

TFM Evaluation Meeting -- REPORT

June 15, 2001

Salt Lake City, Utah

Participants:

Larry Sutton- BLM Training Unit Group Leader
Dave Mueller- Fuels Specialist, Eastern Montana
Ted Mason- Training Specialist, BLM Training Unit
Pam McAlpin- State Fire Management Officer, Arizona
Joe Freeland- Fire Management Officer, Elko, NV
Sheldon Wimmer- State Fire Management Officer, Utah
Aitor Bidaburu- Program Management Assistant, BLM Training Unit
Kato Howard- Fuels Specialist, Alaska Fire Service
Linda Hansen- Field Office Manager, California

The meeting began with the following preface:

Think outside the box. Before we can answer the question, “Is TFM meeting BLM training needs?” we want to identify what the training needs for BLM really are, that are not currently addressed through the NWCG curriculum. To effectively evaluate the TFM Program, assume we are starting from ground zero and building a training program based on actual needs. Then we will determine how well the current program meets those needs.

Job skills needed for BLM fire management

Knowledge in determining sampling methods for monitoring

(covered in Statistics, Fire Effects and Fuels modules of TFM)

Integrating monitoring methods to achieve resource management objectives

(not covered adequately in TFM) *Need to cover concepts like: why are you monitoring, what happens if you don't monitor, how is monitoring tied to objectives, how are you demonstrating that you've met your objectives – these concepts could be covered in 1 hour (fits under NEPA). Could eliminate coverage of Brown's down/dead woody model.*

Availability of technical tools and technology that integrates fire and land management

(well covered - one of the strengths of TFM) *This needs to evolve continuously as programs and applications evolve. “Give us the latest stuff”. Need more coverage of Wildland-UrbanInterface, defensible space, satellite imagery, severity, and prevention. Give students currently accepted definitions of terms (i.e., Wildland-UrbanInterface, hazard fuels, etc.) Give examples of effectively designed wildland-urban interface and prevention programs. Some of this could go into Module V, where some other material could be replaced.*

Tools: GIS, Fire behavior, smoke management, etc.

NEPA: identifying objectives in an EA and incorporating those in a burn plan; difference

between objectives and goals; why do we need to know NEPA

(overview of rational planning process is well covered in TFM; NEPA's relationship to the land management process is also covered)

Land use planning

(covered in Economics, Fire and Land Management and Fire Effects modules)

Understanding the linkages between various planning documents (e.g., FMP - RMP)

(is covered as an overview in TFM and flowcharts are presented)

Familiarity with all types of resources that are impacted by fire management

(minimally covered in TFM)

Analytical skills that lead to decisions or identification of preferred alternatives

(is covered in the completion of the Final Project of TFM)

Understanding of land management planning processes

(only minimally covered in TFM as an overview)

Technical report writing/organization skills

(not taught in TFM, although some assistance is provided in editing and formatting documents that are required for the program)

Budgeting and fiscal management

(BLM perspective is minimally covered in TFM)

Contracting as an alternative tool for accomplishing work

(not covered in TFM) *Cover this as an overview: policy changes that require use of contracts, etc.*

Personnel management (not covered in TFM)

Leadership (not covered in TFM)

Supervision skills (not covered in TFM)

Project management skills (not covered in TFM)

Oral communication skills; presentation skills (not covered in TFM)

Knowledge of BLM's organization and mission (not covered in TFM)

Ability to lead an ID Team on a project (not covered in TFM)

Positions/grades/series of targeted learners:

GS-6/7/8/9 level

People in a Technician series with the desire and potential to advance in fire management.
People who are working towards meeting the educational requirements for the GS-401 series.
We don't want to send people who already have natural resource management degrees; we do want to target upwardly mobile people in the fire program.

Positions that are targeted, when course is completed:

FMO, AFMO, FOS, Fuels Specialists, State Aviation Managers, Dispatch Center Managers

Consensual Review of TFM program

The TFM program as it now exists is beneficial to the BLM and beneficial to the individuals who complete it.

Things TFM does for the BLM:

Helps technicians with lots of field experience but little or no formal college-level education in the natural resource management field transition from technician series to the professional series.

Exposes our employees to state-of-the-art technology and processes for accomplishing fire management (e.g., planning and analysis).

Prepares people to handle any and all fire management problems (i.e., suppression, fuels management, integrating fire and resource management). It may be too heavy on fuels management and is too light on other types of resource management (i.e., range, wildlife) as they relate to fire.

TFM provides people with a grounding in the basics of fire management, plus a broad knowledge of the technology that is available for use in solving fire management problems. It sets people up to either succeed or fail...it's up to each individual.

BLM position is to keep the GIS portion of Module V. Although this course is offered in agency sponsored courses outside of TFM, many of the fire people in TFM are not afforded the opportunity to attend these training classes. The GIS session that TFM offers (although only an introduction) is still valuable for the students.

Prerequisites

Math skills, writing skills, presentation skills, computer skills.

Suggest requiring familiarity with 9214, Review and Update of the 1995 Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy, Red Book, the National Fire Plan, a local Resource Management Plan, and "Opportunities and Challenges."

Final Project

Consensus of the group is to keep the final project as the culminating experience of TFM.

Project should demonstrate familiarity with given analytical tools and ability to identify problems and conduct analysis, identify alternatives and solutions.

Recommendations for improvement of current program

Continue to reduce the emphasis on Pacific Northwest activity fuels (slash management) and broaden the scope to include Range Management issues (noxious weed controls, lease and permit issues, and political environment regarding range management). (*Washington Institute*)

Propose that another curriculum review be undertaken ASAP. (*Advisory Committee*)

Written notification back to non-selected students as to what areas they were weak in and how they can improve and be successful applicants next time. (*BLM Training Unit*)

Develop recommendations for courses that people can take to prepare to apply and participate in TFM. (*Advisory Committee, Washington Institute*)

Recommend the use of TFM graduates on the TFM selection panels that are used in the State's nomination process. Make sure that people actually meet the prerequisites that are specified. (*Management*)

Add more information to the BLM Training Unit web page on TFM (e.g., brochure, suggestions for ways to prepare, etc.). (*BLM Training Unit*)

Complete mentor plan and publish it (get field review). (*BLM Training Unit*)

Encourage Washington Institute to recruit more diversity in its instructor ranks (i.e., race, gender, geographic, experience, agency affiliation, etc.). (*Washington Institute*)

Make it known that the final project will take approximately 300-500 hours to complete, and that some of this will be personal time. (*BLM Training Unit, Management, Washington Institute*)

Recommend standards that all papers have to meet (ie. Must have a defined problem, objectives, alternative solutions, and a logical analytical process for comparing alternatives). (*Washington Institute*)

Recommend that final project evaluation panels include at least one TFM graduate. (*Washington Institute*)

Ask Washington Institute to define what a "process paper" is and why they are inadequate as TFM projects. (*Washington Institute*)

Recommend the BLM Training Unit pursue the identification of college(s) or university(s) that can support a curriculum that meets the needs of our learners. This institution would be able to furnish a single semester of a full load of courses that would provide upper-level college credit hours including fire statistics, economics, fire ecology, NEPA, fire planning, fire behavior, fire management policy, fire effects, etc. (***BLM Training Unit***)