing experience by improving accessibility, efficiency, and support for credentialing applicants. From standardizing and modernizing our application processes to expanding mentoring opportunities and launching the CPC Crosswalk Program, we created clearer and more effective pathways for professional recognition. Combined with continued growth in designations, these efforts reinforce our commitment to advancing excellence in the fire and emergency service.”

**Leadership Updates**

The CPC welcomed several new commissioners in 2025, including Chief Chris Angermuller (Windsor Severance Fire Rescue), James Burgess (International Association of Fire Fighters), Chief Michael Cunningham (Cobb County Fire & Emergency Services), and Chief Matt Knott (Green Bay Metro Fire Department). The CPC also added a new commissioner role for the Fire and Emergency Service Analyst (FESA) designation, now filled by A. Jessica Handoko Nelson (Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department).

The contributions of outgoing CPC commissioners Joshua Smith, Tiffany Green, and Hezedeon Smith were substantial, and the commission extends its sincere gratitude for their dedicated service.

The Crosswalk Program delivers benefits for both professionals and training providers. State fire training agencies, regional academies, higher education institutions, and other eligible organizations may have their curricula formally recognized by the CPC. This recognition translates to Category A credit for candidates, expediting progress toward a CPC designation.

### **Designation Insignia Purchasing Through Amazon**

In August 2025, the CPC launched an Amazon storefront for designation insignia distribution, representing a significant service improvement for new and existing designees. Designation-specific uniform bars and lapel pins are important for designees as they celebrate professional development

accomplishments. Transitioning to an Amazon-based ordering system substantially reduced delivery times and increased designee satisfaction, demonstrating the CPC's broader commitment to leveraging technology to enhance the member experience.

### **Growth in Designations**

By August 2025, the CPC surpassed 4,000 total designations. By year's end, 4,192 designations had been awarded, representing a 15 percent increase from the previous year. Year-end results reflected consistent performance across nearly all credentials, with application volume and approvals exceeding annual benchmarks and reinforcing sustained demand for CPC designations.



### **CPC Commissioners**

#### **Chair, Alexander C. Henderson, Ph.D., CTO**

Associate Professor, Marist University (NY)  
Representative: Chief Training Officers

#### **Vice Chair, Chris Angermuller, DPA, CFO, CTO, CEMSO**

Fire Chief, Windsor Severance Fire Rescue (CO)  
Representative: Agency head who is a CFO protecting populations less than 50,000

#### **James Burgess, CTO**

Director of Training and Grants Administration, International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF), Washington D.C.  
Representative: Labor

#### **Todd Canale, CFO**

Fire Chief, Davis-Monthan Air Force Base Emergency Services (AZ)  
Representative: Department of War Departments

#### **Michael Cunningham, Ph.D., CFO**

Fire Chief, Cobb County Fire & Emergency Services (GA)  
Representative: Agency head who is a CFO protecting populations greater than 250,000

#### **Rebecca Grill, ICMA-CM, CPM, CMC**

City Manager, City of Oshkosh (WI)  
Representative: City Manager

#### **William Hyde, CFO, CEMSO, FM**

Fire Chief, Rogers Fire Department (AR)  
Representative: Chief EMS Officers

#### **Matthew Knott, CFO, FM, PIO**

Fire Chief, Green Bay Metro Fire Department (WI)  
Representative: Agency Head who is a CFO Protecting Populations 50,000-250,000

#### **Thomas Maloney, CFO, FM**

Deputy Chief/Fire Marshal, Marysville Fire District (WA)  
Representative: Fire Marshals

#### **Ashley McDonald, PIO**

Representative: Public Information Officers

#### **A. Jessica Handoko Nelson, FESA**

Senior Data Analyst, Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department (VA)  
Representative: Fire and Emergency Services Analysts

#### **Grant Tinker, FO, CTO, CFO**

Battalion Chief, Colorado Springs Fire Department (CO)  
Representative: Fire Officers

#### **Toni B. Washington, CFO**

Fire Chief, Decatur Fire Rescue Department (GA)  
Representative: At-Large

## Commission on Professional Credentialing 2025 Scholarship Recipients

### CEMSO

**Kevin Easton**, Englewood Area Fire Control District

**Nicholas Khan**, Naval Submarine Base Kings Bay Fire and Emergency Services

**Jacob Fouts**, City of Snoqualmie Fire Department

**Curtis Sutcliffe**, Marion City Fire Department (SC)

**Brian Spies**, Prince George's County Fire and EMS Department

### CFO

**Mike Beard**, Indianapolis Fire Department

**Kelly Johnston**, Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department

**Ken Maine**, Brighton Fire Rescue District (CO)

**Chad Russell**, Andover Fire Rescue MA

**Chris Salter**, Morrisville Fire/Rescue Department

### CTO

**Justin Champion**, Pueblo of Acoma Fire Department

**Nicholas Khan**, Naval Submarine Base Kings Bay Fire and Emergency Services

**Wayne Edder**, Butte Valley Fire Protection District

**Dominic Orlando**, Spring Hill Fire Department

**Cary McCormic**, Puget Sound Regional Fire Authority

### FM

**Danny Timmons**, Travis County Fire Marshal Office

**Christopher Allen**, Montgomery County Fire Rescue Service (MD)

**Cindy Taffel**, Broward Sheriff's Office, Department of Fire Rescue and Emergency Services

### PIO

**Kevin Spruill**, Richmond Fire & Emergency Services

**Carlee E Hatchell**, Lexington County Sheriff's Department

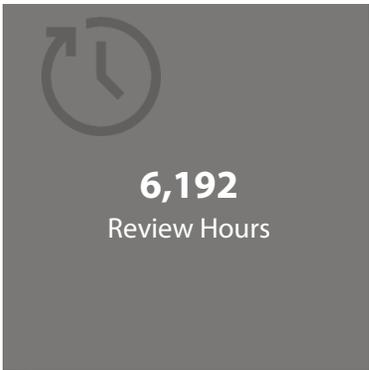
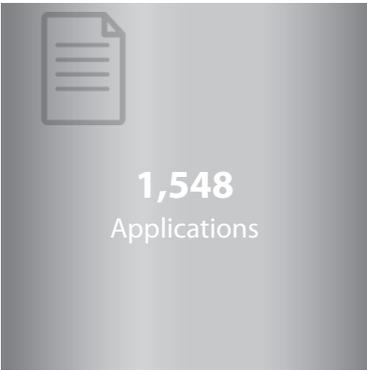
**Sarah Alexander**, Lexington County Sheriff's Department

**Aaron Smullin**, Belton Fire Department



# Volunteers

The accomplishments of CPSE, CFAI, and CPC in 2025 were made possible by the unwavering dedication, expertise, and service of our volunteers. From conducting site visits and reviewing designation portfolios to providing subject-matter expertise and leading consortia, your contributions are essential to our success. Thank you for your continued commitment to advancing our mission to lead the fire and emergency services to excellence through the continuous quality improvement processes of accreditation, credentialing, and education.



## Reviewer Milestones

Congratulations to the following peer reviewers who celebrated a 5-year milestone during 2025:

### Five Years

- Robert Barron
- Michael Bronner
- Buddy Brooks
- Donald Burns
- Travis Clawson
- Brian Couch
- Justin Ducey
- Shawn Dunstan

- Danny Garner
- Derek Henson
- Josh Holzheimer
- Thomas Legler
- Allen Lewis
- Douglas Nelson
- Robert Ramage
- Jarrod Sights
- Thomas States
- Gregory Summitt

### Ten Years

- John (Matt) Lawrence
- Thomas O'Brien
- Josh Waldo

### 20 Years

- John O'Neal
- Greg Rogers

### Fifteen Years

- Steve Przbrowski

## Assessor Milestones

Congratulations to the following peer assessors who celebrated a 5-year milestone during 2025:

### Five Years

- Michael Applegate
- Mike Bailey
- Jeff Beam
- Ed Beardsley
- Matthew Clark
- Brian Cox
- Julien Crolet
- P. Corey Davidson
- J. Kevin Ferry
- Nathan Gac
- John (Brad) Hall
- Jason Hathcock
- Sean Jones
- Jake Leeper
- Richard Loewer
- Scott Maddux
- Andrew Olesen
- Wesley Rogers
- Darryl Sawyer
- Jen Sliemers

- Will Smart
- Corey Smedley
- Joshua Steen
- Laurie Stone
- Jamie Strassner
- Beth Stuglik
- Harry Tulier
- Joseph Voloski

### Ten Years

- Danielle Bryan
- Brynne Burrough
- Cara Flores
- Robert Hilker
- Dr. Byron Kennedy
- Joshua Knepper
- Jonathan Malinowski
- Danny Nicholson
- Barry Shughart
- Jennifer Smith
- Norma Jean Valdez

### Fifteen Years

- Mike Barakey
- Mike Calderazzo
- Roland DeGrauw
- Alan Fletcher
- Robert Lee
- Michael Pritchard
- Neil Rosenberger
- Robert Sepulveda

### Twenty Years

- John Donahue
- Steven Hook
- John O'Neal
- Gary West

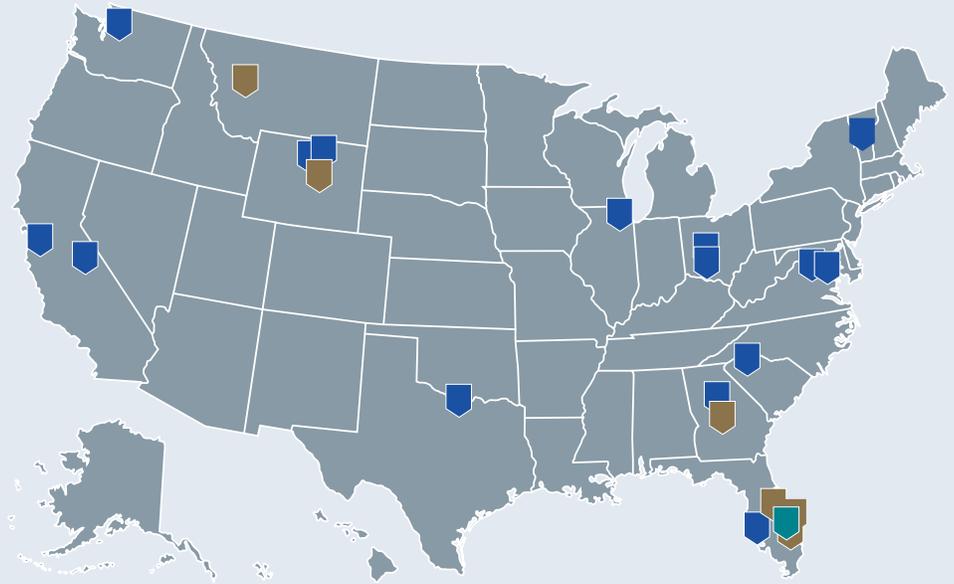


# Technical Advisor Program

2025 marked a significant milestone for the Technical Advisor Program (TAP) as it celebrated 20 years of providing expert guidance and accreditation support to agencies nationwide. During the year, the team assisted a strong mix of returning clients and new agencies, including a growing number seeking service delivery improvements outside the formal accreditation process.

Throughout the year, Technical Advisors demonstrated exceptional professionalism and adaptability, frequently assuming additional responsibilities to meet rising demand. Their commitment to quality and continuous improvement remains central to TAP's impact and long-standing reputation.

Looking ahead, the program anticipates continued growth. Key priorities for the coming year include advancing current projects and enhancing program visibility to support sustained engagement and long-term success.



### Community-Driven Strategic Planning (CDSP) (17)

- Estes Valley, CO
- Scotts Valley, CA
- Williston, VT
- Cape Coral, FL
- Auburn, WA
- McKinney, TX
- Liberty Township, OH
- South Lake County, CA
- Lincolnshire-Riverwoods, IL
- Annapolis, MD

- Greer, SC
- DeKalb County, GA
- Golden, CO
- Joint Base Andrews, MD
- Dayton, OH

- Aurora, CO
- Central Valley, MT
- Self-Assessment Manual (SAM) (1)**
- Coconut Creek, FL

### Community Risk Assessment/Standards of Cover (CRA/SOC) (6)

- Clayton County, GA
- Clermont, FL
- Coconut Creek, FL
- Coral Gables, FL

**Total Stakeholders Engaged – 859**





In 2025, CPSE delivered 18 Quality Improvement for the Fire and Emergency Services workshops. CPSE extends its appreciation to the agencies that hosted these sessions.

- Cherokee County, GA
- Rockford, IL
- Bernalillo County, NM
- Vail, AZ
- Joint Base San Antonio, TX
- West Fargo, ND
- Clayton, NC
- Montgomery County, MD
- Palm Beach Gardens, FL
- Pittsburgh, PA
- Shawnee, KS
- Henry County, GA
- Loveland, OH
- Culver City, CA
- Saudi Arabia
- Huntley, IL
- Apex, NC
- Aurora, CO

CPSE also transitioned the Peer Assessor Workshop from a live webinar format to an asynchronous learning model. Participants now have 30 days to complete the course, providing greater flexibility while maintaining meaningful instructor interaction.

CPSE University continued to expand its resource library, offering comprehensive handouts and instructional videos to support agencies and individuals pursuing accreditation and credentialing.

Several departments also enrolled in the Strategic Planning Academy and the Community Risk Assessment/Standards of Cover Academy. These virtual offerings are well suited for agencies that demonstrate the following characteristics:

An objective individual to serve as a facilitator

- Support and participation from the chief, labor, and a cross section of the department
- Comfort with virtual learning
- A proven track record of approaching initiatives with discipline and dedication



### Live in-person education

18 Deliveries  
438 Attendees

### Live virtual education

4 Deliveries  
121 Attendees

### Strategic Planning Academy

5

### CRA/SOC Academy

2

**On demand educational content accessed – 31,856**





# 2025 EXCELLENCE CONFERENCE



IGNITING INNOVATION  
FUELING THE FUTURE OF THE FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICE

The 2025 Excellence Conference brought together fire and emergency services leaders from around the world for a week focused on learning, collaboration, and innovation. With a dynamic program spanning accreditation hearings, education sessions, networking events, and exhibitor showcases, this year's conference lived up to its theme: Igniting Innovation.

The conference opened on Monday with Commission on Fire Accreditation International (CFAI) hearings. Fifty agencies—including 15 first-time participants—appeared before the Commission. Attendees observed agency presentations, peer team findings, and Commission deliberations, offering a transparent look at the accreditation process and the continual improvement efforts behind it.

Tuesday's official kickoff featured a ceremonial presentation of colors and the national anthem, followed by



welcoming remarks from Chief Mary Cameli, CFO, CPSE Board President. She highlighted this year's theme, **Igniting Innovation**, emphasizing that it would be reflected throughout the week's general sessions, hearings, and educational offerings, setting an energetic and forward-looking tone.

Programming continued with the ever popular city managers panel, *"City Manager Perspectives on Hiring, Managing, and Accrediting Fire*

*Departments."* With the implementation of the National Emergency Response Information System (NERIS) approaching, attendees heard insights from Tom Jenkins, CFO, CEMSO, UL Fire Safety Research Institute, and Jim White, CFO, CFAI Program Manager. The day concluded with the State of the Fire Service panel, where leaders examined current challenges, emerging opportunities, and trends shaping the profession.





Education remains a cornerstone of CPSE's mission. This year's revamped schedule offered more than 80 sessions across six topical tracks:

- Advanced Accreditation
- Accreditation 101
- Credentialing
- Leadership & Management
- Community Risk Reduction (CRR)
- Innovation Through Technology

From foundational concepts to cutting-edge advancements, attendees tailored their learning experience to their professional roles. The credentialing track featured an unstructured format on Thursday, allowing designees to connect, share insights, and network with peers.

Networking continued as a defining feature of this year's conference. A lively Tuesday evening reception brought together attendees, speakers, and industry partners, encouraging collaboration and providing dedicated time in the exhibit hall. CPSE consortiums also met on Wednesday and Thursday, creating additional opportunities for shared problem-solving and community building.

Throughout the week, attendees engaged with industry-leading organizations showcasing innovative tools, technologies, and services that support excellence in fire and emergency services. CPSE extends its sincere thanks to the sponsors and exhibitors whose generous support contributed to the conference's success.

**2025 Sponsors**

- Anna Maria College
- Blanchard
- Brycer, The Compliance Engine
- Columbia Southern University
- Darkhorse Emergency
- Deccan International
- DocTract
- ESO
- Esri
- Essential Personnel
- First Due
- FirstWatch
- International Fire Service Training Association (IFSTA)
- Image Trend
- Inspection Reports Online (IROL)
- Marist University
- PowerDMS by NEOGOV
- PSTrax
- Tablet Command
- UL FSRI





# Community Experience

The Community Experience program was created to keep CFAI agencies and CPC designees proactively engage between cycles. Through ongoing engagement opportunities, the program encourages networking, learning, knowledge sharing, and new ways to stay involved throughout the year.

In 2025, CPSE Community Experience presented 14 webinars that engaged nearly 500 participants. Topics ranged from research and Mass Casualty Incident (MCI) response to NERIS implementation, death communication, and navigating the political landscape. Designees were also treated to specially tailored events for their designation to continue their education

## Virtual Event Takeaways

October 1, 2025

### NLC Research Exchange

- 1) NLC research shows America's population growth over the last century has primarily occurred in urban areas.
- 2) If urbanization trends continue, as much as 99.8% of the population will reside in cities by 2070.
- 3) Thank you to everyone who provided insights into what public safety research questions should be explored.

## CPSE Community Experience Presents Events

Event	Date	Location
Excellence Conference & CPC	1/15/2025	Designee Discussion
CEMSO - MCI Response	3/19/2025	Designee Discussion
FESA Introduction	4/11/2025	Meet-Up
FO - Death Communication	4/21/2025	Designee Discussion
PIO - Evacuation Messaging	5/5/2025	Designee Discussion
Dog Therapy Programs	5/13/2025	Meet-Up
Public Perceptions in Firefighting	5/27/2025	Fire Chief Chat
CFO - Advocacy	7/29/2025	Designee Discussion
CTO - Intergenerational	8/5/2025	Designee Discussion
NLC Research Exchange	10/1/2025	Meet-Up
FIRST - Drexel Research	10/29/2025	Fire Chief Chat
FESA - NERIS	11/21/2025	Designee Discussion
11th Edition Town Hall	11/29/2025	Meet-Up
CFO - Political Landscape	12/8/2025	Designee Discussion

## CPSE Community Experience Presents Event Types

- Designee Discussion**  
Hosted for each specific designation to support their continued education goals and hot industry topics
- Fire Chief Chats**  
Hosted for Fire Chiefs of Accredited agencies to foster strong leadership skills and worldwide networking
- Meet Ups**  
Hosted for any member of the CPSE Community to engage in trending and novel emerging trends within the industry



# Consortiums

As in years past, CPSE staff actively participated in each Consortium meeting – whether in-person or virtual – delivering corporate updates and conducting continuing education sessions related to accreditation and credentialing. In 2025, CPSE was able to meet and chat with over 1,350 individuals across 60 meetings.

Nearly 20 education presentations were provided to consortium members by CPSE staff in addition to providing important information on CPSE processes. Hot topics this year included the CFAI 11th Edition, NERIS, site visit experiences, and credentialing.



# Industry Presentations and Engagement



In 2025, CPSE was invited to deliver presentations at 11 meetings and conferences. Content included introductions to CPSE quality improvement processes, CPSE’s commitment to data, and more! Through these events, CPSE was able to engage with over 880 people.

## CPSE External Presentations

Event	Date	Location
ESO Wave	4/24/2025	Austin, TX
NCR FESA Symposium	4/25/2025	Fairfax County, VA
FireDAWG (CRR)	5/12/2025	Glendale, AZ
TRAIN Summit	5/14/2025	Champaign, IL
Black Chief Officers Committee (BCOC) Conference	7/23/2025	Fort Lauderdale, FL
FireDAWG (FRI)	8/12/2025	Orlando, FL
BCOC Webinar	10/15/2025	Virtual
Women in Fire	11/3/2025	Loveland, CO
Nerdstock	11/5/2025	Loveland, CO
FireDAWG (TSI)	12/7/2025	Irving, TX
TSI	12/9/2025	Irving, TX

CPSE staff continued to provide subject matter expertise through engagement with various fire service entities:

Service Entity	Staff
Congressional Fire Services Institute (CFSI) National Advisory Committee (NAC) Chair	Preet Bassi
CFSI NAC Member	Debbie Sobotka
Marist University Fire Service Advisory Board	Preet Bassi
NFPA 1000 Chair	Mike Higgins
NFPA 1000 Member	Ben Stone
NFPA 1022 Chair	Preet Bassi
NFPA 1022 Member	Kelly Martin
NFPA 1750 Member	Jim White
USFA Data and Tech Working Group Co-Chair	Preet Bassi
USFA Training and Education Working Group Member	Debbie Sobotka
Vision 20/20 Steering Committee Member	Mike Higgins
6th Fire Service Needs Assessment Working Group Member	Debbie Sobotka
Training Responders’ Awareness using Immersive Next-Generation Technology (TRAIN) Project Technical Panelist	Preet Bassi
AFESA Education Subcommittee Member	Kelly Martin





Facebook Reach  
22,706

LinkedIn Reach  
17,101

Website Visits  
307,127



**Center for Public Safety Excellence**  
17,473 followers  
8mo • 🌐

As we conclude National Volunteer Week, CPSE would like to say a huge "THANK YOU" to all of our volunteers for all of your contributions to our organization. Because of your dedication to our mission, together we are able to make the fire and emergency services better and stronger. Thank You! <https://lnkd.in/epDeA3eh>



**Center for Public Safety Excellence**  
16,949 followers  
2w • 🌐

Durango Fire & Rescue (Colorado) conducted a community-driven strategic planning process. Facilitated by the Center of Public Safety Excellence. 37 community members and 22 agency members participated in this planning workshop. The goal of the four-day process was to act as a catalyst for the development of the agency's five-year strategic plan.

Ernst Piercy and 55 others • 1 repost

**Center for Public Safety Excellence**  
17,473 followers  
5mo • 🌐

CPSE is launching a new subsidiary, the CPSE Center for Innovation, to address an industry-wide gap in evidence-based decision making and to serve as a catalyst for innovation in the industry. ....more

CPSE Announces a new Subsidiary

www.cpse.org

**Center for Public Safety Excellence**  
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4w • 🌐

There are now 3,577 CPC designated officers! CEMSO 206/CFO 1998/CTO 262/FESA 11/FO 793/FM 254/PIO 53. Search the credentialing directory at <https://lnkd.in/efPuUxK5> Congratulations, everyone!

**THE COMMISSION ON PROFESSIONAL CREDENTIALING**

206	1998	262	11	793	254	53

Norris W. Croom III and 120 others • 12 reposts

**Center for Public Safety Excellence**  
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6mo • Edited • 🌐

CPSE is collaborating with Fire Safety Research Institute and U.S. Fire Administration to ensure CFAI agencies are #NERISready. Read more at <https://lnkd.in/eBhVfXUu>

CPSE collaborating with FSRI and USFA to align NERIS with CFAI Model

www.cpse.org

51 • 4 reposts

## Awards

*During the opening session of the 2025 CPSE Excellence Conference, we honored three exceptional individuals whose unwavering dedication and exemplary contributions have set a high standard for excellence in fire and emergency services. Their commitment to leadership and continuous improvement serves as an inspiration to all, reinforcing the mission of CPSE.*



### Ray Picard Award

This award recognizes an individual who exemplifies the ability, character, dedication, leadership, and visionary attributes demonstrated by Chief Picard.

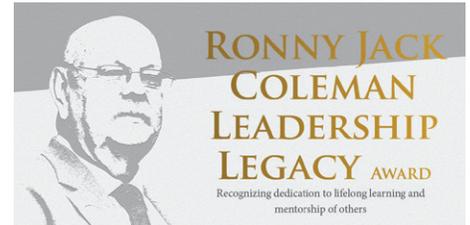


Fire Chief John Butler was named the 2025 recipient of the Ray Picard Award. Chief Butler has spent his career elevating the fire service through

visionary leadership, mentorship, and a steadfast commitment to excellence. As Fire Chief of the Fairfax County (VA) Fire and Rescue Department, a CFAI-accredited agency, he has championed accreditation and professional development both within his department and on a national scale.

Chief Butler's leadership extends beyond Fairfax County, shaping fire service standards through his service as Chair of the National Fire Academy Board of Visitors, where he provides invaluable insight and guidance on the CFAI accreditation process. Drawing on his own experience, he offers advice, support, and encouragement to agencies throughout their accreditation journeys. From September 2020 through August 2023, Chief Butler served as a Commissioner on the Commission on Fire Accreditation International (CFAI), where his experience leading an accredited department brought valuable perspective to the Commission.

His global influence is evident through his engagement with fire service leaders at international conferences, where he shares best practices to enhance fire safety and emergency response worldwide. Chief Butler's unwavering commitment to professional excellence, mentorship, and service reflects the highest standards of continuous improvement within the fire service, making him a deserving recipient of the Ray Picard Award.



### Ronny Jack Coleman Leadership Legacy Award

This award recognizes an individual who holds a designation through the Commission on Professional Credentialing (CPC) and has exhibited superior leadership and actions that



have elevated the Fire and Emergency Service profession through mentoring, teaching, advocating, and sharing outstanding contributions.

Assistant Chief Donald Burns of the Wilmington (NC) Fire Department was recognized for his extraordinary impact on the fire service through an unwavering commitment to mentorship, professional development, and credentialing. A champion of the

Center for Public Safety Excellence (CPSE) credentialing process, Chief Burns has guided countless members of his department toward achieving professional designations, fostering a culture of continuous learning and leadership.

His hands-on approach includes personalized coaching, workshops, and technical guidance, ensuring mentees fully understand the rigorous requirements of CPSE credentialing. Through these efforts, Chief Burns has elevated individual careers while strengthening the overall professionalism and operational readiness of the Wilmington Fire Department.

Beyond his department, Chief Burns' influence extends nationwide. As a CPSE Peer Reviewer, he has provided invaluable feedback to fire service professionals seeking designation, helping them refine applications and align accomplishments with industry standards. He actively advocates for CPSE credentialing at conferences, regional workshops, and through leadership roles within the fire service community. His dedication to mentorship, advocacy, and excellence makes him a deserving recipient of the Ronny Jack Coleman Leadership Legacy Award.



### **Cliff Jones Ambassador Award**

The Cliff Jones Ambassador Award recognizes an individual who goes above and beyond in supporting accreditation, credentialing, and the mission of CPSE. The recipient is selected annually by CPSE staff.



Fire Chief Chris Angermuller, CFO, CTO, of Windsor Severance (CO) Fire Rescue, was named the 2025 recipient. Chief Angermuller embraced the credentialing

process by earning his Chief Fire Officer (CFO) designation in 2016 and Chief Training Officer (CTO) designation in 2018. He has demonstrated a strong commitment to CPSE's mission through his service as a CFAI Team Leader and CPC Peer Reviewer.

From 2022 through 2024, Chief Angermuller dedicated 2,004 hours to completing 501 application reviews for the Commission on Professional Credentialing (CPC). Beyond his own agency, he has supported the professional development of others through mentoring and advocacy for the credentialing and accreditation process. He also served as coordinator for the Rocky Mountain Accreditation and Professional Credentialing Consortium, further extending his impact on the fire service community.

# Holistic Volunteer Management

CPSE's 2024-2027 strategic plan included a people focused strategy — and that starts with our volunteers. With such a large volunteer base, the staff unanimously agreed this should be the first priority in strengthening the organization's overall strategic plan.

The project sought to assess and update CPSE's volunteer engagement model to better support committed volunteers. A 7 month timeline included in person risk assessment and journey-mapping sessions, with virtual meetings held on a regular basis.

To support this work, CPSE brought in Tobi Johnson & Associates. Tobi brings more than 30 years of experience in volunteer administration and is well known for founding VolunteerPro and hosting the Volunteer Nation Podcast. A small staff team was selected to support project efficiency.

CPSE's volunteer ecosystem is broad, spanning boards, peer assessors/reviewers, team leaders, technical working groups, and more — all of which expand the organization's reach and tap into deep subject matter expertise. An audit of policies, processes, and volunteer experience concluded that CPSE already has



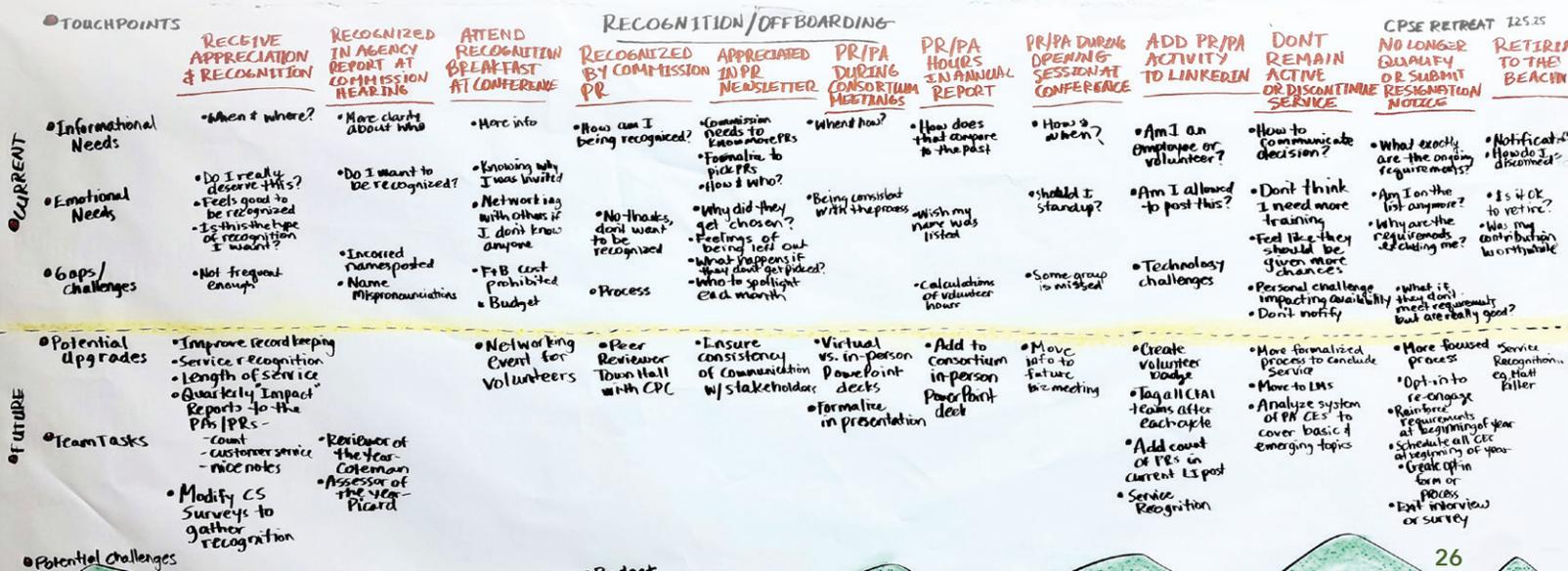
strong engagement, mission driven motivation, and well-established policies. In short—nothing is broken, but opportunities exist for enhancement.

A big part of the work involved identifying risks within the volunteer program. The team looked at how to reduce harm, bring due diligence, protect the brand, and stay aligned with CPSE's mission. From this, they identified twelve priority risks specifically tied to Peer Assessors and Peer Reviewers.

A key highlight of the project was volunteer journey mapping. This helped the team walk through a volunteer's

experience step by step — from being recruited and onboarded, to serving, being recognized, and eventually offboarding. The mapping revealed pain points but also clear opportunities for improvement and consistency.

To keep everything on track, the team created a sizable implementation schedule of 45 total tasks. We anticipate completing 31 of these in 2026 by both staff and the assistance of an outside marketing/communications firm, and the rest are planned for 2027.





## Philosophy of Volunteer Involvement for CPSE Volunteers

At CPSE, we recognize the invaluable role volunteers play. These dedicated individuals partner with our staff to amplify our impact, offering subject matter expertise and fresh perspectives on emerging trends. Our volunteers are members and contributors to the CPSE community. We expect our volunteers to serve as ambassadors for CPSE, operate with integrity and transparency, and exemplify industry best practices. Their commitment to continuous

improvement and willingness to give their time and talent leads the fire and emergency service to excellence.

Through their contributions, CPSE volunteers help create safer and more resilient communities by advancing the fire and emergency service. In return, volunteers benefit from enhanced professional networks, personal development opportunities, and the satisfaction of making a meaningful impact. CPSE is committed to providing

volunteers training and resources to ensure their success, recognizing their contributions, and fostering an environment that encourages belonging. Together, we aim to increase the number of professionals with greater technical competency, develop better industry leaders, and improve fire departments' efficiency and effectiveness.





# CPSE CENTER FOR INNOVATION



CPSE's wholly owned subsidiary, the CPSE Center for Innovation (CPSE CFI), reported significant organizational progress, strategic partnerships, and program development throughout 2025, solidifying its role as a catalyst for innovation within the fire and emergency service sector.

## First In-Person Governance Meeting

On August 6, 2025, CPSE CFI held its first in-person governance meeting. Discussions included strategic scan topics, sponsorships, and program development. A stakeholder-centered innovation facilitation workshop refined the Expert Finder program through user personas and value proposition development.

## Program Development

CPSE CFI continues to build out its five program areas:

- Innovation Training and Facilitation
- Innovation Museum
- Actionable Research
- Insight Hub
- Expert Finder

These programs aim to bridge the industry gap in evidence-based decision making, surface innovative solutions, and support professional growth.

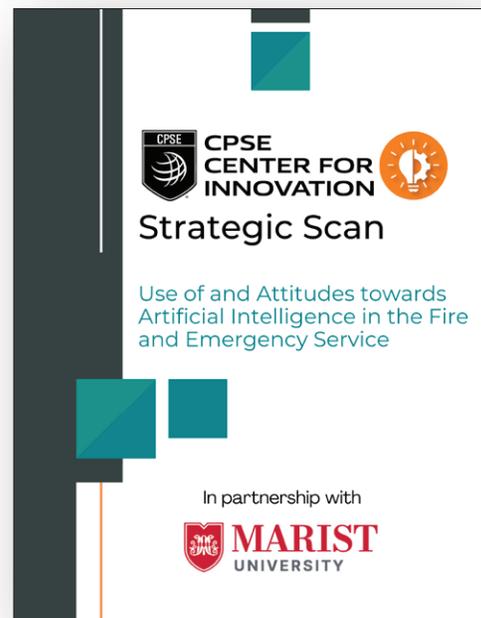
## AI in the Fire and Emergency Service Strategic Scan

CPSE CFI published its first major research product in September 2025—a strategic scan on AI use and attitudes within fire and emergency services. The scan examined:

- Current and planned AI use in operations, administration, and training
- Comfort levels and concerns among fire chiefs
- Policy readiness and access to AI tools

Five actionable recommendations emerged:

- Pilot AI in low-risk, high-impact operational areas
- Expand AI training and capacity building
- Develop formal AI policies
- Prioritize administrative AI integration to free operational resources
- Plan for scalable AI infrastructure and access



# CPSE CENTER FOR INNOVATION



Innovation Training and Facilitation



Innovation Museum



Actionable Research



Insight Hub



Expert Finder

## Partnership with FireRescue1

CPSE CFI announced a major partnership with FireRescue1 to design and power the Innovation Museum. Launched in December 2025, the museum is a curated digital experience featuring proven practices through articles, interviews, podcasts, and case studies. FireRescue1 will serve as the exclusive media sponsor for the Innovation Museum and participates on the CPSE CFI Industry Advisory Council.

**INNOVATION  
MUSEUM HUB**

Powered by

**FIRE RESCUE 1**

## Industry Advisory Council

The Industry Advisory Council (IAC) comprises membership from nonprofit and for-profit organizations within the fire and emergency service. These organizations provide input on the CPSE Center for Innovation's initiatives and gain access to exclusive networking opportunities and insights.

Thank you to these organizations serving on the IAC:

- FireRescue1
- Fire Safety Research Institute
- First Responder Center for Excellence
- International Association of Fire Chiefs
- International Fire Service Training Association
- International Code Council
- Marist University
- National Fallen Firefighters Foundation
- National Fire Protection Association
- National Fire Sprinkler Association
- Science to the Station

## CPSE Center for Innovation Board of Directors

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Fire Chief, Greensboro Fire Department, NC

President

### **Alexander Henderson, Ph.D., CTO**

Associate Professor, Marist University, NY

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Town Manager, Town of Foxborough, MA

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Fire-EMS Chief, Columbus Fire & EMS, GA

GA

CFAI Representative

### **Ron Siarnicki, CFO**

Director-at-large

# Association of Fire and Emergency Services Analysts (AFESA)

In March 2025, CPSE announced it would begin incubating the Association of Fire and Emergency Services Analysts (AFESA) for a three-year period. During this time, AFESA will operate as a committee within CPSE while continuing to fulfill its mission as a membership association.

AFESA's mission is to provide advocacy, education, innovation, and networking for the fire and emergency service community—resulting in increased competency and opportunity for analysts, greater effectiveness in departmental planning and operations, and enhanced public trust within communities. AFESA's vision is to serve as the champion for the profession of fire and emergency service analysts, driving individual growth, organizational excellence, and industry advancement through the values of belonging, collaboration, and integrity.

Over the past several years, ad hoc and grassroots efforts have sought to bring the analyst community together. These efforts gained momentum with the inaugural National Capital Region Fire and Emergency Service

Analyst Symposium held in May 2024. Following that meeting, a group of analysts decided to form an association and, in July 2024, confirmed their interest in partnering with CPSE to launch the new organization. Between August 2024 and January 2025, a small working group met virtually and in person with CPSE staff to develop AFESA's mission, vision, values, programs, and governance structure, as well as to outline the terms of the incubation agreement. The CPSE Board of Directors approved the agreement during its January 2025 meeting.

A five-member governance committee has been established, with one seat designated for CPSE and four reserved for full AFESA members. In July 2025, AFESA opened membership registration and has since launched a members-only website featuring resources and a discussion board, along with hosting numerous virtual meet-ups.

Additional information about the Association of Fire and Emergency Service Analyst can be found at **[www.afesa.org](http://www.afesa.org)**.





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