



**DEPARTMENT OF FORESTRY AND FIRE PROTECTION
OFFICE OF THE STATE FIRE MARSHAL**

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ATTACHMENT 3

Date: August 21, 2014

To: **State Board of Fire Services**

From: Ken Wagner, Fire Service Training Specialist III

SUBJECT/AGENDA ACTION ITEM:
Fire Fighter I Certification Examination Process

Recommended Actions:

Information/discussion only
Report on proposed Fire Fighter I certification examination process and stakeholder outreach efforts

Background Information:

The Blueprint 2020 report discussed the desire of our stakeholders to see implementation of certification (capstone) testing for professional certification issued by State Fire Training (SFT). Furthermore, as we have discussed implementation of national recognition at the Fire Fighter I level, we have anticipated requiring candidates to complete certification skills and written examinations. These examinations would be delivered at Accredited Regional Training Programs (ARTP) and Accredited Local Academies (ALA). Staff has been engaged in on-going dialogue with the Statewide Training and Education Advisory Committee (STEAC) on implementation of this certification examination process and believes that implementing the certification examination process is an important step in strengthening our certification system. Furthermore, a certification examination process must be implemented in order to achieve accreditation by the International Fire Service Accreditation Congress (IFSAC) and the National Board on Fire Service Professional Qualifications (Pro Board).

STEAC has expressed concerns during discussions on this topic. Staff has openly discussed these concerns and has been making adjustments to proposed implementation plans to address them. During a meeting with the California Professional Firefighters (CPF), President Paulson and members of his staff expressed additional concerns to the State Fire Marshal. One key request made by CPF was that SFT should meet with stakeholder groups to seek their input and interest in this proposal. Staff has been actively engaged in this effort.

Analysis/Summary of Issue:

Staff has prepared a detailed process for implementation of certification examinations delivered by Accredited Regional Training Programs (ARTP) and Accredited Local Academies (ALA). This process has been discussed in some detail with representatives from both ARTPs and ALAs.

Although the process is still being fine tuned, the attached chart is a reasonable representation of how the certification examination administrative process would work.

In addition to the process, staff has been working with ARTPs to develop a clear understanding of the costs associated with implementing certification examinations. The attached document entitled "Certification Examination & National Recognition Cost Analysis" has been vetted through the California Fire Technology Directors Association. This document does not address certification costs that may be borne by ALAs.

State Fire Training will continue to meet with stakeholders to discuss the implementation of a certification examination process and understand their concerns. To date, SFT has met with the following groups:

- California Fire Chiefs Association (CFCA) Board of Directors (February 19, 2014)
- CFCA, Training Officers, Northern Division, Board of Directors (April 15, 2014)
- CFCA Training Officers, Southern Division, Board of Directors (April 1, 2014)
- California Fire Training Directors Association (CFTDA) (on-going)
- Accredited Local Academies (ALAs) (April 29, 2014)
- California State Fire Fighters Association (CSFA) Board of Directors (May 1, 2014)
- Los Angeles Area Fire Chief's Association, Regional Training Group (April 2, 2014)
- FIRESCOPE Board of Directors (July 9, 2014)
- California Metro Fire Chiefs Association (July 10, 2014)

Presentations to the following stakeholder groups are pending:

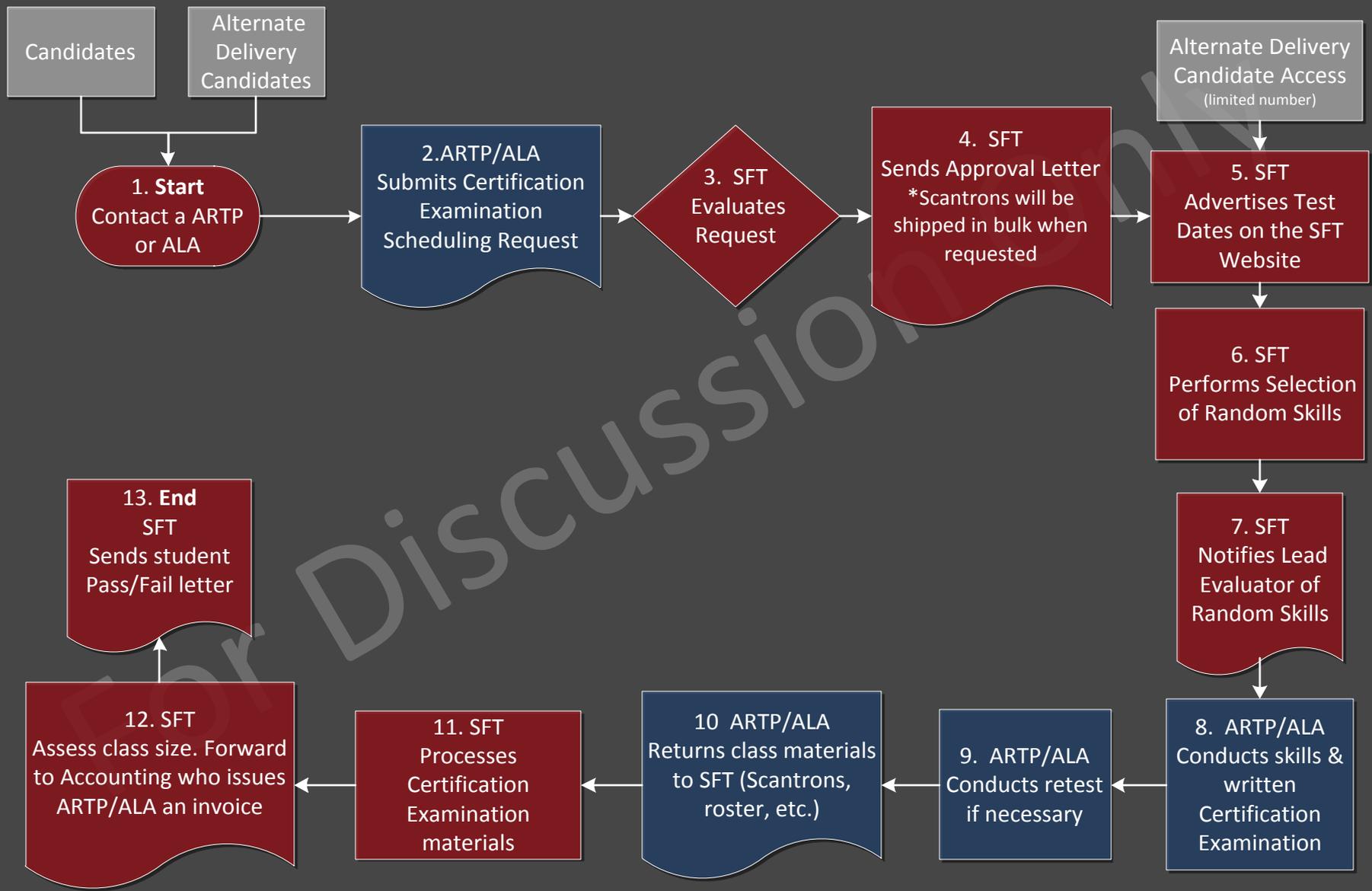
- League of California Cities, Fire Chiefs Department Board of Directors
- Fire Districts Association of California (FDAC) Board of Directors

The reaction has been positive from the stakeholder groups so far. There have not been any new concerns raised that require further analysis or modifications to the proposed implementation plans. Staff will continue to engage stakeholder groups in discussion on this important initiative.

Notwithstanding a major concern that may surface from the stakeholder groups, staff is planning to bring this proposed Fire Fighter I certification examination process back to STEAC for approval at the January 16, 2015 meeting, and to the SBFS at the February 19, 2015 meeting.

Fire Fighter I - ARTP/ALA Certification Examination Process

SFT = 
 ARTP/ALA = 





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CERTIFICATION EXAMINATION & NATIONAL RECOGNITION COST ANALYSIS

BACKGROUND

In response to both Blueprint 2020 and on-going Mission Alignment initiatives, State Fire Training (SFT) has been moving toward implementation of two significant initiatives:

1. Implementation of written and skills certification examinations at all levels as curriculum is updated to meet current NFPA standards.

And

2. Accreditation by the International Fire Service Accreditation Congress (IFSAC) and the National Board on Fire Service Professional Qualifications (Pro Board), which would empower SFT to issue national certification along with California certification. Written and skills examinations are required by IFSAC and Pro Board.

On July 19, 2013 the Statewide Training and Education Advisory Committee (STEAC) discussed implementation of certification examinations, IFSAC and Pro Board certification and their associated costs. Numerous questions were raised concerning costs, requiring this more detailed analysis.

Although SFT has absorbed the implementation costs of these two initiatives to date, full implementation and future administration of these two initiatives will result in additional costs. As SFT is a self supporting, or "Special Fund" program within the Office of the California State Fire Marshal (OSFM), funds for these programs must be generated through user fees. Furthermore, implementation plans call for reliance on Accredited Regional Training Programs (ARTP) and Accredited Local Academies (ALA)¹ to be the primary delivery method of certification testing. ARTPs will also have additional costs that must be addressed through user fees. The purpose of this document is to present the analysis of future implementation and administration costs.

CERTIFICATION EXAMINATION COSTS

In order to analyze costs, it is necessary to first discuss how it is anticipated certification examinations will be implemented on a statewide basis. This analysis will focus on Fire Fighter I as the first self assessment applications to IFSAC and Pro Board will only include Fire Fighter I certification.

The Job Performance Requirements (JPRs) for Fire Fighter I require implementation of both written and skills certification examinations for all candidates. Written examinations will be developed and validated by the Fire Fighter I Curriculum Development Cadre utilizing the test bank purchased from Performance Training Systems (PTS). The revised Fire Fighter I curriculum includes JPRs for Fire Fighter I, Wildland Fire Fighter I and Hazardous Materials First Responder Operational. Four to six different written examinations will be developed. The Cadre has already developed skills sheets for each of the JPRs requiring skills examination. These skill sheets will be utilized by on-site skills evaluators to review each candidate's performance and document whether they pass or fail the skills examination. Each skills examination will include approximately twenty-three (23) skills; a combination of required and randomly selected skills.

In order to implement certification examinations statewide, SFT has determined that the most efficient means will be to engage ALAs and ARTPs. The program plan being developed will designate ARTPs and ALAs as certification examination centers. ARTPs and ALAs will be required to conduct the

examinations using SFT examination materials, in accordance with SFT procedures and utilizing SFT Registered Lead Evaluators and Skills Evaluators. SFT has been meeting with both ARTPs and ALAs on a regular basis to solicit their input on this implementation.

Using the California Fire Technology Directors Association (CFTDA) as a conduit, SFT met on October 28, 2013 with representatives from three (3) ARTPs, Alan Hancock College, San Francisco City College and Sierra College to discuss certification implementation and associated costs. Although there are still many unknowns at this time, detailed discussion occurred on implementation of written and skills examinations. It is important to understand in brief, some key implementation steps and responsibilities of both SFT and ARTPs/ALAs for the certification examination process.

- SFT Responsibilities
- Develop written and skills exams
 - Evaluate and process certification examination requests from ARTP/ALA
 - Coordinate with on-line exam provider (PTS)
 - Select random skills for exams
 - Process student results
 - Evaluate exam results
 - Register Lead & Skills Evaluators

- ARTP/ALA Responsibilities
- Request exam authorization from SFT
 - Utilize Registered Evaluators
 - Insure exam security and impartiality
 - Maintain records of candidate performance on skills exam
 - Communicate results to SFT
 - Provide computer access for on-line written exam
 - Provide all props and materials needed for skills exams

SFT is anticipating implementation of a \$10 per candidate Student Exam Registration Fee to offset the program implementation and administration costs. This fee would be collected by the ARTP and forwarded to SFT at the conclusion of the examination process through the standardized invoicing process.

To implement certification examinations, ARTPs will need to provide certain staffing and facilities. The most costly item is the evaluators needed to adequately deliver the written and skills examinations. Table #1 depicts the time and resources required for skills testing for approximately thirty (30) candidates. Table #2 depicts the time and resources required for delivering the written examination to approximately thirty (30) candidates.

Table #1(Skills)

Topic	No. of Skills	Day	No. of Lead Evaluators ea. Day	No. of Skills Evaluators	No. of 8 hr. Days	Total Staff Hours
Fire Fighter I	12	1&2	1	6	2	112
Wildland Fire Fighter I	8	3	1	2	1	32
Haz Mat FRO	3	3	1	1	1	
TOTAL	23	3	1 (only 1 req. ea. day)	9 (FTE)	3 (may be combined)	144

Skills Examination	3 days x 8hrs = 24 hours
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Lead Evaluator	1 x 24 hours = 24 hours
F/F I Skills Evaluators	6 x 16 hours = 96 hours
Wildland/Haz Mat Skills Evaluators	<u>3 x 8 hours = 24 hours</u>
Total	144 hours

Table #2 (Written)

Topic	No. of Lead Evaluators	Staff Hours
Fire Fighter I (Includes Wildland Fire Fighter I and Haz Mat FRO)	1	3

Salaries for ARTP employees vary between institutions throughout the state. Table #3 provides cost estimates for implementation of the skills and written examinations as presented in Tables #1 and #2. *It is important to keep in mind that these are cost estimates and actual candidate expenses will vary dependent upon each ARTP's ability to package the examinations. This will be discussed in greater detail later.*

Table #3 (Costs)

Examination Type	Staff Hours	Cost Per Hour Range	Total Cost Range	Cost Per Candidate Range @ 30 per exam
Skills	144	25-80 (lab)	3,600-11,520	120-384
Written	3	35-100(lecture)	105-300	3.5-10
			Total Cost Per Candidate Range	\$123.5-\$395

IMPLEMENTATION OF CERTIFICATION EXAMINATION COSTS

As stated previously, the costs calculated in the section above can be implemented by ARTPs in various ways. The implementation method may also change depending on the relationship between the candidate and the ARTP. For example, some candidates may be registered students with the ARTP, resulting in a tuition model. Some candidates may be local delivery students that do not have the same relationship with the ARTP. The implementation method for local delivery candidates will need to be negotiated between the ARTP and the local delivery provider or may be the candidate's responsibility. Therefore, illustrations herein will reflect a range for costs and expected fees.

The cost item details below provide more complete information on the various proposed fees associated with implementation of certification examinations.

Cost Item Detail

Student Exam Registration Fee

This is a new \$10 fee that will address the costs incurred by SFT for the administration of certification examinations including examination development, scheduling, recordkeeping, student notification and evaluator training. Fire Fighter I is the only CFSTES course that does not have an associated fee.

Tuition Fee

Although some ARTPs may be able to incorporate the time necessary to deliver the required skills and written examinations into their current program, others may find it necessary to add a maximum of 24 hours (1 unit of credit). The resulting cost increase would be a **maximum** of \$46 per student. This is the current tuition cost per unit which is subject to change on a statewide basis.

ARTP Fee

If candidates are not registered as students with the ARTP, direct fees may be charged for participation in examinations. Fees may range from \$125-\$395. There are numerous relationships/business models that may result in reduction or elimination of this fee. The actual fee will be negotiated with the ARTP. *This fee is only an estimate.*

On-Line Exam Fee

SFT anticipates utilizing the services of PTS as an on-line platform for delivery of written examinations. SFT will develop and validate the examinations and forward them to PTS for delivery. Examinations will be conducted utilizing ARTP computer capacity. Students will register on-line with PTS and pay them \$18 directly. Students and SFT will receive results immediately after the examination.

Tables #4 and #5 below provide a view of estimated total student costs for certification examinations. Table #4 illustrates a student who received training at an ARTP while Table #5 illustrates a student who received their training through local delivery.

Table #4

(Certification Examination Costs for Accredited Regional Training Program (ARTP) Students)

Cost Item	Payee	Projected Cost
Student Exam Registration Fee	Collected by ARTP & Transmitted to State Fire Training (SFT)	10.00
Tuition Fee	Accredited Regional Training Program (ARTP)	46.00
On-Line Exam Fee	Performance Training Systems (PTS)	18.00
	Total Maximum Per Student	\$74.00

Table #5

(Certification Examination Costs for Local Delivery Students)

Cost Item	Payee	Projected Cost
Student Exam Registration Fee	Collected by ARTP & Transmitted to State Fire Training (SFT)	10.00
ARTP Fee	Accredited Regional Training Program (ARTP)	125-395
On-Line Exam Fee	Performance Training Systems (PTS)	18.00
	Total Maximum Per Student	\$153-\$423

IMPLEMENTATION OF CERTIFICATION FEES

Certification fees will be impacted by how IFSAC and Pro Board certification is issued in conjunction with California certification. Two implementation models are addressed in this analysis. One, voluntary IFSAC and Pro Board certification where they are issued **separately** from California certification. Two, required IFSAC and Pro Board certification where they are **incorporated** with California certification.

As an accredited agency, SFT will be required to pay annual agency fees and individual participant certification fees to IFSAC and Pro Board. Annual agency fees are approximately \$2,000 each and are adjusted depending on the number of certifications issued. Therefore, implementing incorporated IFSAC and Pro Board certification will also result in minimal certification cost increases paid by candidates. The result would be spreading the cost over a broader population with a smaller cost increase per participant. SFT anticipates that the current Fire Fighter I certification fee of \$40.00 would increase to between \$55.00 and \$65.00 with the incorporated certification model. Should IFSAC and Pro Board certification be issued separately, certification fees for those choosing to participate would likely increase to between \$70.00 and \$80.00. This would be the result of amortizing administrative and operating costs across a smaller population of participants. Table #6 illustrates this fee for the two models.

Table #6 (Certification Fee)

Cost Item	Payee	Projected Cost
Certification Fee Voluntary (IFSAC/Pro Board issued separately from California Certification)	SFT	40
	Total Fee Including \$40 California Fee	\$80
California Certification Fee Increase (IFSAC/Pro Board incorporated with California Certification)	SFT	25
	Total Incorporated Fee Including \$40 California Fee	\$65

IMPLEMENTATION EXAMPLES

Illustrations I-IV below depict estimated candidate costs when examination fees and certification fees are combined. *Once again, It is important to keep in mind that the examination fees are estimates and actual candidate expenses will vary dependent upon each ARTP's ability to package the examinations.* The illustrations reflect the method by which the candidate received their training and the two certification issuance models.

Illustration I

<u>Candidate Who Received Training at ARTP with Separate Certification Fees</u>	
Certification Examination Costs	74
IFSAC/Pro Board Certification Fee	80
TOTAL	\$154

Illustration II

<u>Candidate Who Received Training at ARTP with Incorporated Certification Fees</u>	
Certification Examination Costs	74
Incorporated Certification Fee	65
TOTAL	\$139

Illustration III

<u>Candidate Who Received Training via Local Delivery with Separate Certification Fee</u>	
Certification Examination Costs	153-423
IFSAC/Pro Board Certification Fee	80
TOTAL	\$233-\$503

Illustration IV

<u>Candidate Who Received Training via Local Delivery with Incorporated Certification Fee</u>	
Certification Examination Costs	153-423
Incorporated Certification Fee	65
TOTAL	\$218-\$488

CONCLUSIONS

Implementation of certification examinations and issuance of IFSAC and Pro Board certification will result in increased user fees.

SFT believes that delivering certification examinations through a structured process will increase the professionalism of the California fire service and will bring CFSTES into closer alignment with the myriad of professions and vocations that already require candidates to demonstrate knowledge through certification examinations. Delivery of certification examinations through ARTPs and ALAs is a sound decision as these organizations demonstrate their commitment and professionalism through the accreditation process and have expressed their desire to enhance their involvement by participating in this new endeavor. Furthermore, ARTPs have numerous models available that can be utilized to help keep certification examination fees at a reasonable level.

There are two models of implementing IFSAC and Pro Board certification. One, voluntary IFSAC and Pro Board certification where they are issued *separately* from California certification. Two, required IFSAC and Pro Board certification where they are *incorporated* with California certification. Taking into consideration economy of scale, uniformity with other states, ease of candidate understanding, internal SFT business practices and the proposed moderate fee increase the incorporated model is the most viable.

ⁱ ALAs are accredited to deliver Fire Fighter I and other CFSTES programs along with FSTEP and CICC training to their employees only. Any increased costs an ALA may experience for delivery of certification testing to their employees are not addressed in this analysis.



STATE FIRE TRAINING ACCREDITED REGIONAL TRAINING PROGRAMS 50 MILE RADIUS

