

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 leaders 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 leaders intent. We call it disciplined initiative because all actions must be grounded in the leaders 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 leaders 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.