

CINCINNATI AFRICAN AMERICAN FIREFIGHTERS ASSOCIATION

Summary of Findings for Strategic Planning Process
April 2017



Prepared by

Community Building Institute A PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN



Introduction

The Cincinnati African American Firefighters Association is exploring strategic directions for the organization over the next three to five years. With new leadership at CAFA, and soon to be new leadership in the Cincinnati Fire Department, it makes sense for this organization to think about its future goals, and how best to accomplish them. With that in mind CAFA conducted a survey of membership, hosted two membership meetings to discuss future plans and is beginning to develop an organizational strategic plan. The survey, results, and notes from the work sessions are attached. This brief report is a summary of the input received and a set of thoughts for future direction.

Survey Results

The membership was asked to complete a survey that asked about the relevance of the organization, its historic importance and what is most important moving forward. Over 50 members completed the survey. The majority of survey respondents had been on the Force for over 20 years. There were only six surveys completed by members with less than 10 years' experience on the force. This signals a real need to reach out to younger members.

Both active and relatively inactive members said they were willing to give more to the organization if it were engaged in activities that seemed relevant to the membership and the larger community. Survey respondents overwhelmingly see the mission of the organization to reach out into the community. What this means to members was working with children to show them a career path in safety services, to make sure that African American communities are getting adequate service and have good access to health care, especially seniors, to making sure that homes are fire safe through the smoke detector distribution programs and other outreach.

The single most important outreach activity members thought CAFA should engage in was recruiting. Of survey respondents, 88% saw recruiting as the most important priority moving forward. Over half of survey respondents saw ensuring respect and inclusion of African American firefighters in the Cincinnati Fire Department (CFD) as a critical activity for the organization. Community outreach, training and professional development were also identified by members as important for CAFA.

Member Meeting Results

In two separate meetings of membership about 20 members shared their thoughts about the survey results, and discussed in more depth how the organization should move forward. These discussions went much deeper on the need to reach young people in the community and to help them see the career ladder represented by the safety service professions. Current African American firefighters are role models for children and young people who are looking for a path. It is important particularly for young African American children to see themselves in successful firefighters. It gives them hope and a vision of what their future could be. Current firefighters are part of creating a culture of success for young people. Members talked about engagement as needing to start when children are in elementary school, “just have lunch with them”, and progressing to active recruiting in high schools. The “family culture” of people going into these professions is being created by current firefighters.

This need to reach out and the need for recruiting are closely tied and members talked about the need to create a formal recruiting program that comes from CAFA. There are several current members, mostly people who have been on the Force for over 10 years, who do volunteer recruiting and sometimes have had the opportunity to do recruiting as part of their job responsibilities, but these efforts seem to most to be ad hoc and not really coordinated. Members see this as a critical function of the organization and want to create a more formal system, and involve more of the membership in this activity. To most this might be the single most important function of the organization moving forward.

Continuing to be vigilant about fair treatment, inclusion and respect in the Department should be a critical function of the organization. From input on the recruiting process for the Chief, to always having African Americans as part of the Department training, including having female firefighters engaged in training, and recruiting is important to making sure the Department culture continues to move to a more equitable place.

Elder firefighters realize that they have a role to play in brining younger members along; supporting training, studying for promotional exams, and keeping younger members engaged in the organization, are all important and have also been done on a more ad hoc basis. The overall organization would like to get more deliberate about this work as well.

In both the survey and the member meetings people talked about the need to create a more positive and productive environment at membership meetings. Getting rid of the drama at meetings was high on everyone's list of things to do in the future. People want the organization to hold productive meetings with clear agendas and discussions that center on getting things done. It was suggested that there may be ways to modify the agenda and the way meetings are run to create more productive outcomes. Members all need to be held accountable for being respectful, honest and inclusive in their dealings with one another, in meetings and in all their interactions with each other.

The following themes are a combination of how people responded to the survey and what was said in the member meetings. These themes represent where the membership wants to go and provide some detail into how to proceed.

Themes

- Community outreach is what makes the organization relevant
- Continued attention to equitable treatment of African Americans on the force is important
- Recruiting is a critical task for the organization
- Outreach to children is very important
- Young firefighters are willing to participate
- Members who have been on the force longest are most involved
- Promotional support to younger members is important
- Organization needs to hold itself accountable to a culture of trust, respect and inclusion

The following suggestions for future direction for CAFA are based on feedback from the organization and membership. Each of these suggestions will take more discussion and vetting from the organization. This is a place to start in moving forward over the next several years. These ideas have come from the membership of CAFA and would move the organization forward regionally and maybe even nationally so that CAFA can continue to be one of the most progressive and productive African American firefighting associations in the Country.

Suggested Future Direction

- Develop a formal recruiting program
- All members need to participate in recruiting
- Create a promotional support team and ask a younger and older firefighter to co-lead
- Develop a membership code of conduct and hold each other accountable
- Create a social media team and ask a young firefighter to lead
- Create a membership asset inventory and ask a younger and an older firefighter to co-lead

Appendix Member Meeting Notes

March 23rd and 25th

Survey Findings

- Get to young people: be on their level, they need to be invited
- Generational differences
- Millennials need to be directly touched
- Willingness to give more (180 members)
- Need to give more value
- More from female firefighters

CAFA Outreach; what does that mean?

- Food drive
- Smoke detectors (Avondale)
- Red Cross
- CAFA is doing things no one else does
- Hot topics: lack of jobs and kids w/ pressure (lack of opportunity)
- Help young people: education, careers, outreach (go to elementary schools)
- Blue jean gyms united us
- Help young people with promotions
- Young firefighters will show up when asked – give them something to do
- Need to communicate on social media to young members
- CAFA needs a Facebook page
- Need to share our story with kids (HS)

Give Back to Community

- How do we reach out
- Recruiting
- School supplies
- Support low income in all communities (fire safe)
- School outreach (Turkey Drive)
- High school database on current firefighters (where did they go to high school send each to their schools)
- Use fire houses as community resource, leverage ourselves as role models
- Car Seat Program: this took a lot of time, hard, lots of politics

Promote AA Community Well-being

- N. College Hill Model
- Mentor elementary school kids (just have lunch)

Community Paramedics

- Some community support
- Embrace para-medicine
- Role of CAFA – make sure elderly in AA neighborhood have access
- Access to health care
- Support internal promotion opportunities – professional development
- Inclusion
- Support young ones in their promotional process
- Help people study with study group
- Need to target and support young firefighters (library and study support)
- We have a building with nothing in it
- More structured promotional support
- “Brand the support”
- Ladder of engagement from the little ones, to high school, to young people, to promotion
- Cadet program is important for inclusion

CAFA and CFD

- Need to advertise our brand with kids in schools
- Programs with EMT basics: showcase the good
- Certification program – connect with West High
- Law and Public Safety career path
- Need bigger recruit staff
- CAFA role is volunteer – not formal
- Need to get more formal role @ Urban League – CAA explores youth to work summer program
- Get kids exposed early and often
- Promote career day and get young firefighters involved
- Be present

Does org respond to the needs of the recruit?

- Need AA & female in training – all the time and need to ask formal question/request of chief
- Need diversity of thought in CAFA
- Leadership in CFD that is African American
- Get on local 48 Human Relations Committee motivated to do work, get “gassed up”
- AA & women – support, but both voices need to be in CAFA and in CFD
- Can CAFA support all this diversity – Latino and Appalachian?
- National connections
- International Black FF
- DURM – web
- Regional – 9 chapters
- Get someone on this local CAFA site

CAFA Needs to Become More United. How do we connect with each other?

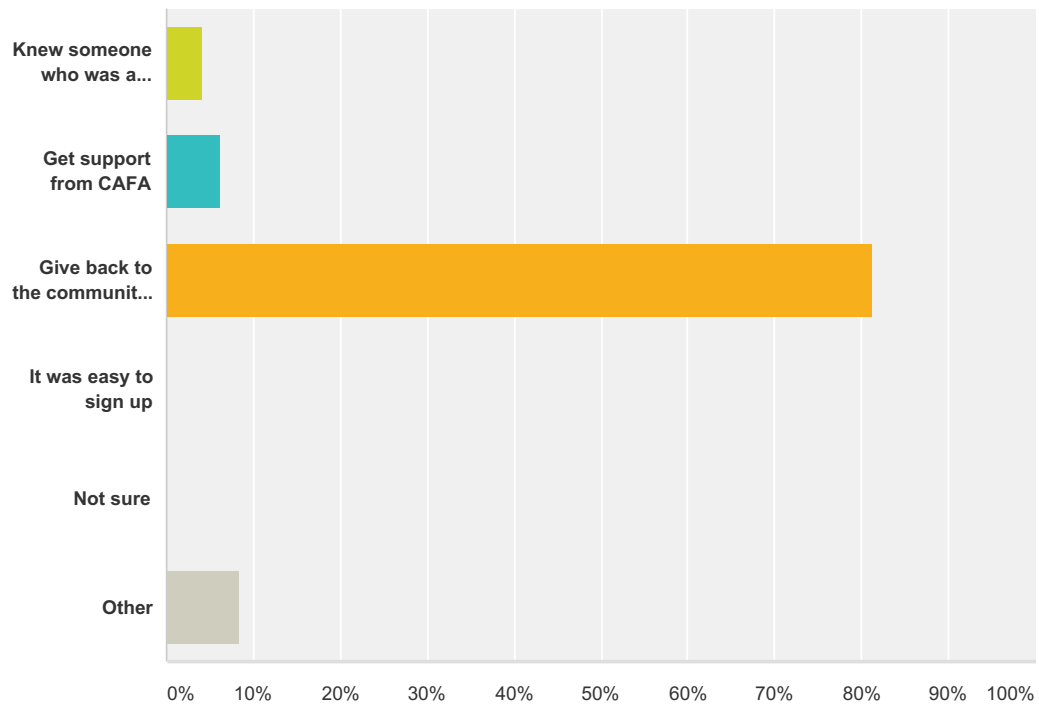
- Clear vision and mission statement
- Think globally/nationally (national model) – we are a solid trailblazer that stepped out of union and won
- Every other meeting should be about “projects” – recruiting
- Order of business is in constitution – can be changed in process of doing const.
- Ask people to do what you need

What do we do to end the “Drama”?

- Respect each other as men and women
- We can disagree and still least respect each other
- Controlled thoughts
- Honesty – have honest discussions
- Better rules on the decorum
- Stronger leadership
- Honesty
- Check your emotions at the door
- Respect, consideration, listen/hear
- Squash personal issues
- Respect one another
- Maintain order
- Stop the personal attacks
- Stop the cliques
- Forgiveness, compassion for differences, respect one another

Q1 Why did you become a member of the CAFA?

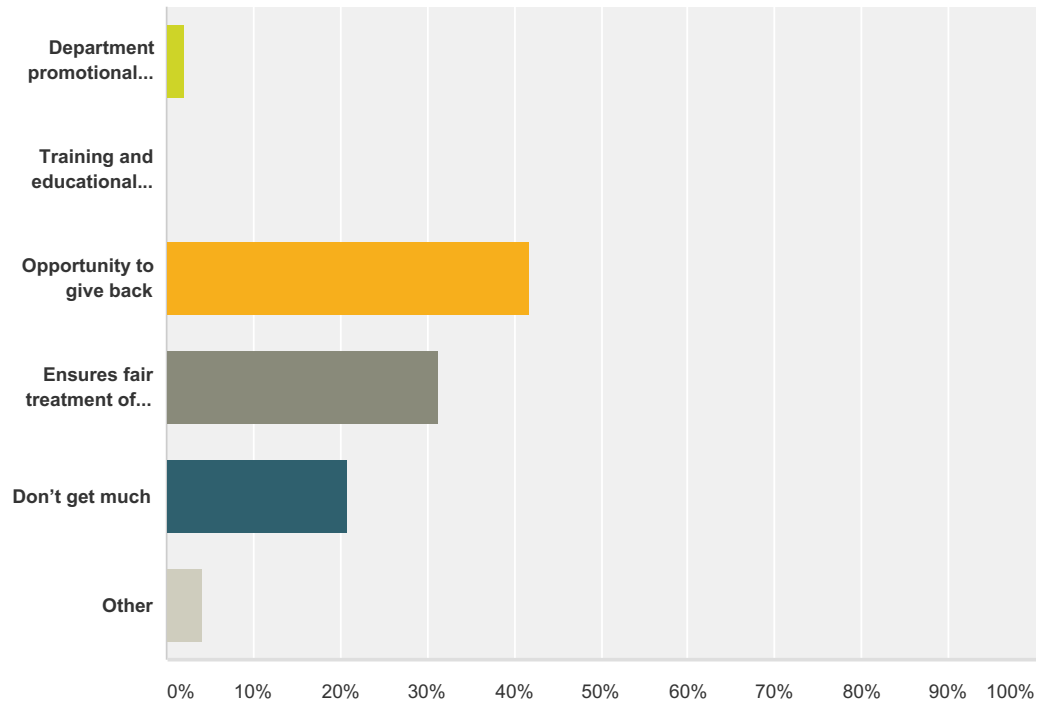
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Answer Choices	Responses
Knew someone who was a member	4.17% 2
Get support from CAFA	6.25% 3
Give back to the community and organization	81.25% 39
It was easy to sign up	0.00% 0
Not sure	0.00% 0
Other	8.33% 4
Total	48

Q2 What benefit do you receive from CAFA?

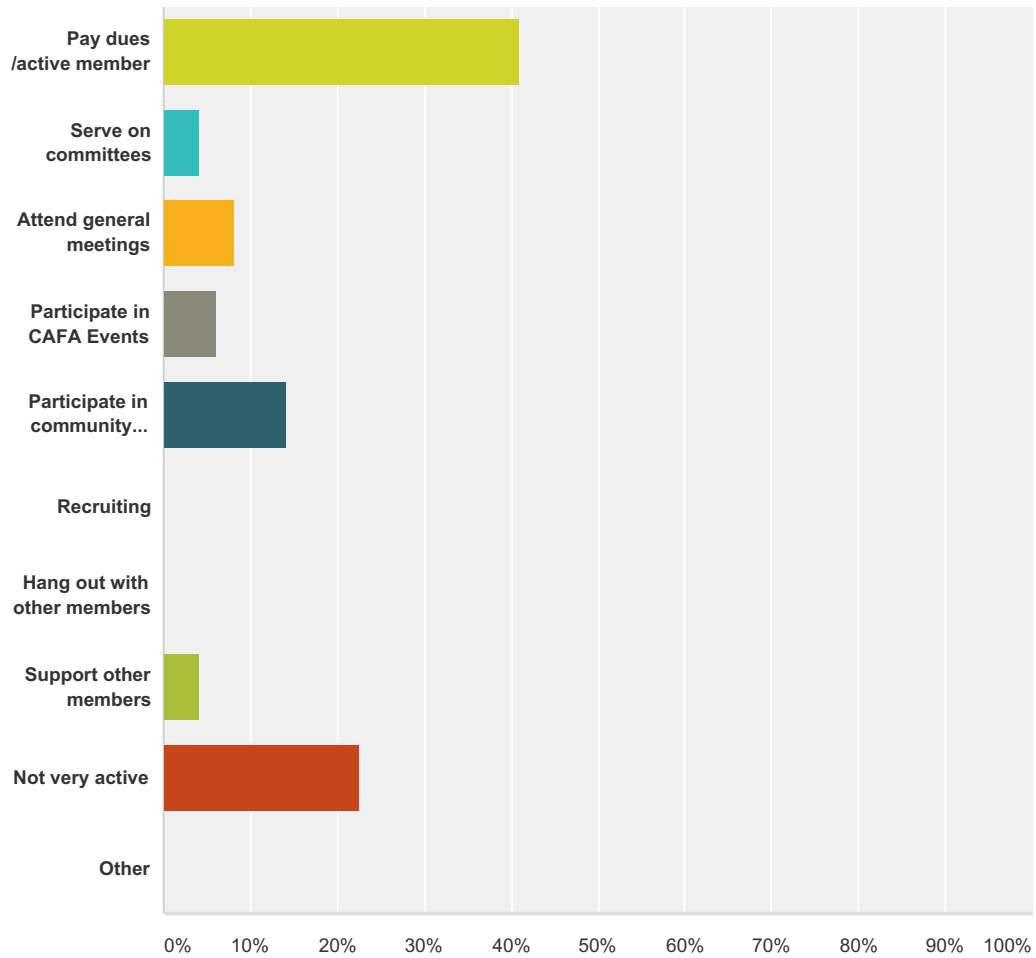
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Answer Choices	Responses
Department promotional support	2.08% 1
Training and educational support	0.00% 0
Opportunity to give back	41.67% 20
Ensures fair treatment of minority firefighters	31.25% 15
Don't get much	20.83% 10
Other	4.17% 2
Total	48

Q3 How do you participate in CAFA?

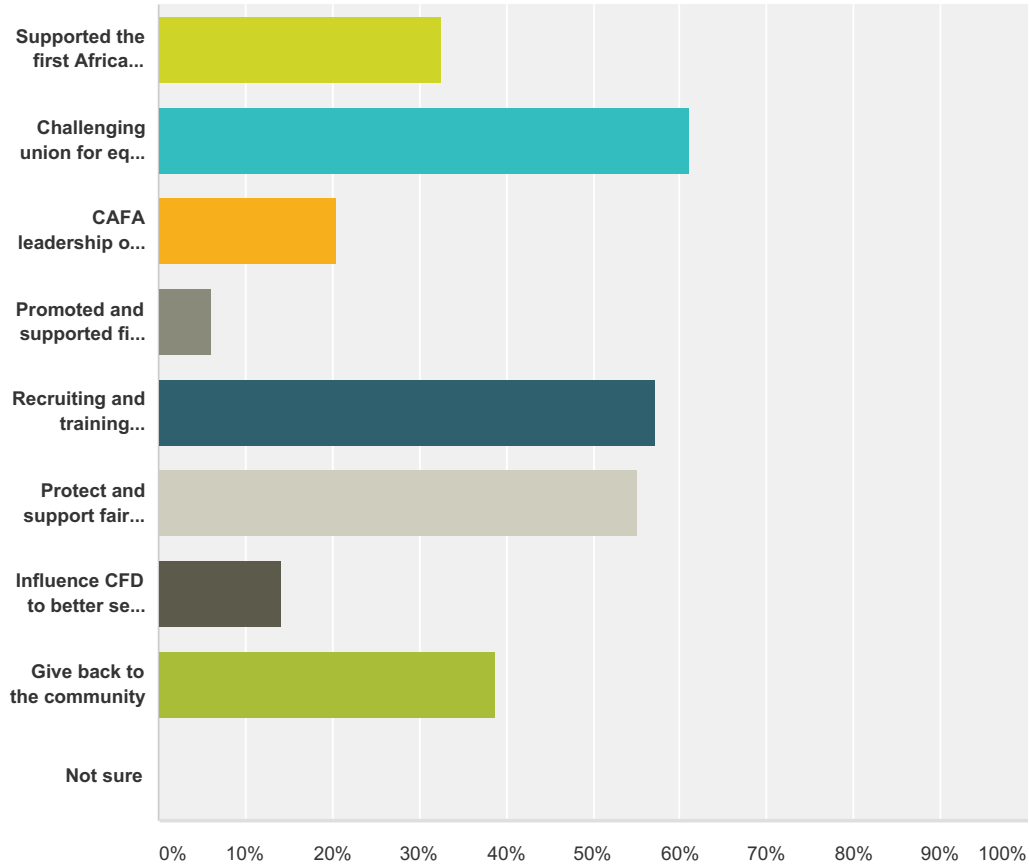
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Answer Choices	Responses	Count
Pay dues /active member	40.82%	20
Serve on committees	4.08%	2
Attend general meetings	8.16%	4
Participate in CAFA Events	6.12%	3
Participate in community service events	14.29%	7
Recruiting	0.00%	0
Hang out with other members	0.00%	0
Support other members	4.08%	2
Not very active	22.45%	11
Other	0.00%	0
Total		49

Q4 What are some of the most important accomplishments of the organization in the past? (pick the three that are most important to you)

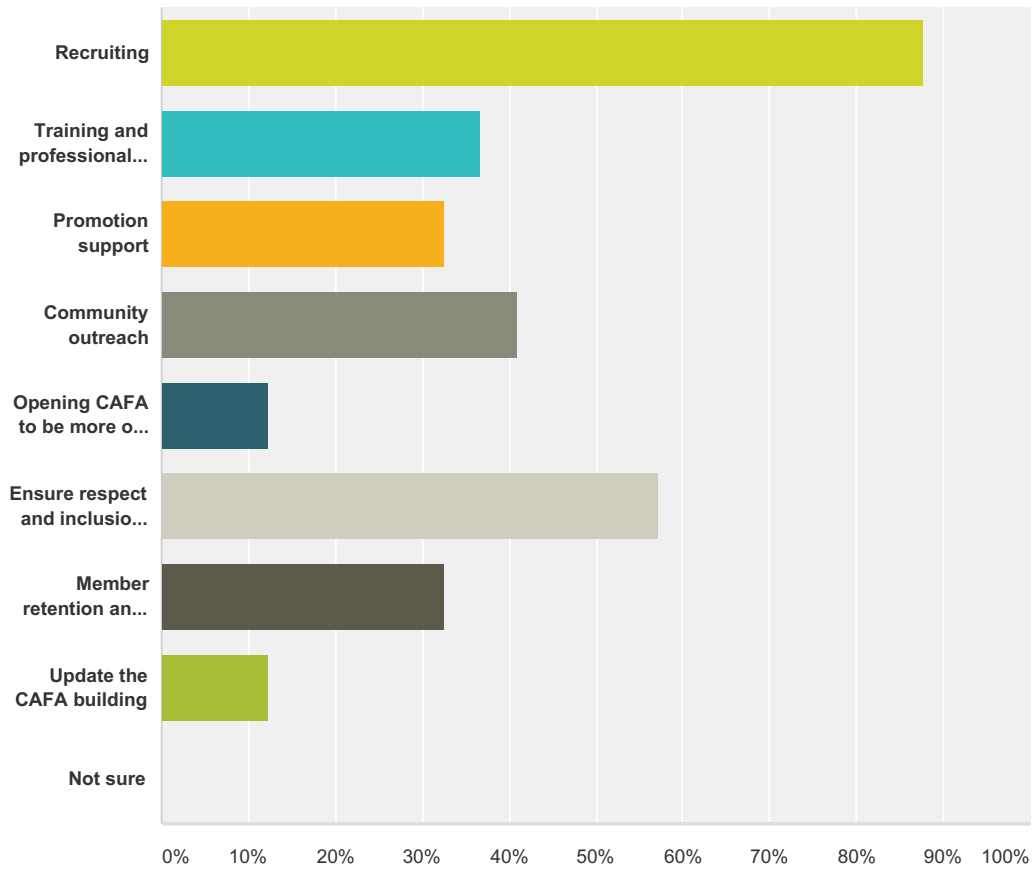
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Answer Choices	Responses
Supported the first African American fire fighters on the job in Cincinnati Fire Department	32.65% 16
Challenging union for equal representation	61.22% 30
CAFA leadership on Local 48	20.41% 10
Promoted and supported first African American Chief	6.12% 3
Recruiting and training minority firefighters	57.14% 28
Protect and support fair treatment of minority firefighters on the job	55.10% 27
Influence CFD to better serve African American community (i.e. smoke detector program)	14.29% 7
Give back to the community	38.78% 19
Not sure	0.00% 0
Total Respondents: 49	

Q5 What should the most important priorities be moving forward? (pick the three that are most important to you)

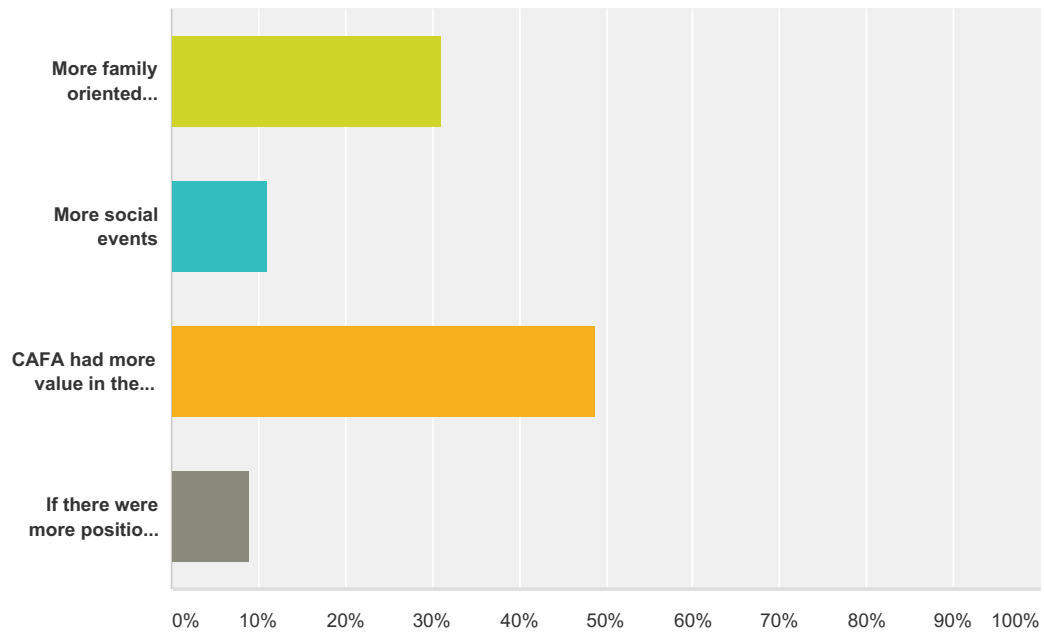
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Answer Choices	Responses
Recruiting	87.76% 43
Training and professional development	36.73% 18
Promotion support	32.65% 16
Community outreach	40.82% 20
Opening CAFA to be more of a community resource	12.24% 6
Ensure respect and inclusion of minorities in CFD decision-making	57.14% 28
Member retention and growth	32.65% 16
Update the CAFA building	12.24% 6
Not sure	0.00% 0
Total Respondents: 49	

Q6 What would help you be more active in CAFA?

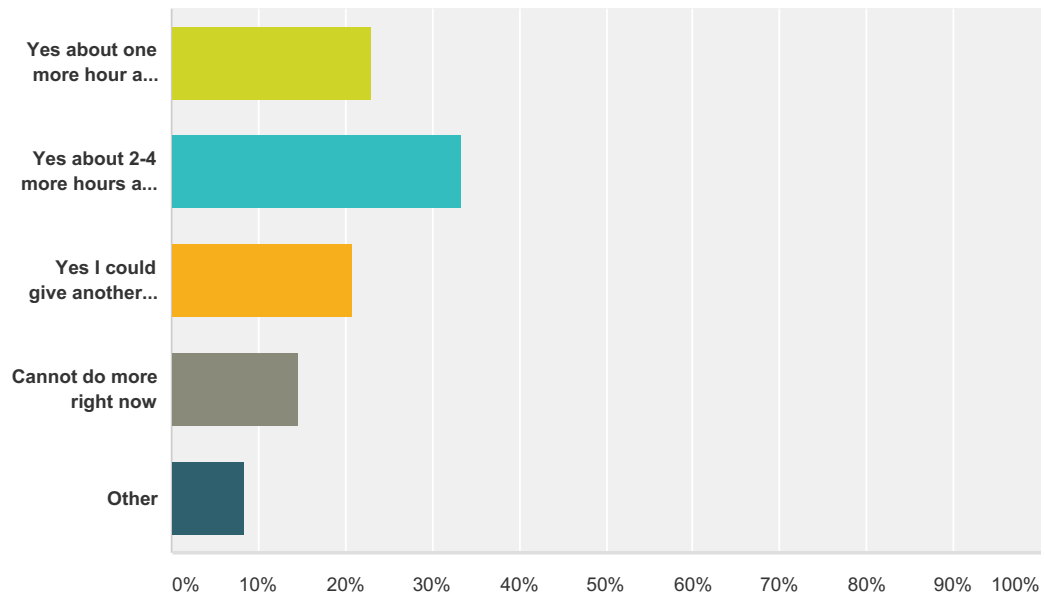
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Answer Choices	Responses	
More family oriented activities	31.11%	14
More social events	11.11%	5
CAFA had more value in the community	48.89%	22
If there were more positions in the organization with more responsibilities	8.89%	4
Total		45

Q7 If you were asked could you spend more time on CAFA activities?

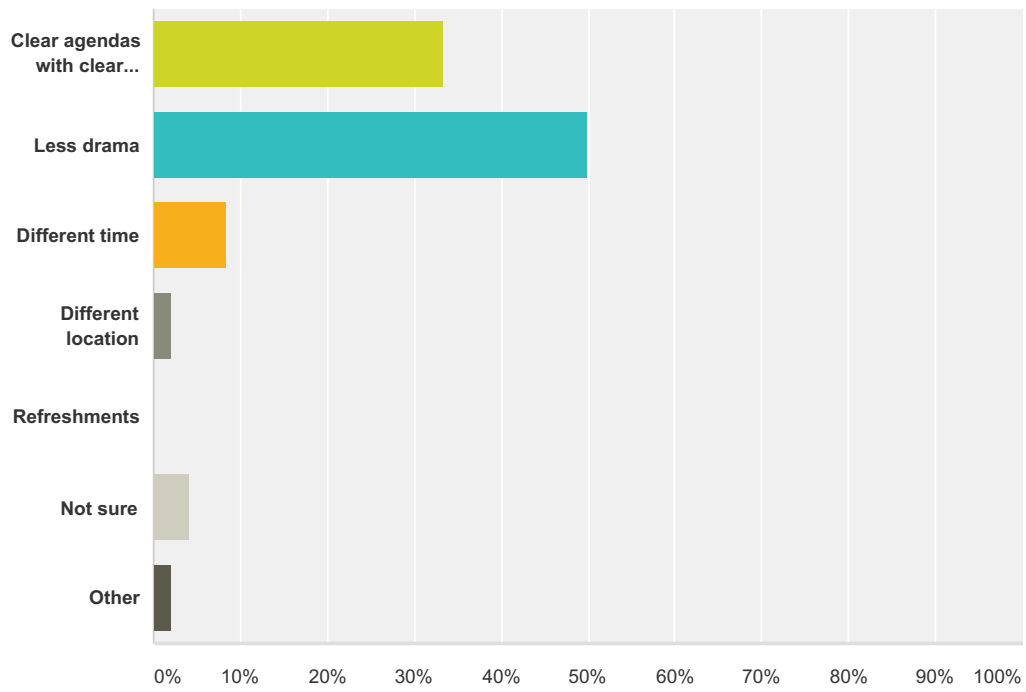
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Answer Choices	Responses	Count
Yes about one more hour a month	22.92%	11
Yes about 2-4 more hours a month	33.33%	16
Yes I could give another 5+ hours a month	20.83%	10
Cannot do more right now	14.58%	7
Other	8.33%	4
Total		48

Q8 What would make you more likely to come to general meetings?

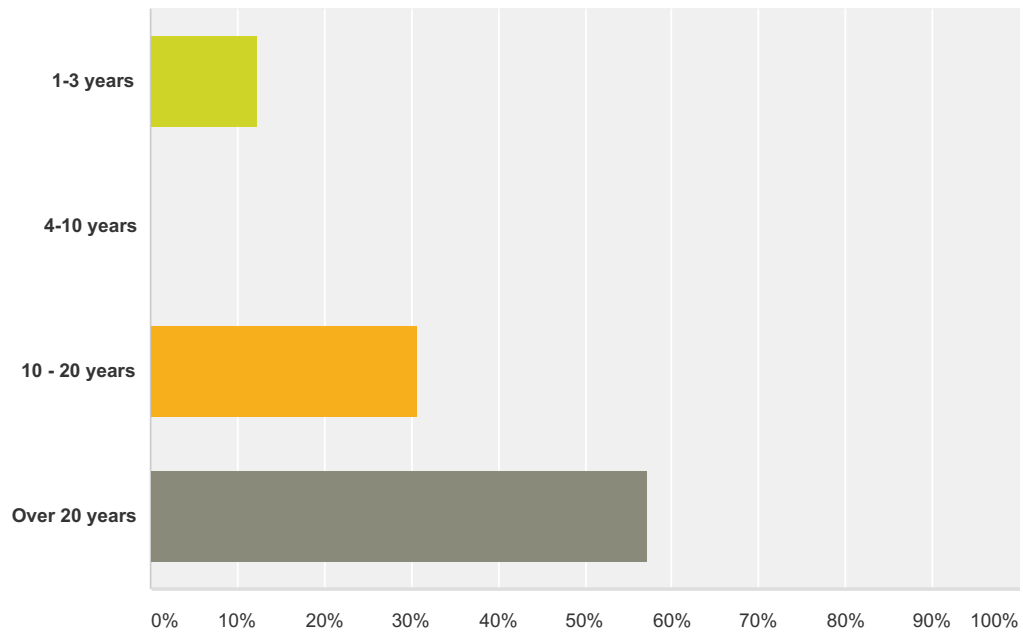
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Answer Choices	Responses
Clear agendas with clear outcomes	33.33% 16
Less drama	50.00% 24
Different time	8.33% 4
Different location	2.08% 1
Refreshments	0.00% 0
Not sure	4.17% 2
Other	2.08% 1
Total	48

Q9 How long have you been with the Department?

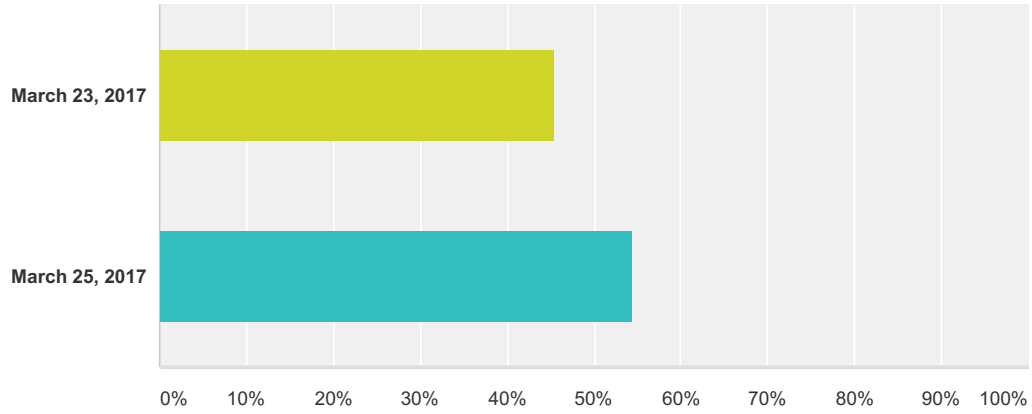
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Answer Choices	Responses	
1-3 years	12.24%	6
4-10 years	0.00%	0
10 - 20 years	30.61%	15
Over 20 years	57.14%	28
Total		49

Q10 What day are you available to attend the membership strategic planning session at Xavier University's Cintas Center.

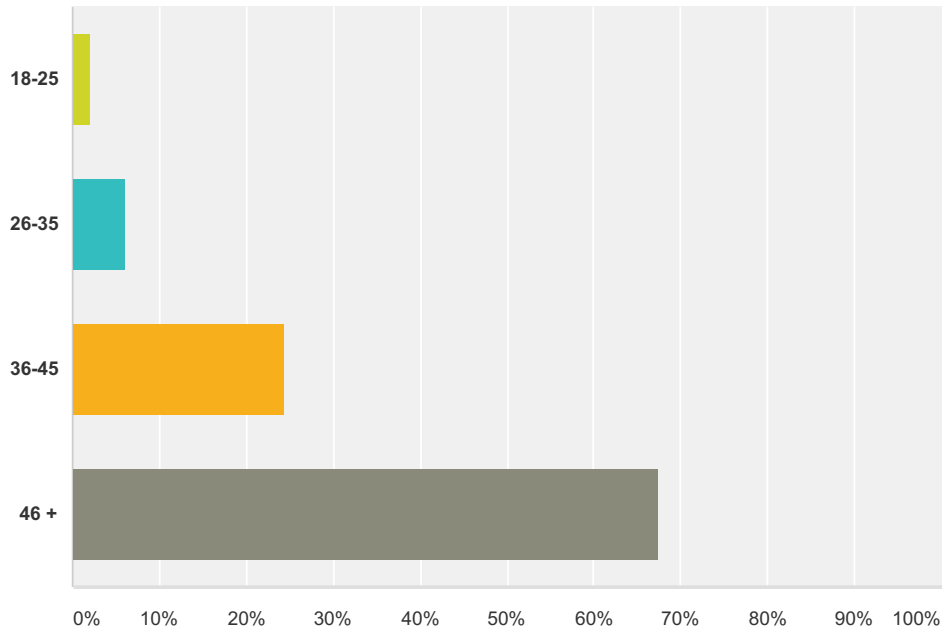
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Answer Choices	Responses	
March 23, 2017	45.45%	20
March 25, 2017	54.55%	24
Total		44

Q11 How old are you

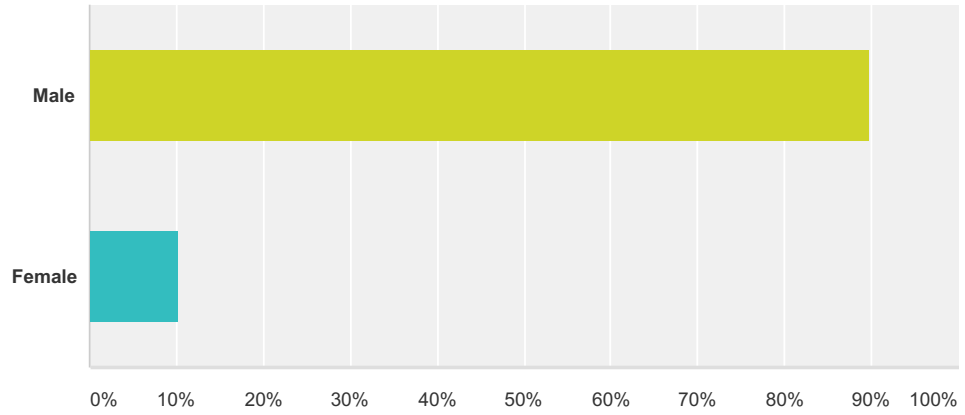
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Answer Choices	Responses
18-25	2.04% 1
26-35	6.12% 3
36-45	24.49% 12
46 +	67.35% 33
Total	49

Q12 Sex

Answered: 49 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses
Male	89.80% 44
Female	10.20% 5
Total	49