

OCFA

Organizational Doctrine:

Philosophy

Values

Leader's Intent-Based Decisions

Leadership Standards



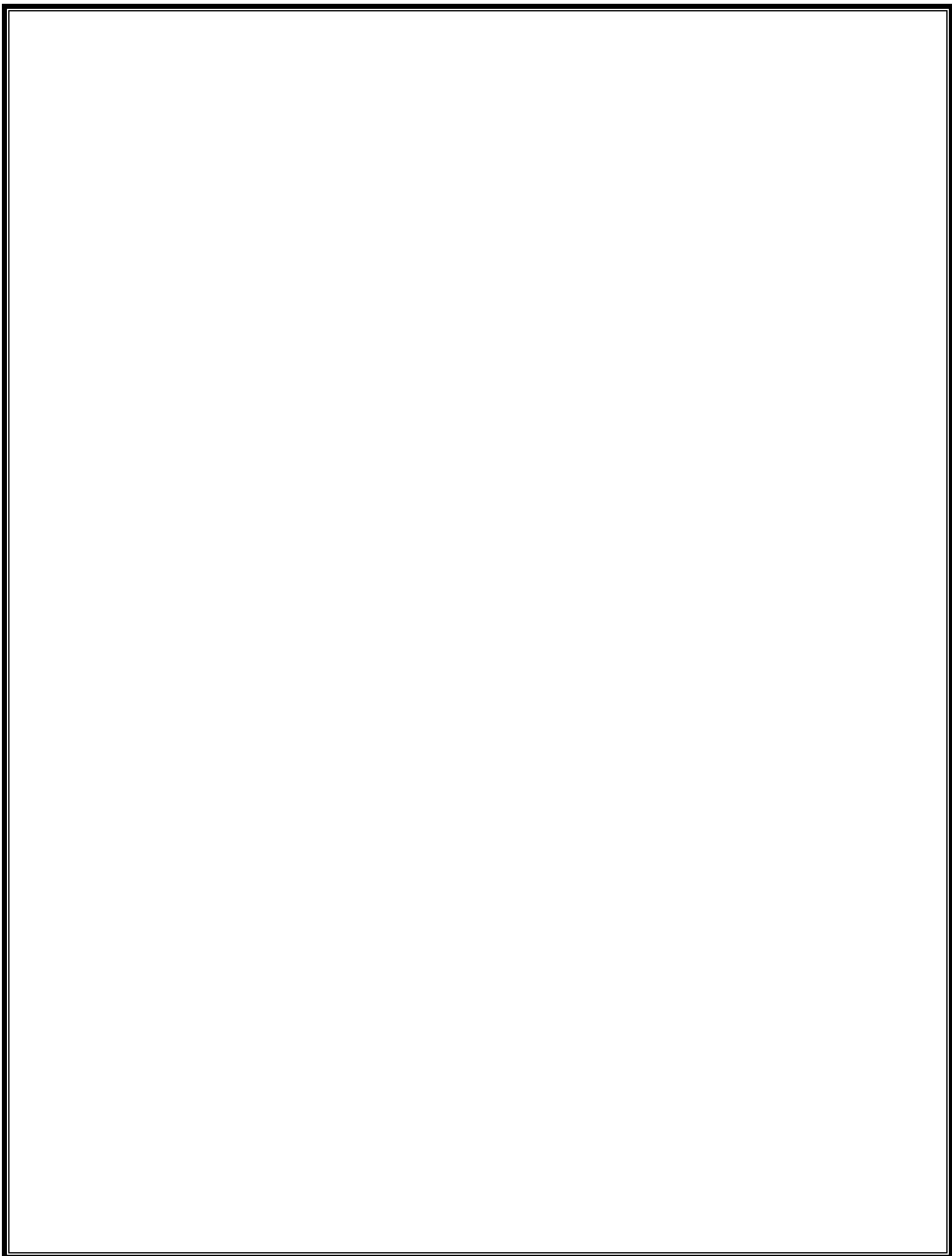
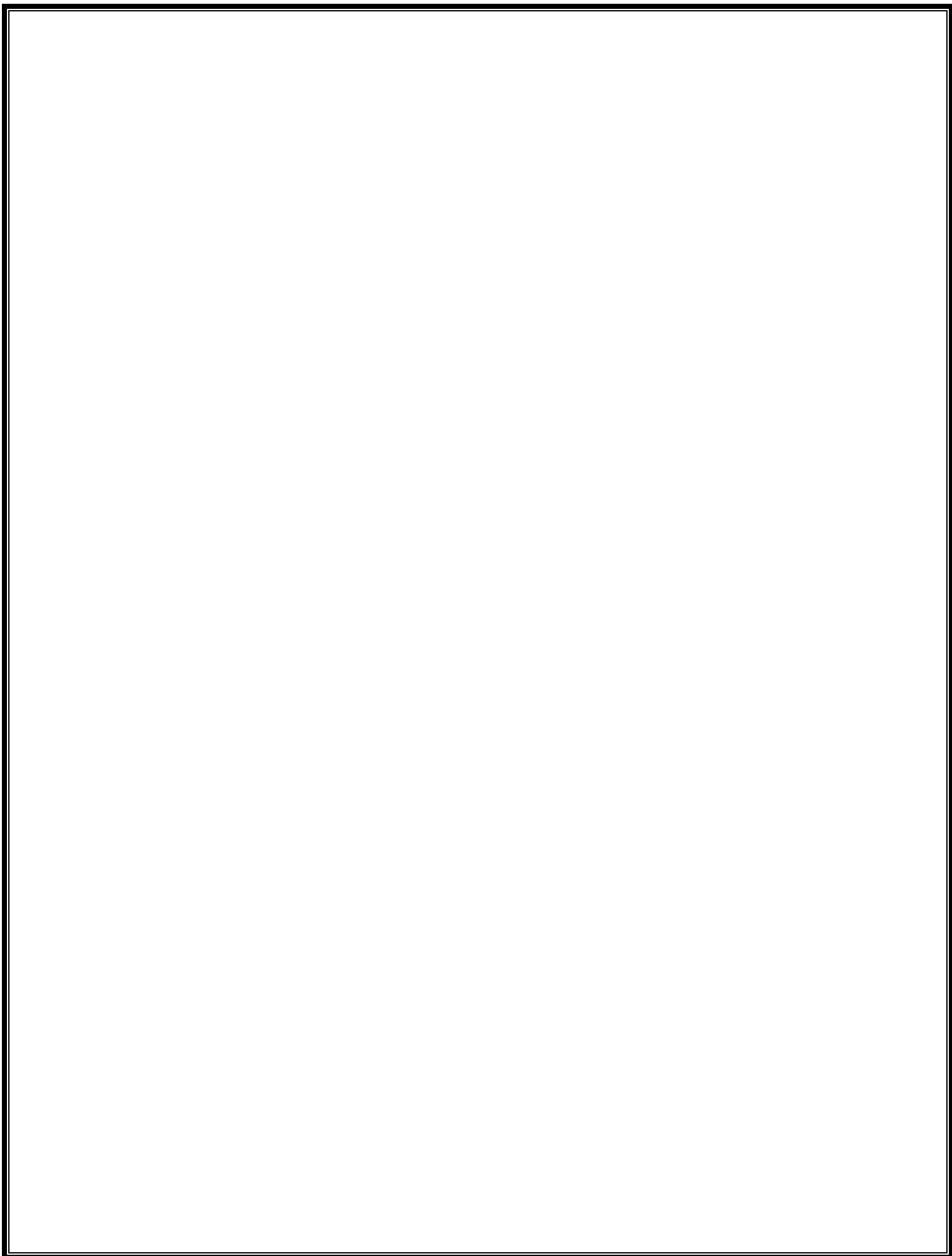
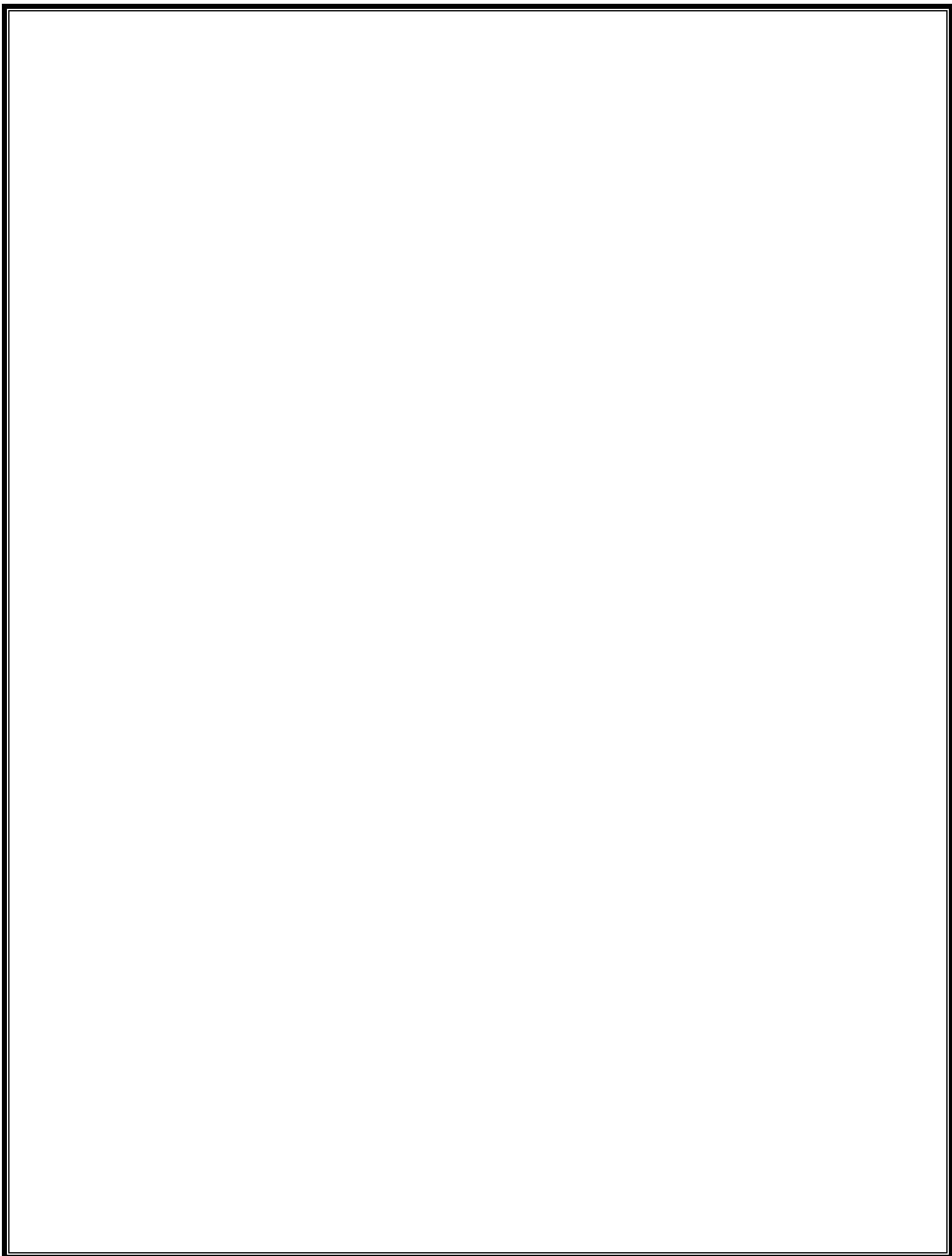


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Organizational Philosophy



Introduction

***We proudly serve the changing needs of our communities by providing exceptional emergency and support services.
We pledge a commitment to preserving the quality of life.***

- OCFA Mission Statement

Our mission defines our purpose and the benefits we bring to those we serve. Therefore, everything we do supports our combined efforts to accomplish OCFA's mission. To that end, we are a *mission-driven organization*. We choose priorities based on how well they align with our mission; we apply principles that enable everyone at every level of the organization to do their part to accomplish the mission.

Although OCFA has always had a mission statement, the principles and concepts behind our culture of operations have been communicated informally or in inconsistent ways. For these reasons, *The OCFA Organizational Doctrine* is designed to build a shared understanding among all members of what is expected of them in supporting and aligning with our mission.

The Basis of Our Philosophy

The incentive for this mission-focused mindset is rooted in the requirements of the organization's future. Therefore, we must continue to evolve in our focus on the mission and look for ways to improve how we provide services to better face an increasingly complex world.

The OCFA protects communities in some of the most risk-prone geographies in the U.S. In addition to well-known and increasingly severe natural and man-made threats, large and multi-layered incidents are rising, as illustrated by today's headlines. As a result, the OCFA is responding to more events with growing complexity.

These issues have effects on the entire organization, directly and indirectly. They increase the workload and tempo of our work. They pose challenges that are ever more politicized, and that require a new level of ability in problem-solving skills.

To be successful in these changing conditions, we must aspire to be flexible and adaptable as we deliver our services. We all concentrate on providing our service with speed, accuracy, and consistency. To these ends, we subscribe to a philosophy and culture that is driven by our mission's needs and requirements.

Defining our operational philosophy and culture enables us to achieve the following:

- Improve our ability to be adaptable at a foundational level and build resilience to recover quickly in the face of setbacks.
- Accelerate the speed and enhance the focus of critical decision-making.
- Provide more consistency in the work environment for all our members.
- Most importantly, ensure alignment with our mission at all levels.

Who does this apply to?

The principles described in our organizational philosophy apply to ALL personnel and sections of the OCFA. Each team is accountable for determining how these principles best apply to their section, including “what right looks like” within their department’s duties and responsibilities.

Integrating Our Philosophy

The OCFA Way promotes the qualities that enable our members to serve with enthusiasm, pride, and effectiveness. OCFA encourages us all to internalize personal values and develop the character of successful members. It articulates who we are and what we aspire to be. The values of *The OCFA Way*— Duty, Professionalism, Integrity, Respect, Courage, and Self-Improvement—are personal building blocks, the core foundation that supports our standards and organizational philosophy.

OCFA has also developed a doctrine that describes *HOW we do our work* and to *WHAT standards*.

Collectively, these documents define how the OCFA expects its members to do their work. This overview provides a roadmap for understanding how the different components of the *OCFA Organizational Doctrine* fit together and complement each other.

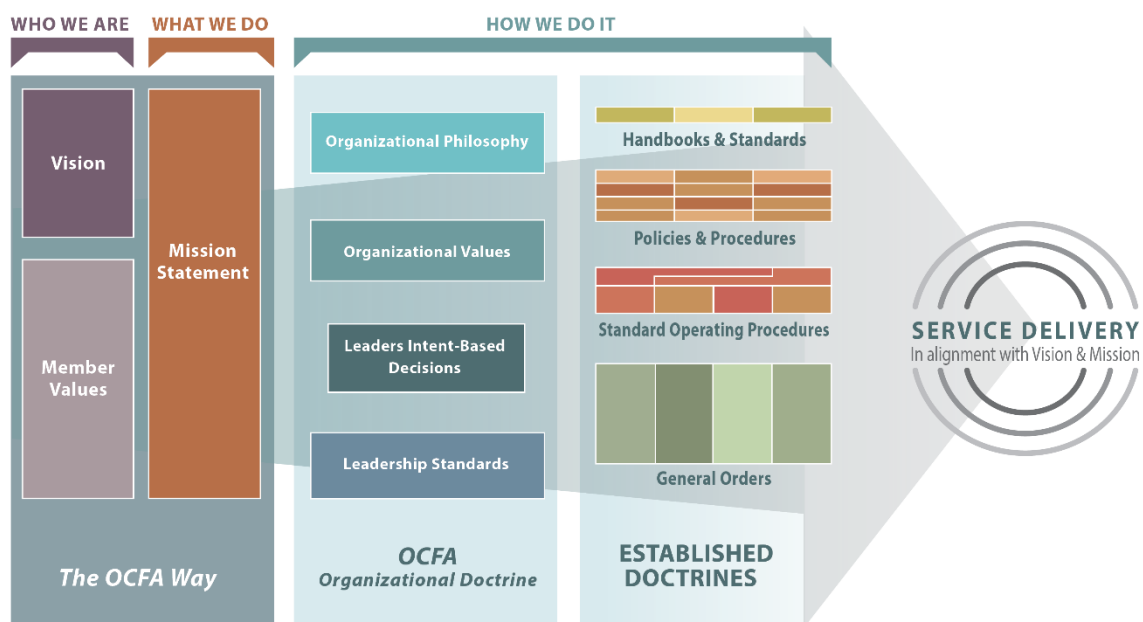
Components

At the core of this evolution is defining how we work with each other. To this end, we have outlined our operational values and to whom and what we are accountable. We also conveyed the principles that reinforce how we move information and situational awareness through our organization, how we lead and make decisions, and how we learn from our experiences. The resulting documents collectively define and provide guidance for implementing the *OCFA Organizational Doctrine*.

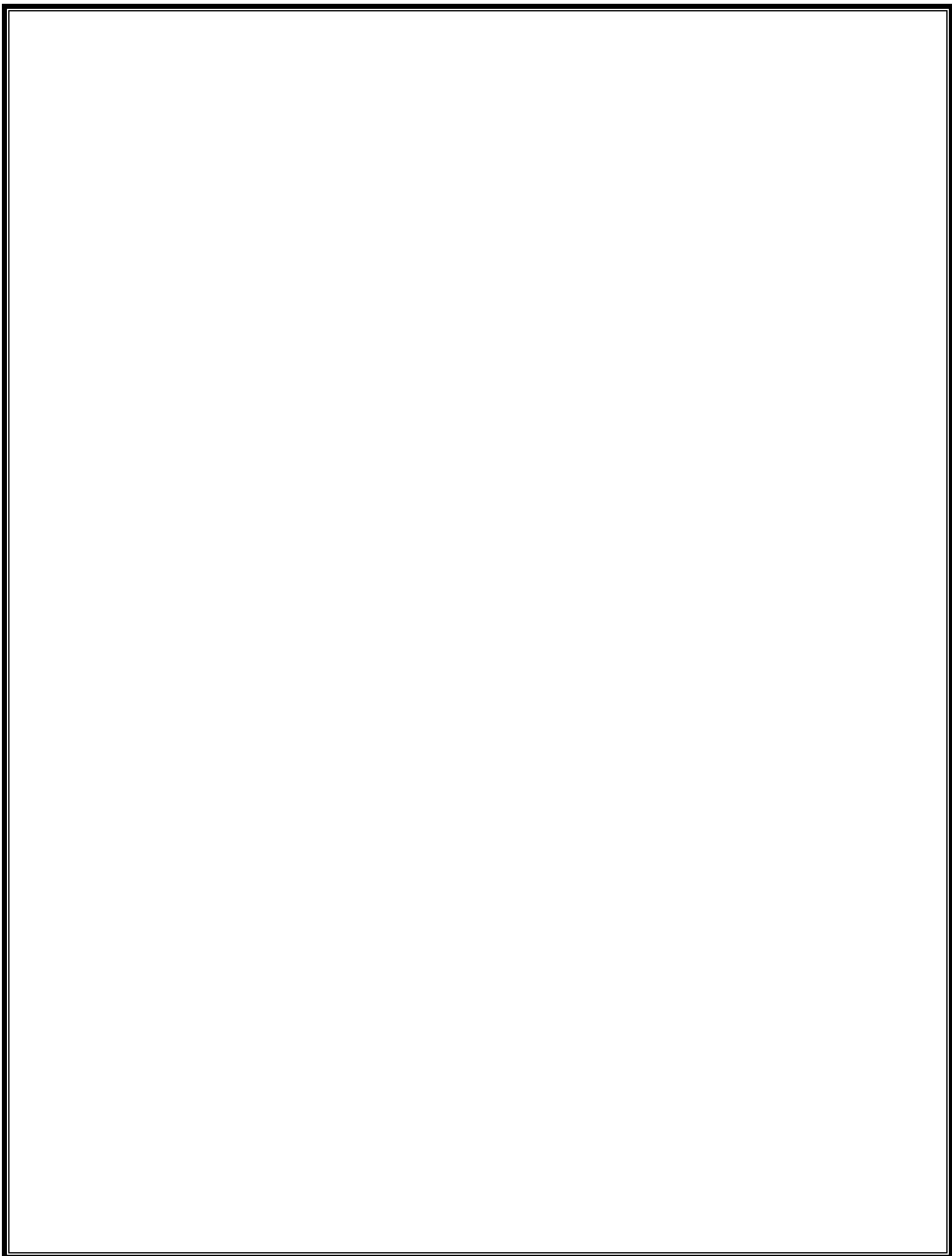
The *OCFA Organizational Doctrine* is comprised of the following documents that can be read separately or in order:

1. **Organizational Philosophy**- the document you are reviewing now.
2. **Organizational Values**- a document that describes the core team values that OCFA deems critical for guiding our work.
3. **Leader’s Intent-Based Decisions**- a document that describes the basis for our decision-making standards.
4. **Leadership Standards**- a document that describes the attitudes and behaviors that the OCFA expects from its leaders.

As the *OCFA Organizational Doctrine* continues to be refined and expanded, these documents may be updated, and others may be added, corrected, or revised to align content. For the same reasons, other documents such as General Orders or SOPs, training, and The OCFA Way may be influenced by this evolution.



Relationships among components of OCFA Doctrine



Organizational Values

Introduction

Our organizational values are universal, pertaining to the work of all sections. These values create the foundation for Operations and Professional Staff members' decision-making and action across the OCFA, regardless of position or function. Our organizational values are the shared team values that govern how we do our work.

All members are accountable for aligning their actions and decisions to this organizational value set:

- **Service for the common good**
- **High trust state**
- **Pursuit of truth**
- **Adaptability driven by the end state**
- **Disciplined initiative**
- **Continuous improvement**

Service for the Common Good

The mission of OCFA is to serve our communities.

As members of the OCFA we are focused on the big picture and the best outcome for those we serve. We have confidence that our strong ethics will meet the short and long-term needs of the communities we serve. Whether responding or on-scene, managing an incident, providing organizational support, or working with our team, we will do our best to maintain the proper perspective in determining the pathway to the common good. We each accept our role as an integral component of the organization and work together to serve the common good.

As members of OCFA, we have these responsibilities in supporting the common good:

- **Act with unified resolve** to ensure our actions and decisions are consistent with our mission.
- **Seek to understand the larger perspective** and all the factors that should be considered.
- **Represent honestly and with integrity our team's perspectives,** avoiding bias or advocacy that can distort understanding and undermine trust.

In an organization as large and diverse as OCFA, we rely on the collective efforts of our diverse groups and sections to serve our communities. At the core of our success is a commitment to ensuring our actions and decisions promote the common good.

High-Trust State

Our organization's work is built on trust with the communities we serve, each other, and our processes. Our communities trust us to perform our duties promptly and professionally.

Developing a solid foundation of trust in one another is a process that takes time. Each of us has the responsibility to commit to embodying professionalism, integrity, and courage, creating the foundation for a high-trust state. Building trust through relationships with one another and solidifying our own trustworthiness is everyone's professional responsibility.

As members of OCFA, we can lay the groundwork for a high-trust state in these ways:

- **Demonstrate technical competence.** Knowing our job and showing technical proficiency are essential to the organization's success. When we consistently prove our ability, our coworkers know we are dependable. We gain credibility as reliable cooperators by exhibiting skillful competence during interactions with communities and partner agencies.
- **Act with integrity.** We operate with integrity by being consistent and trustworthy in both word and action. We strive to adhere to a code of conduct built on honesty and accountability, and we maintain higher standards for ourselves than are expected of us.
- **Protect each other.** While performing our duties, the possibility of facing physical and mental dangers exists. As members of the OCFA, we must communicate to one another any potential risks we may be confronted with.
- **Focus on the "what" and not the "who."** As professionals, we understand that people occasionally make mistakes and misjudge situations. We also understand that there won't always be an easy agreement on how best to move forward. Even so, focusing on "what" we must do to achieve a positive outcome is more important than determining "who" was right. Holding ourselves and others accountable for our collective success or failure builds trust in our culture.

- **Communicate well.** We have to understand and be clearly understood when working with others. We can effectively express our expectations and desires by cultivating successful communication skills by participating in active listening, briefings, and debriefings.
- **Extend the willingness to trust others first.** Building trust with others begins with the individual. When working with others, start with the assumption that they, too, are trained professionals, believing that they are capable and proficient unless proven otherwise. Extending this professional courtesy is an important first step in building confidence in one another.

Pursuit of Truth

To make sound decisions and take appropriate actions, all of us, at all levels, need to understand the situation presented to us well. The more our understanding (situational awareness) matches the actual reality (the truth) of what is happening, the more likely our decisions and actions will be constructive and effective. Even though we understand that we can never know everything about a situation, we still strive to learn the best we can in our time.

The basis for our collective pursuit of truth is the value of *Integrity*:

Serving with honor and sincerity, consistently and openly pursuing truth and providing truth in our dealings with others, using a moral and ethical internal compass that communicates to others that you are here for the right reasons.

From a place of integrity, we seek to develop a shared understanding of the situation—a common operating picture. To do so, we must accurately assess the situation and align our decisions and actions with what we know to be the truth. We must be willing to seek diverse perspectives, challenge assumptions, verify information, determine root causes, and confront uncomfortable truths. Through consistently pursuing truth, we make better decisions about relative risks and safety and improve the probability of success.

As members of OCFA, we have these responsibilities in the pursuit of truth:

- **Share meaningful information.** We make every effort to be clear and concise to provide helpful context for our information. We clearly delineate between what is fact and what is opinion, rumor, or wishful thinking. We judge the relative importance of the facts and details to pass along meaningful assessments.

- **Deliver pertinent information despite time constraints.** We deliver the best information possible, given the existing time constraints. We must always understand that time constraints frequently translate into gaps in understanding. If we wait for perfect information, we could miss the window of opportunity. Despite having incomplete or conflicting information, we build the best model of the situation as we can.
- **Apply critical thinking.** We demonstrate professionalism by listening and applying critical thinking to what we read and hear. To reduce or prevent error, we remain vigilant for signals that indicate something is based on faulty reasoning or false assumptions. We should come with an open mind in discussions, briefings, and After-Action Reviews. We should be prepared to engage in critical thinking and discussion with each other.
- **Ask questions.** We embrace the professional responsibility of asking clarifying questions. This responsibility is fundamental when we don't understand objectives, instructions, or the leader's intent. Questions enable us to expose gaps in understanding and improve everyone's situational awareness.

Adaptability Driven by the End State

When standard procedures do not meet the needs of the task at hand, we must be willing to change our plan to come up with a different approach or strategy. What is essential is being prepared to adapt as needed to find the best way of achieving the end state.

We adapt with the best possible situational awareness and the complete understanding that our current methods and practices may be subject to change. We must ensure that changes in our actions are the most effective means of reaching the desired end state of the mission and accomplishing our goal.

Maintaining this kind of flexibility keeps our actions linked to the current situations and promotes adapted responsiveness as conditions change. For example, we may need to adjust to a new business process, revise the order of a procedure, or even adjust the command structure for significant incident response.

As members of OCFA, we have these responsibilities in adapting to achieve the best end state:

- **Guard against rigid conformity.** We must guard against automatically following rules that may prevent us from recognizing what is not working well.

- **Show willingness to innovate.** We should be ready to develop new solutions that are better aligned with the common good and help us achieve the desired end state.
- **Understand the intent.** We must remember the original objective when we deviate from the original procedure or policy.

We do not make decisions to depart from normal processes lightly and must always keep the bigger picture in mind. However, sometimes we make decisions based on the unfolding situation and the potential consequences before us. Therefore, we should always seek the best choice that enables us to accomplish the mission.

Disciplined Initiative

Our member values of *Duty* and *Courage* call for us to exhibit a bias for action. These ideals form the groundwork in support of Individual Initiative. All of us are responsible for taking the initiative as is fitting for our position. Therefore, we must always strive to take the initiative—a bias for action.

We are expected to use *disciplined initiative* to respond to a problem or to seize an opportunity. The disciplined initiative acts within the defined parameters of the leader's intent. We call it disciplined initiative because all actions must be grounded in the leader's intent and aligned with the values and mission of OCFA.

To back the expectation of disciplined initiative, the organization supports training our members in leadership and decision-making to take action confidently. When we use disciplined initiative in a good-faith effort to solve problems, we have confidence that we are supported by the organization, even if the outcome of our actions does not achieve what we hoped it would.

Taking disciplined initiative makes us accountable for the outcome and our decisions and actions. In addition, we are responsible for sharing our thoughts with others, including articulating the values and risks that are part of our decision process.

Disciplined initiative and accountability strengthen our resilience in the face of adversity. This flexibility will enable us to solve problems at the lowest level proactively. We practice disciplined initiative both in time-constrained situations and in daily activities. Our people have the training and experience, and we have faith in their ability to make good decisions in both standard and non-standard situations.

As members of OCFA, we have these responsibilities as we exercise disciplined initiative:

- **Know the leader's intent.**
- **Have technical proficiency** to do the job.
- **Understand the potential risks** and the consequences of our actions.
- **Understand the applicable policies and the intent** behind them.
- **Walk others through our decisions and actions** in advance and after the fact so that others can understand our thinking and learn.

Continuous Improvement

We must strive to keep learning. Our ability to seek continuous improvement enhances our organizational capability, safety, and level of service. Learning from our experiences enables us to improve performance and minimize future risks. Through this process, we seek to be the best we can be as individuals and as an organization.

For our organization to improve, we must be willing to learn both as individuals and as teams. Self-improvement is critical to being able to help others learn from their performance.

As members of OCFA, we have these responsibilities in promoting continuous improvement:

- **Build and reinforce trust** to promote open and honest discussion of our collective performance, for example, in After Action Review or in more informal settings.
- **Actively promote, model, and support a culture of learning and growth.**
- **Seek and accept feedback** from others to guide our learning.
- **Demonstrate a willingness to mentor** others to guide their learning.
- **Look for ways to find efficiency and advance our capabilities** as individuals and teams.

Accountability to Our Values

As members of OCFA, we accept responsibility for modeling our values, but more importantly, we agree to the system of accountability underlying them:

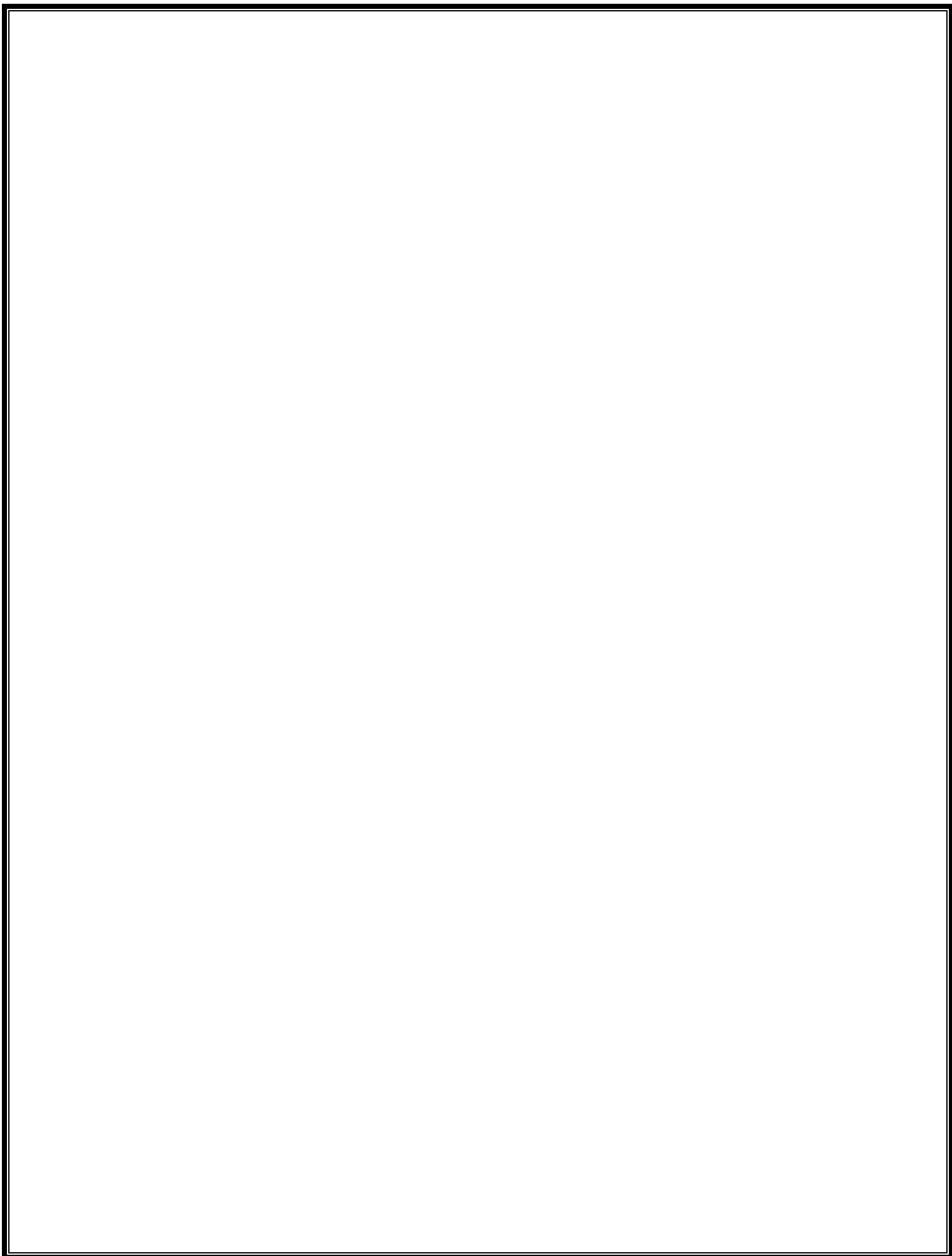
- **We hold ourselves accountable for our decisions and actions.**
- **We are willing to hold others accountable.**
- **We agree to be held accountable by others.**

We all are personally responsible for ensuring that our attitudes, behaviors, and actions consistently demonstrate our commitment to the operational values of the OCFA.

Summary

Our common understanding and alignment with our organizational values generate cohesion, adaptability, and resilience throughout the organization. Our dedication to applying these values keeps us in sync and enables us to move our organization to the next level of professionalism and excellence.

Leader's Intent-Based Decisions



Introduction

At OCFA, we promote the concept of *Leaders Intent-Based Decisions*. This approach calls for decisions to be made at the lowest level by communicating the leaders intent. It allows all of us to take the initiative and use our best judgment to meet our leaders intent and best serve the mission. Our goal is to ensure that decisions are made by the right people at the right level for the right reasons.

Decisions that need to be made quickly can be made with the organization's full support. By permitting us to exercise judgment, this model allows us to take ownership of a situation and have the freedom to think creatively when experiencing unexpected challenges. Taking the initiative makes us accountable for explaining our decisions and actions. The organization stands behind us when we show that the leaders intent guided us.

Regardless of whether we are participating in day-to-day activities or responding to emergencies, these key assumptions of *Leaders Intent-Based Decisions* apply to all of us:

- **Our members come to work to serve and do their best.** We subscribe to the ideals outlined in *The OCFA Way*. As we align with these ideals, we have confidence that we are supported by the organization, even when mistakes or missteps happen.
- **Our members are competent professionals.** Leaders delegate decisions, share responsibility, and provide the appropriate level of supervision. As a result, our people can determine how best to execute the assignment with full accountability for their actions.
- **All decisions and actions must align with the leaders intent within our organizational values.** Leaders intent is the basis for our decisions and our authority. When decisions or actions are outside these boundaries, they cannot be supported.
- **Decisions and actions should be delegated to the lowest practical level whenever possible.** In promoting initiative, we want to ensure that our members have opportunities to gain experience in taking on more responsibility. Therefore, when it makes sense, we want to delegate tasks or assignments in all aspects of our organization.
- **Our members closest to the problem or situation can act quicker and get better results than if they elevated the decision to others above them.** This is because we expect actions to be appropriate for the circumstances, with people applying common sense solutions.

- **Exercising disciplined initiative is an expectation for all of us.** In accordance with the core value of the individual initiative, we are empowered to act to accomplish the mission within the scope of the leader's intent. In addition, we are expected to bring critical judgment to our assignments and offer innovations or solutions when needed to gain efficiency, reduce risk, or provide better service.

Leaders Responsibilities

Those in leadership roles must be prepared to provide clear understanding through leaders intent so team members have the information they need to make decisions and act with initiative. Leaders also must delegate and supervise through mentoring to balance the needs of the mission and the individual. In delegating action, leaders provide the support, authority, and resources to the team so they have the tools to take the appropriate measures on their own.

Leaders want to prepare team members to think and act decisively instead of taking a passive approach as a "follower." When encountering ambiguity, *followers* seek permission before acting. This permission-seeking posture reinforces passiveness and inaction. As a result, *followers* can quickly become more afraid of making mistakes and miss an opportunity to make a difference.

Organizationally, we want our team members to be able to act independently, exercising judgment and adapting to achieve the desired end state. Therefore, we are expected to exercise disciplined initiative as a priority within well-known boundaries as we accomplish our mission.

To maintain the necessary state of readiness to act confidently, we must prepare in these ways:

- Have the knowledge, skills, and abilities to make appropriate judgment calls and decisions in real-time.
- Take initiative to solve problems and to innovate when given opportunities.
- Understand our organizational values and the intent of our leader.
- Accept accountability for our actions.

Leader's Intent

Leader's Intent is how we transition a decision into action. It focuses on action and situational awareness to execute an assignment successfully.

Leader intent is a clear, concise statement that should be communicated so that everyone understands the expectations to succeed in their assignments. It delineates three essential components:

- **The Task** to be completed, including the objective or goal of the assignment.
- **The Purpose** of the task, including situational awareness, providing the context for the task.
- **The End State** of how the situation should look when completing the assignment.

In fast-moving, dynamic situations, top-level decision-makers cannot always incorporate new information into a formal planning process and redirect people to action within a reasonable timeframe. The leader's intent is provided so people closest to the issue can adapt plans and exercise initiative to accomplish the objective when unexpected opportunities arise or the original plan no longer suffices. A leader's intent is crucial to effective organizations because it reduces internal friction and empowers subordinates.

Within the defined end-state framework, leaders can develop plans and make decisions that include an agency's mission, objectives, and priorities.

Knowing the leader's intent helps subordinate decision-makers choose new courses of action wisely. They know what success looks like and understand the rationale behind their assigned tasks. When they encounter a barrier, they can make informed decisions aligning with the mission's goals.

Much of leader's intent already exists within our training, SOPs, and other doctrines that are well-known by members. However, to ensure that we all stay consistent and focus on meeting the end state, OCFA leaders must communicate the parts that have changed or are new or non-standard.

Decisional Authority

To be successful, we delegate appropriate decisional authorities to our members. From the start, our organization sets the expectation that every member works to solve problems at their level.

In the following, we describe the principles and constraints of decisional authority so that we can understand and follow *consistent decision-making practices*. This consistency generates predictability—both for decision-makers and those affected by the decisions—which enhances trust throughout the OCFA.

Three concepts of OCFA decisional authority are:

- **Inherent Authority**
- **Warranted Deviation**
- **No Surprises**

Concept of Inherent Authority

OCFA members inherently have the authority to decide how to accomplish their assigned responsibilities for which they are accountable. These responsibilities include those outlined in our job description or assignments defined by organizational leadership.

Concept of Warranted Deviation

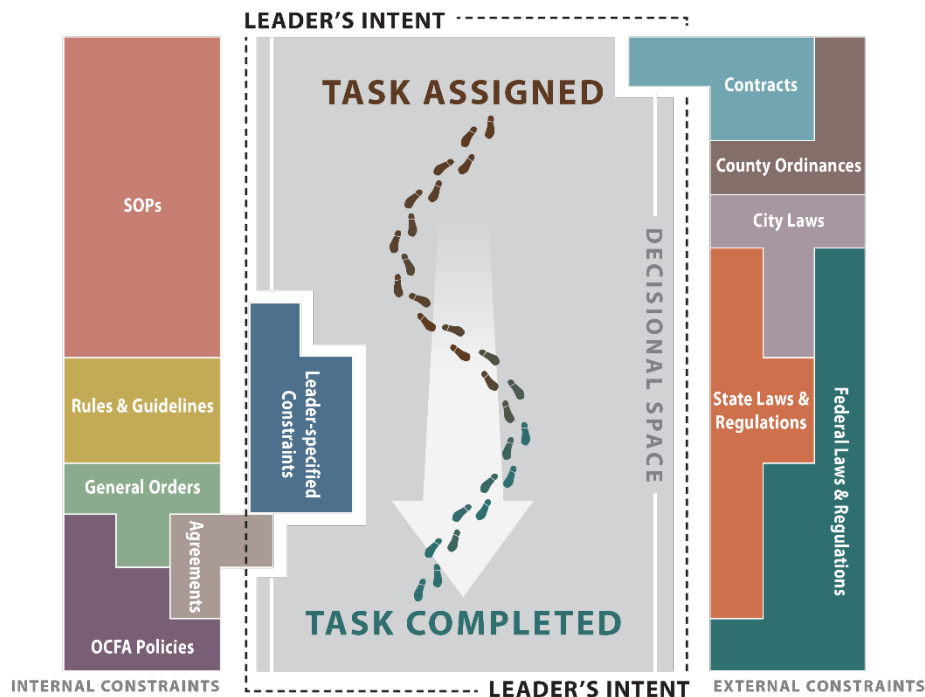
At times, the demands of our position or our understanding of the leaders intent may conflict with the constraints of rules, policies, or other written guidance. In these instances, the need for immediate action means that there is not sufficient time to resolve the perceived discrepancy through the normal process. In these cases, we may deviate from the constraints to accomplish the leaders intent, using disciplined initiative and doing our best to lower risk to a practical level as long as it is within our organizational philosophy and morally and ethically responsible.

Navigating Constraints

Departing from policies, rules, guidelines, or SOPs inevitably brings us into gray areas where the best course of action may not be clear. Our organizational philosophy offers a lens to navigate these gray areas to balance risk vs. gain.

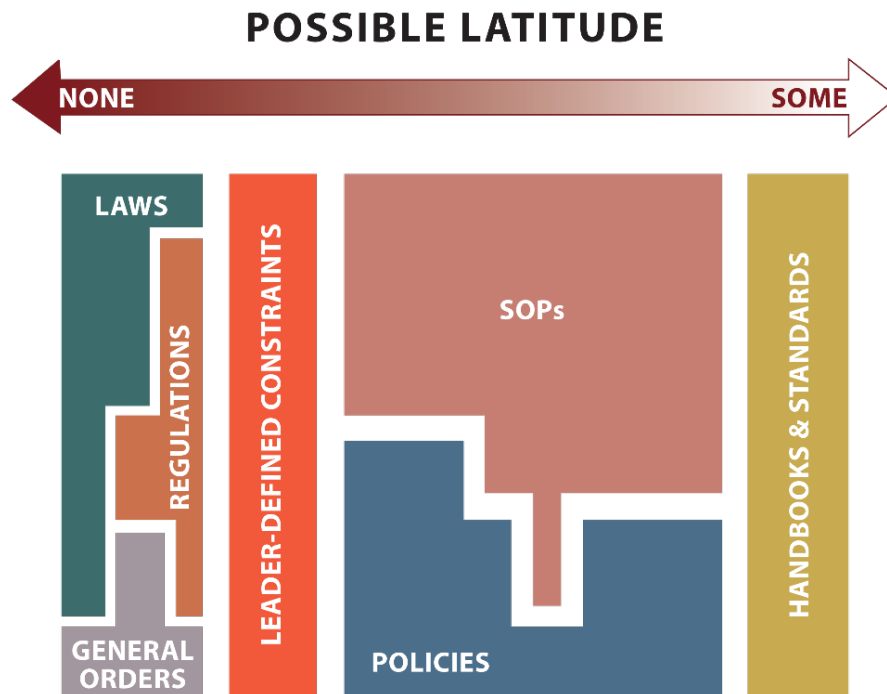
In every given assignment, we work within the boundaries of numerous decisional constraints. We have internal controls (OCFA policies, agreements, general orders, SOPs, handbooks, manuals, and guidelines) and external controls (contracts, agreements, city and county laws and ordinances, and state and federal laws and regulations).

In addition, our leaders sometimes add constraints to an assignment to mitigate risk or account for factors specific to the situation. All these constraints form the framework for our work, helping to define the “decisional space” (or lane) for our assignments.



Applying Latitude

We usually work within these constraints quickly, but circumstances may require us to take a disciplined initiative outside accepted parameters. We have varying degrees of latitude for deviating from different kinds of limitations. Some constraints do not allow for deviation, while others provide more freedom. Understanding how much latitude we have is essential for navigating this space.



Laws and Regulations

We have the least latitude to deviate from external constraints in the form of local, state, and federal laws and regulations, which are the basis for the existence of OCFA. These laws and regulations provide the limits and authorities of the legal framework of OCFA.

As we pursue the OCFA mission, it is exceedingly rare to contend with a situation where there is a need for actions that counter the law. The bar of proof is exceptionally high for taking such action, so the justification to bypass a law or regulation must be connected to extreme circumstances or situations.

General Orders

Likewise, we have no latitude regarding General Orders, which are legally-based directives covering topics such as alcohol at the fire station, conflict of interest, workplace violence, and other fundamental mandates that cannot be compromised or violated.

Leader-Defined Constraints

While providing the intent for an assignment, a leader may specify constraints (e.g., Don't go further than X. If you see Y, talk to me for further instructions, etc.). Because they are conveyed at the time of the assignment, these constraints are generated based on present conditions and have an immediacy pertinent to the current situation.

These additions to the leader's intent are often intended to mitigate new risks or address evolving conditions, so these constraints provide detailed situational awareness that should not be disregarded. For these reasons, less latitude is afforded when deviating from a leader-defined constraint, and the accountability level is higher. When an operator cannot meet the leader's intent due to a constraint imposed by the leader, the operator has an obligation to communicate the issue to the leader.

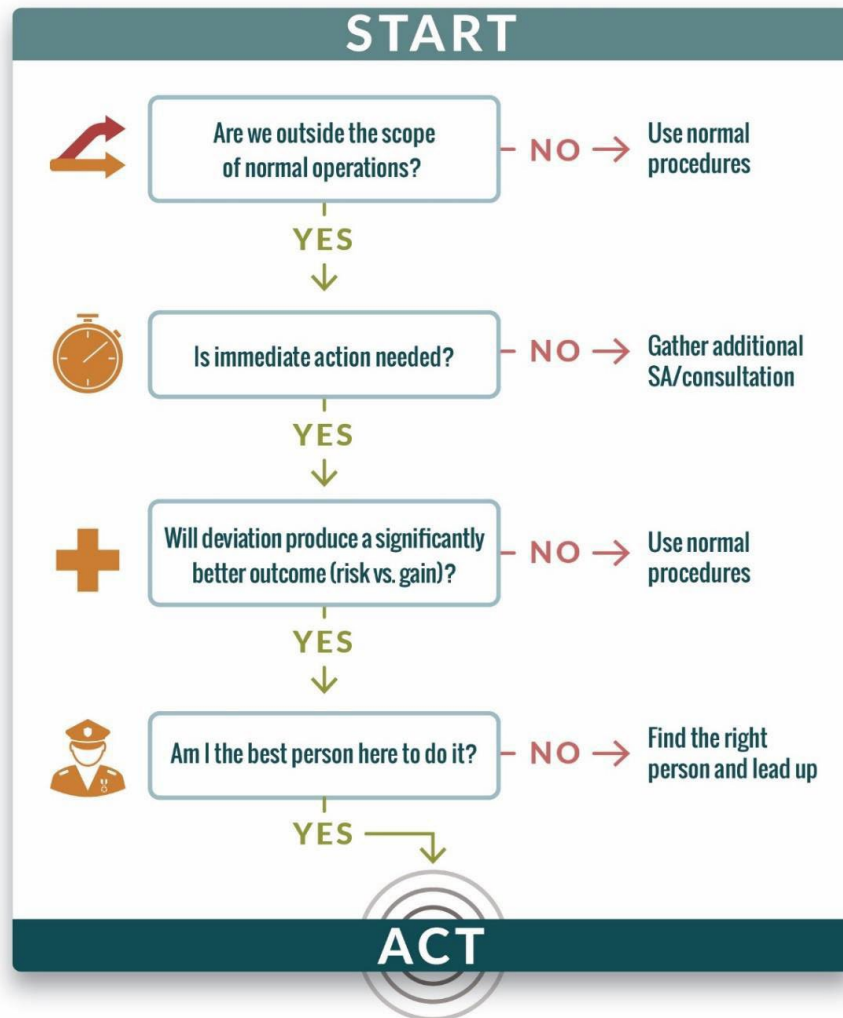
Standard Operating Procedures

We have some latitude to deviate from the largest category of internal constraints, OCFAs SOPs. These constraints cover subjects such as communications, operational procedures and guidelines, best practices, uniforms, and vehicles. They describe how we generally do business. Our SOPs constitute our best practices so that deviation may be appropriate dependent on the circumstances. When we are under pressure, and the mission is at odds with the written guidance, we cannot afford to be paralyzed because the SOP does not fully apply. As a general rule of thumb, we follow established guidelines/SOPs unless they prevent us from accomplishing the leader's intent. When they do, the leader's intent should prevail. We use thoughtful, legal, ethical, moral, and disciplined initiative and take action based on our best judgment, even if this means some guidelines/SOPs must be temporarily set aside to resolve the situation.

Other types of written guidance—department manuals, handbooks, memos, and other standards—comprise a combination of training guidelines, procedural instructions, and reference manuals. These are usually managed and maintained at these are usually managed and maintained at the program level.

When do we have the authority to deviate?

The following flow diagram is an aid to visualize our responsibilities when there may be a need to deviate from standard policies in time-constrained situations.



Accountability for Deviation

We are fully accountable when deviating from established guidelines or SOPs to serve the mission better and achieve a more favorable outcome.

Whenever we do so, we are responsible for providing the rationale for our decision. Walking through the decision enables others to understand the perceptions that caused us to do things differently.

Providing this rationale demonstrates our willingness to be held accountable for our decisions and actions. It enables the organization to stand behind us when we take disciplined initiative, even when we take an approach that is not “by the book” or does not yield success.

In addition, the rationale reveals whether the action is *initiative or freelancing*. If it is *freelancing*, the explanation will not link to leaders intent and is more about serving self-interest rather than the interests of OCFA. Decentralized decision-making in no way condones freelancing and walking through decisions ensures that any non-standard actions were taken to accomplish the leaders intent better and serve the mission.

Ultimately, our actions are evaluated through the following questions:

1. Were the actions taken in good faith to benefit the customer and the organization?
2. Were the actions aligned with the Leaders Intent of the assignment and with the mission and values of the OCFA?
3. Were the actions reasonable when considering the individual's level of experience and training?

Answering these questions promotes transparency and builds a solid foundation for accountability. We also learn by talking through our decisions and thinking with others. Sharing our thought processes reinforces others' willingness to take the initiative and innovate in accomplishing the mission.

Concept of No Surprises

Only some of our decision-making takes place in time-constrained situations. In day-to-day business and operations, our decisional space has known boundaries that enable us to determine whether we have the authority to make the decision or whether we need to elevate the decision to the next level.

In following the *Concept of No Surprises*, we have an obligation to keep supervisors and team members in the loop when making decisions that significantly impact others. Doing so enables team members to anticipate and synchronize their actions with ours.

When we make a decision that has impacts outside our authority or sphere of control, we have an obligation to bring others into the decision-making process to inform and collaborate. We have a duty to de-conflict, coordinate, or, if needed, elevate the decision when appropriate to ensure we involve the right people from the proper levels.

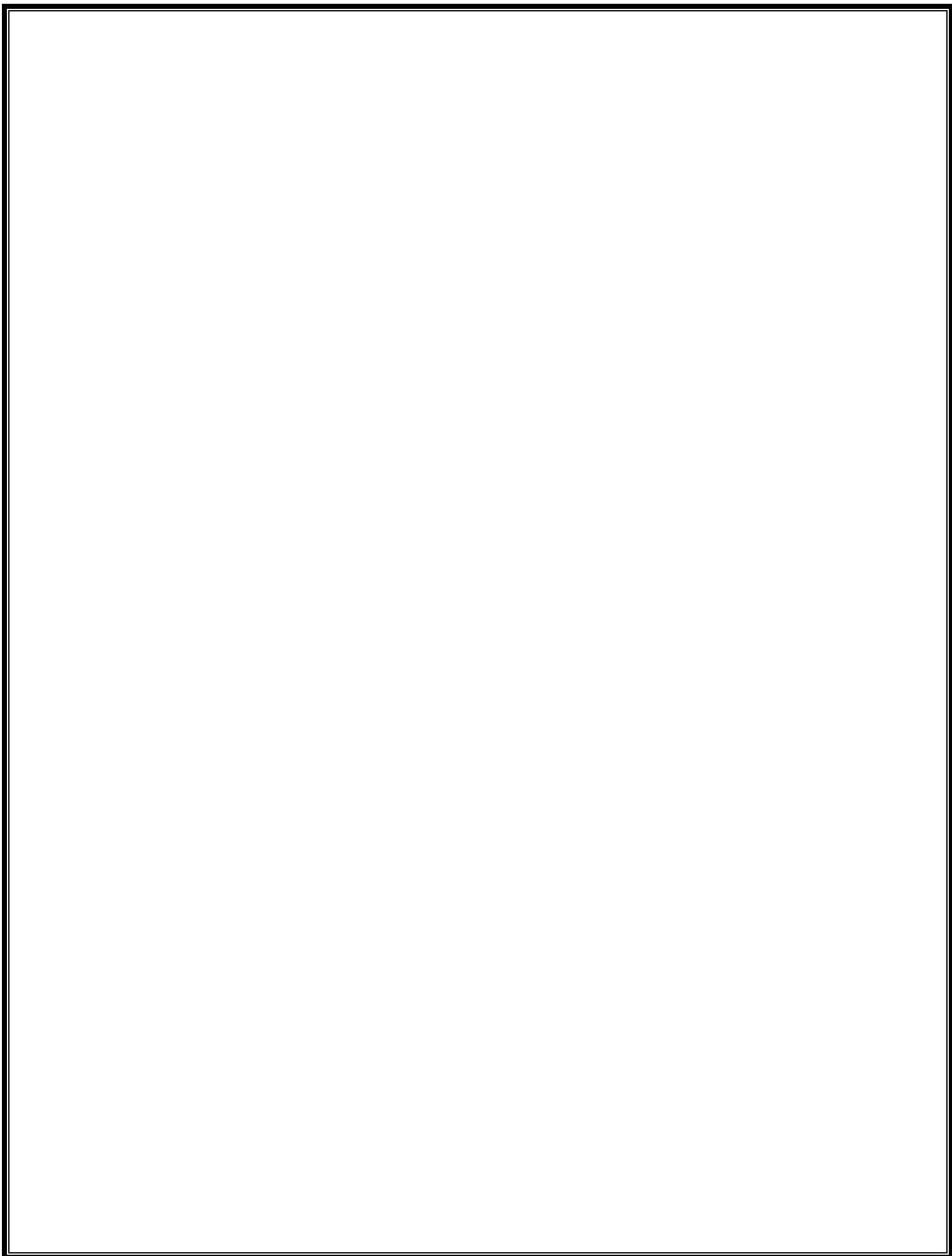
Following are some examples of decisions that must be elevated through the chain of command:

- Decisions that incur costs beyond authorized limits.
- Decisions that change the configuration or organization of OCFA resources (not just their temporary use).
- Decisions that affect adherence to or interpretation of an agreement, MOU, or contract that the OCFA has in place.
- Decisions that generate the potential for political ramifications affecting the OCFA or its communities.

Summary

The foundation of our organizational philosophy is the power and speed created through delegated action. We are always accountable for our judgment and actions as we pursue our mission. Whether innovating with a new approach or adapting to an unexpected problem, we keep our actions aligned with the leader's intent and values. Guided by these principles, we know that even if things go wrong, we will stay consistent and hold the trust of the OCFA.

Leadership Standards



Leadership within the OCFA

The success of the Orange County Fire Authority depends on our leaders. Leadership can come in two different forms: formal and informal. Members deserve a leadership team that is strong and consistent across the organization. For that reason, we have developed this document to provide clarity and guidance about what is expected from leaders at every level at the OCFA.

This document is a vision of *what right looks like* for our leaders, regardless of rank or profession. This document is not a training manual about **being** a good leader, nor does it describe a leader's supervisory responsibilities and duties. Instead, this document describes the organization's expectations of all its leaders.

OCFA recognizes that leadership is a responsibility for all of its members and will continually be a work in progress. We will all make mistakes, but we constantly work to become even better leaders tomorrow.

Our organization wants leaders to act with integrity and be aligned with the correct values. Therefore, it is up to us to learn the skills and hone our temperament to become the quality leaders the organization expects, and our members deserve.

At the OCFA, leaders are held accountable for their effectiveness and willingness to improve according to these standards.

"*The OCFA Way*" lists "Depth of Character" as one of the personal values of all members. It discusses "using a moral and ethical compass that communicates to others that you are here for the right reasons." As leaders, we strive to show that we have an enduring internal compass that leads our members in the right direction.

Leaders Influence Through Credibility

Standard: Demonstrates trustworthiness and integrity to build credibility

The leader takes tangible steps to build credibility by acting with integrity and authenticity.

The OCFA relies on us to be steadfast. The organization bestows our rank, but the credibility that underpins the position is up to the leader to develop and strengthen.

How others perceive us, in considerable measure, determines our effectiveness and the reach of our influence. We expand our ability to influence others when we consistently demonstrate that we are trustworthy and ethical.

Our day-to-day words and actions can either build or damage our credibility, depending on how our people and community perceive us. When we act with integrity and authenticity, our credibility is enhanced. Conversely, if our actions and words conflict or if others perceive us as self-serving, our credibility suffers.

Our values set an example for others to follow. As a result, we maintain a steady focus—doing what is best for the community, our people, and the organization. This consistency demonstrates to our team that we are willing to do what it takes to be a leader worth following.

Leaders Command Presence

Standard: Projects a command presence with others

The leader models calmness, levelheadedness, and focus when providing direction and guidance.

The leader generates a stable and predictable environment for the team.

The combination of calmness and focus creates our unique brand of command presence. Professionalism, competence, and poise all contribute to the desired image of our leaders.

A composed command presence serves to build confidence in those who follow us. In doing so, we gain our people's trust and respect. In addition, when we project a strong command presence, we enable our team members to focus more fully on the mission.

Leaders Demonstrate Competence

Standard: Demonstrates competence

The leader demonstrates competence and understanding that provides meaningful assistance to their subordinates.

Leaders must consistently strive to master competence. Team members look up to their leaders and rely on them to guide their work, especially in difficult times. In addition, leaders are consistently learning and growing from their own experiences to demonstrate best practices and provide sound advice for everyone to benefit from.

Leadership competence is also essential because it enables us to appropriately demonstrate and oversee the work. Leaders need to know what “right” looks like to be able to delegate and supervise effectively. Further, our experience and proficiency enable us to recognize emerging risks or take advantage of windows of opportunity. We can anticipate the team’s needs and hold members accountable for their performance.

Leaders Know Their People

Standard: Demonstrates team awareness and knowledge

The leader knows their team well, including their capabilities, goals, relationships, and general personal circumstance.

We begin building trust by knowing our team. By training, supporting, and guiding our team, we foster one-on-one relationships with each team member so that we know them as individuals. We seek insight into their strengths and weaknesses, capabilities and potential, and long-range goals and aspirations.

We support our people for their capabilities, balancing the risks and benefits of prospective assignments. We also provide clear intent as necessary, articulating the purpose, task, desired end state, and constraints as needed for the situation. We strive to set our members up for success.

Supporting our people in these ways increases individual satisfaction and reinforces cohesion by promoting camaraderie and a sense of belonging within the team.

Leaders Promote Open Communication

Standard: Fosters open communication

The leader actively seeks input from others and listens well to feedback when it is offered.

We encourage team members to bring up questions, concerns, and ideas. When they do, we listen and address what comes up. We have a duty to treat team members with respect in all situations, and we first show respect by listening to what they say.

Open communication is critical to our situational awareness as leaders. In addition, it prepares our people to better adapt to change.

Leaders Treat Their People Ethically, Fairly, and Respectfully

Standard: Conducts self in an ethical, fair, and respectful manner

The leader models good moral leadership and behaves openly, fairly, and ethically.

The leader provides a fair and equitable standard and environment for their subordinates' development, opportunities, correction, and discipline.

The leader respectfully corrects team members who take actions that are unethical or unfair to others.

If our people believe we are acting *unfairly*, it endangers cohesion and trust within our team.

We address performance deficiencies through the same lens of equality. Overlooking deficiencies seeds discontent and imply that the standards may not matter. For these reasons, we make every effort to be even-handed.

As leaders, we also have the authority and a duty to call out and correct behavior that is unfair to others. Regardless of its basis (gender, race, cliques) or its form (bullying, harassment, favoritism, exclusion), we are responsible for dealing with these issues with courage, acting swiftly and professionally to solve problems early before they grow.

Fostering Initiative

Standard: Fostering initiative in members and the team

The leader actively provides opportunities to build judgment and critical thinking skills to strengthen decision-making and initiative.

The leader encourages initiative taken by members and provides appropriate performance feedback.

Our operating philosophy calls for team members to act with disciplined initiative when needed. Taking initiative requires opportunities for people to push their critical thinking and innovation skills. For our members to succeed in these situations, we must provide support through mentoring and give feedback. In this way, we build resilience and ensure we have capable people when needed.

For our people to take this initiative, they must trust that we will support them when they need to make decisions in unfamiliar areas. To this end, we will understand honest mistakes made in a good-faith effort. When team members show they did

their best to fulfill the leaders intent, we regard mistakes as opportunities to learn and improve.

Leaders Strive to be Better in All We Do

Standard: Promotes a team culture that is focused on consistent learning and constant improvement

Our leaders model the values and attitudes that promote feedback and self-examination for all.

Our leaders hold themselves and our people accountable at all times.

The OCFA faces an environment that continues to evolve, growing more complex daily. These challenges call for us to raise our performance, service, and adaptability level to meet the future demands of our profession and those we serve. In addition, our members will look to our behaviors and how we demonstrate our daily continuous improvement actions as a model for their actions.

Our actions, attitude, and behavior will reflect a willingness to examine our strengths and weaknesses and those around us. Our ability to consistently improve our leadership and operational skills will be critical to our success in the future.

In addition, we must commit to providing feedback to individuals and our team as a key responsibility for all. Finally, we must mentor and develop our people so that they deepen their technical, communication, and decision-making skills.

Our people are tomorrow's leaders; we must provide the right environment, guidance, and support to develop all aspects of their abilities, including leadership, command abilities, and continuous learning.

Moving Forward

Leadership is a journey, not a destination. Therefore, we must continuously strive to develop ourselves and our people as leaders, firefighters, and people. Leadership is action! At the OCFA, we need all our people to lead.

This handbook is not an all-encompassing guide but a starting point for our people and organization. Being a leader requires a lot of knowledge, skills, and abilities. However, not all leaders will be the same, each with a unique style.

Everyone can lead in some way. You can lead yourself and your peers. You can lead those above and below you, but no matter what you do, we need all our people to start being leaders now. As you go through your career, situations and opportunities will require you to lead. When that opportunity presents itself, the leadership traits described here will serve you as individuals, as teams, and as part of OCFA.

Do not let rank or position determine your leadership ability and growth. Instead, let your leadership capabilities and development propel you to higher positions and greater leadership opportunities.

