

## **CHAPTER V**

### **IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This chapter includes an overview of the research, a discussion of the results of the research, and the implications of the research for the adult educator. The researcher also provides an explanation of a process model of a career path for professional development and a shared responsibility management model: both especially pertinent to agencies that use contract instructors. Finally, the chapter includes suggestions for future research. In this section the term “training organization” is used to mean “academic institution”, “federal training agency”, or any other education or training establishment that uses adult educators to teach or train adults.

#### **Overview**

Although considerable information exists on the needs and emerging roles of adjunct faculty in academic institutions little printed material exists on contract instructors' needs and roles in federal agencies. Any information that does exist is within internal files and not readily retrievable.

This study attempted to determine the most effective administrative support and professional development of contract instructors at one federal agency, the National Fire Academy (NFA.) In particular the study examined NFA instructors' problems that may have implications for program delivery and their need for administrative support services, especially in the orientation of new instructors, program delivery, evaluation processes and professional development. The study sought recommendations for the provision of these needs. Institutions working within the mainstream of adult education in academe will find similar problems and issues affecting their adjunct faculty.

To secure useful information for analysis, the researcher developed and mailed questionnaires to all 536 of NFA's resident program contract instructors. Of these, 245 were completed and usable, for a return rate of 45 percent. The responding contract instructors were divided into those who taught predominately NFA management courses, 50.6%, and those who taught predominately NFA operations courses, 49.4%. The NFA has been in existence in

Emmitsburg, MD for 18 years. Of the responding contract instructors 38.8% had taught at the NFA for at least 10 years. In addition the perceptions of the NFA Program Chairs were sought via individual interviews with 8 of the 10 Chairs.

The Program Chairs' interviews were also designed to determine their perception of the types of problems, if any, that they had experienced in dealing with contract instructors, and the Chairs' perceptions of the need for contract instructors' administrative support and professional development.

The contract instructors' questionnaire data were analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. The quantitative analysis was accomplished by using descriptive statistics, including central tendency and frequency distributions, and inferential statistics using the Chi Square Test of Comparison. The qualitative analysis was accomplished by categorizing and coding open-ended responses. The Program Chairs interview data was also categorized and coded.

### **Discussion**

This research began with an examination of the method used to manage contract instructors at one civilian federal training agency, the National Fire Academy (NFA). Each year approximately 3000 students from the United States and foreign countries attend resident training programs designed to improve their fire service operations and management skills and knowledge. Predominately these programs are taught by teams of two contract instructors. These contract instructors are managed by an assigned Program Chair, who uses the instructors' contractual Scope of Work as the framework for their required work output. It does not appear that this document provides sufficient guidance to assure a high quality program delivery. In particular many areas of administrative support are overlooked. The document also does not address the professional development needs of these contract instructors.

The literature review disclosed that there was little available written material on the management of contract instructors within the federal government. However, there was much more information available from academe that was pertinent. Specifically, at a time when the use of contract instructors within academe is increasing, so are concerns about how to best manage these personnel. This mirrors a similar increase in the use of contract instructors (and contractors, in general) in government and industry. Concomitant with this increase in use is an increase in

concern about managing these personnel and maximizing their performance. Some of the literature reviewed, especially Gappa and Leslie, offered suggestions to accomplish these tasks, especially as they relate to administrative support and professional development.

The research had a three-fold purpose. First, the research could determine the elements of effective support of instructional delivery for the Academy's contract instructors. Second, the research could provide the basis to make NFA policy recommendations of these identified elements. And, third, the research sought to determine what was required to support the professional development of contract instructors in any training organization.

All 536 of the NFA's resident contract instructors were sent a questionnaire about their perception of the need for administrative support and professional development. There were 245 responses, for a 45% return rate. Eight of the ten NFA Program Chairs, who oversee the contract instructors, were interviewed about their perception of the types of problems, if any, that they have dealt with in managing these contract instructors. They also were provided an opportunity to offer suggestions for dealing with any identified problems. Two of the ten Program Chairs were not available for the personal interviews.

The results indicated that the responding contract instructors had several administrative support needs and concerns, including keeping program content current, providing new instructors with an orientation and an instructor handbook, gaining access to classroom supplies, and improving the availability of program evaluations. These responding contract instructors also expressed strong interest in three professional development options: preferred admission into other NFA classes, on-site instructor conferences, and a newsletter that would provide information on new NFA courses and policies. Generally, the interviewed Program Chairs responses were supportive of these needs and concerns. However, several of the interviewed Program Chairs expressed reservations about whether or not the Government had a responsibility to provide professional development to contractors.

The specific responding contract instructors' survey results, and associated Program Chair interview comments, as appropriate, are discussed below:

## Problems with Implications for Program Delivery

Student Violation of the Rules -- Participants in this study had low levels of experience with NFA students' violating campus rules, with 62% indicating that they had not encountered these situations. Unlike compulsory education programs in the elementary, middle or high schools there is very little tolerance for misbehavior in civilian federal training agencies. Further, the career field studied, the fire service, uses a quasi-military organizational structure, internally and operationally. Given this structure perhaps students at the NFA are pre-conditioned to expect to be held accountable for their behavior in class and out of class.

Instructional Team Disagreement -- A little over half of the participating contract instructors (53.9%) had not encountered instructional team disagreements with other contract instructors. Given the potential for such disagreements over currency of instructional content, choice of methodological techniques and the potential for personality conflicts this was unexpected. On the other hand the NFA contract instructors, as trainers of adults, probably know that instructional team disagreements, especially if they become known to students, will degrade the quality of instruction and make their task more difficult.

Outdated Program Content -- This issue was a concern for 60.8% of the respondents. Several of the interviewed Program Chairs expressed surprise over this. In addition, the Chi Square Test of Comparison disclosed that contract instructors that teach predominately operations subjects had significant perceptual differences when compared to the management contract instructors: more of the operations contract instructors believed that the content was outdated than did their counterparts in management. One explanation for this may be that the operations content field changes more rapidly than the management one. A second explanation could be that the initial development process, and the periodic updating of content, may be different in the two content areas. The Chi Square Test of Comparison also revealed that those with over 12 years teaching experience at NFA tended to have higher rates of belief that the content was outdated when compared to less experienced contract instructors. One Program Chair commented that this may be due to the fact that to experts in a given field, such as these highly experienced instructors, the content was outdated. The implication of this comment is

that this state of affairs is to be expected, and that to students, and other neophytes, the content was probably viewed as quite current.

#### Administrative Support Services for New Instructors

Orientation of New Instructors -- About half (55.1%) of the participating contract instructors agreed that there was a need for a formal on-site orientation for new instructors. This was complemented by the comments of the Program Chairs: 7 of the 8 interviewed agreed that there was such a need, while the last Program Chair indicated that he already offered such an orientation for his contract instructors. Perhaps an on-site orientation program could be formalized and developed using some of the components covered in this Program Chair's orientation program.

Instructor Handbook Mailed Prior to First Class Session -- A large number (65.3%) of the responding contract instructors indicated that having an instructor handbook mailed to new instructors prior to their first class session was important. The Chi Square Test of Comparison revealed that contract instructors over age 50 felt especially strongly about the need for this administrative support item. One explanation for their responses is that this group, as the most mature, may bear the burden of attempting to orient newer, and younger instructors "on the fly" (i.e., when a course has already begun.) Another possibility is that this group had to orient itself, and based on that experiential learning believes strongly that there must be a better way.

Required On-site Meeting with Program Chair -- About half (51.8%) of the participating contract instructors agreed that there was a need for new instructors to meet on-site with their respective Program Chairs. This can be particularly important as it is the final opportunity before a course commences to agree on mutual expectations, roles and responsibilities, conflict resolution mechanisms, and teaching assignments.

#### Administrative Support Services -- Program Delivery

Classroom Set-up -- About half (50.6%) of the participating contract instructors agreed about the need for classroom set-up (i.e., tables, chairs, etc.) as necessary to assist instructors in program delivery. None of the interviewed Program Chairs mentioned classroom set-up specifically as a method to improve contract instructors' program delivery. One Program Chair, however, did mention the general need for more administrative support. Currently the NFA

provides classroom set-up through a long-term non-instructional contract.

Classroom Supplies -- About half (55.9%) of the contract instructors agreed about the need for classroom supplies (i.e., manuals, pens, charts, etc.) as necessary to assist instructors in program delivery. The Chi Square Test of Comparison revealed that the participating contract instructors under 40 years of age felt strongly about the need for this administrative support item; while those over 50 years of age did not feel it was as great a need. Given the experience level of those older contract instructors it is plausible that their knowledge of the system permits them to obtain needed supplies without going through normal channels. Several of the Program Chairs indicated that there should be an assigned support person for each classroom area, especially as it relates to audio-visual support. One Program Chair said that the NFA should provide stand-alone personal computers, and printers in each classroom. Currently the NFA provides classroom supplies through a long-term non-instructional contract.

Secretarial Typing Support -- Overall, there was a relatively lukewarm response to the need for this administrative support item with 40.8% agreeing that it was important; while an almost equal percentage (40.4%) were neutral. Traditionally typing support has not been offered at the NFA. The Chi Square Test of Comparison revealed that the contract instructors that had the most experience teaching at the NFA (those with over 12 years) felt a much stronger need for this administrative support item when compared to those with the least NFA teaching experience (under 7 years). Similarly, the oldest contract instructor group (over age 50) felt a much stronger need for this administrative support item when compared to the youngest age grouping (under age 40.) These results may indicate a generational difference in computer literacy, with the younger contract instructors being fully computer literate. If this is so, then there is no need for secretarial typing support. Rather, there may be a need for computer literacy classes for those without such skills.

#### Administrative Support Services -- Evaluation Processes

Computer Scanning of Student Test Results -- About half (49%) of the respondents indicated that this was an important administrative support item. The Chi Square Test of Comparison revealed that contract instructors in the middle age grouping (40 to 50 years of age) believed that providing this administrative support item was more important than their younger or

older counterparts. Perhaps this is an idiosyncratic result. There were no specific Program Chair interview comments on this subject. Computer scanning of student test results is not currently done at the NFA; instead instructors score student examinations by hand.

Bank of Computerized Student Test Questions -- About half (47.8%) of the respondents indicated that this was an important administrative support item. There were no specific Program Chair interview comments on this subject. There currently is no bank of computerized test results at the NFA.

Availability of Program Evaluation to Instructors -- The responding contract instructors felt particularly strongly about this administrative support area with 74.7% agreeing that this was important. There were many respondent comments indicating the need for this item. These comments were mirrored by similar comments from the Program Chair's interview results. Currently the NFA's program evaluation results, electronically scanned from student-completed forms, are only occasionally forwarded to instructors.

#### Administrative Support Services -- Professional Development

Preferred Admission to NFA Classes -- A large percentage (60.4%) of the respondents indicated that this was an important administrative support area. The Chi Square Test of Comparison revealed that instructors in the middle age grouping (40 to 50 years of age) indicated much greater interest in this area, with 72.6% agreeing, when compared to their younger and older counterparts. The younger instructors (under age 40) may not have yet realized the importance of this professional development item, while the older ones (over age 50) may have determined their own methods of obtaining related information without NFA admission assistance. Currently the NFA does not provide preferred admission to its contract instructors.

Periodic On-site Instructor Conferences -- Most respondents (71.4%) agreed that this was an important administrative support area. This was affirmed by their written comments, and reinforced by some of the Program Chair interview results, as well. One of the Program Chairs suggested that contract instructors could audit other classes. The Chi Square Test of Comparison revealed that instructors in the middle age grouping (40 to 50 years of age) indicated much greater interest in this area, with 80.5% agreeing, when compared to their younger and older counterparts. Similar to the responses about preferred admission perhaps the younger instructors

(under age 40) have not yet realized the importance of networking with other instructors at conferences, while the older ones (over age 50) have found alternative methods to accomplish this. Currently the NFA does not offer on-site (or off-site) conferences to its contract instructors.

Newsletter with Explanation of New Policies, etc. -- Responding contract instructors felt extremely strongly about this administrative support area with 80.8% indicating their agreement that there was a need for this item. At one point the NFA's supervising agency, the United States Fire Administration (USFA), produced a newsletter, "Fully Involved," that provided information on new NFA courses and policies. However, there is no current general, or instructor-specific, newsletter being produced by either the USFA or the NFA.

### **Implications for the Adult Educator**

Training organizations that contract for instruction view the contracted individuals as providing "turn-key" instructional services. These services most often include instructor provision of content, instructional delivery, administrative activities (such as documentation of student attendance), student evaluation, and the solution of classroom problems. Specifically, the scope of work that a federal training organization uses provides exact detail of what is legally required. In the case of the NFA these details include teaching ability, subject matter expertise, and extensive knowledge of agency administrative procedures. Usually the program content has already been developed. Similarly, within academe adult educators that are serving as adjunct faculty are usually expected to provide the full range of instructional services to include provision of content, instructional delivery, administrative activities, student evaluation and the solution of classroom problems.

### **Administrative Procedures**

Training organizations' beliefs that these contract instructors are subject matter experts is not in question, especially in view of the workplace changes emphasizing short-term relationships between independent, but fully-qualified, contractors and training organizations. However, expecting contract instructors to have teaching ability and subject matter expertise as well as extensive knowledge of a training organization's often arcane administrative procedures is unreasonable since they do not usually have access to such needed administrative information prior to their first instructional contract.

Adult educators who work as federal employees with training management responsibilities (often classified as “education specialists”, “program chairs” or “course managers”), and adult educators that work as department heads or programs chairs within academe must consider the program delivery implications of assuming that contract instructors have knowledge of internal administrative procedures. To divide the various contract instructor capabilities into those that are directly teaching-related (teaching ability and subject matter expertise) and those that are not (knowledge of a training organization's administrative procedures) is useful. In this way the nature of one problem and its solution becomes clear: contract instructors lack of knowledge about administrative procedures can be remedied by providing an orientation for new contract instructors and periodic updates for more experienced ones.

#### Professional Development

However, a thornier problem remains: what can training organizations do to advance the professional development of contract instructors, and thus, by extrapolation, improve the quality of their training deliveries and student learning? Given the belief in “turn-key” contracting should these organizations undertake professional development for non-employees? The prevailing belief within government and academe is that providing such professional development is inappropriate and unnecessary. In fact, many organizations, within and outside of government, believe that there is no longer an obligation to provide professional development even for employees, no less contractors. While “outsourcing” has become increasingly more common no large-scale research effort has yet been undertaken to determine the implications of this change in training staff.

Up until this point the discussion of the professional development of contract instructors has been framed as a question of “responsibility” or “obligation,” as in “does the training organization or the contract instructor have the responsibility for professional development?” This question construction is counterproductive since it assumes that there is a forced choice decision to be made: either the training organization is totally responsible or the individual is totally responsible. A more reasonable approach is to view the responsibility as shared. The contract instructor is responsible for his/her individual professional development. Meanwhile, the training organization is responsible, ultimately, to its customers/students for the quality of its

programs, which are improved by having professional development options for its instructors, contract and employee.

The real question becomes one of identifying who will bear the costs of such professional development. Again, this should not be viewed as a forced choice between training organizations or contract instructors, with one group paying all costs and the other none. Rather, this represents a spectrum of options spread across a continuum. At one extreme the training organization bears the entire financial burden; at the other end the contract instructors bear it. The midpoint of the continuum is represented by a sharing of costs with the training organization paying for the professional development opportunity (for example, the registration for a conference for contract instructors), while the contract instructors are paying the costs associated with travel to the conference site and per diem expenses for hotel and food.

A variety of non-traditional methods could be used to off-set training organizations' and contract instructors' expenses. For example, a training organization can offer a site for a training conference, while the contract instructors donate their time as speakers. Another option would be for a training organization to develop some type of "token economy." In this method a contract instructor would "earn" points each time he/she taught for the organization. These points could be used to "pay" for professional development opportunities sponsored by the training organization.

#### Age Differences

An additional implication for the adult educator is the fact that many training organizations may be in the midst of a "changing of the guard" with older, more experienced instructors preparing to retire. Meanwhile, younger, less experienced instructors are assuming positions of increasing importance within these training organizations. Given this mix of experience and background, effort must be directed to determining if the needs of these two groups are similar or not. This researcher found differences that were disclosed by the Chi Square Test of Comparison. For example, older contract instructors (over age 50) felt a much stronger need for secretarial typing support than did their younger counterparts (under age 40.) This difference may be due to the computer literacy of the younger instructors versus the lack of such skills in the older instructors. However, it would be simplistic to assume that one group had all of the deficiencies,

while the other had none. Rather the specific implication of these age differences is that great caution must be used in designing administrative support programs or professional development options as though the target audience -- contract instructors -- was a monolithic one.

### **Recommendations**

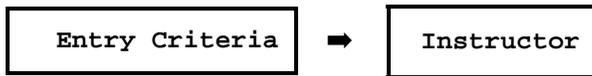
One recommendation is to develop a process model of the intervention points where instructors (federal contractors or academic part-timers) may need professional development in teaching ability, subject matter expertise, and administrative procedures. Such a model, like those used in instructional system design, is well within the experience-base of adult educators. This model can be used to allow agencies and academic institutions to frame decisions as to whether the responsibility for such development is theirs or the instructors. Although presented later in this document as a finalized product the model should be considered as a vehicle for discussion. The actual development of a model for a specific organization should be a consensual process with all “stakeholders” -- organization training managers, contract instructors, potential or past students -- involved in the developmental process.

### **Career Path Model**

As to the question of the need for such a model one only needs to look at virtually any training organization -- college or university, federal training agency, private company --to see if a career path exists for their full-time employees. Within academe those who perform full-time academic duties have a rank structure (often starting with “lecturer” and continuing through to full “professor”.) Advancement through these ranks is dependant on several predetermined factors, such as education attained, research conducted, and years of teaching experience. Similarly within the federal government's training agencies advancement is dependant on the accomplishment of several predetermined factors including years of service, training, and to a lesser extent than academe, education.

Using the National Fire Academy as an example instructors need a career path since one does not now formally exist. Without such a path it is difficult for instructors to know how to prepare for advancement or improvement. Currently, the NFA's existing method has only two

formal steps, as shown in Figure 1:



**Figure 1**  
**Current NFA Career Path**

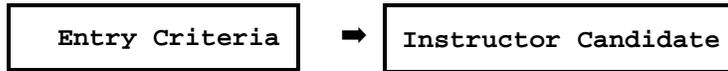
The entry criteria determine who is selected to teach at the NFA. These criteria usually include documentation claiming academic credentials, job experience in the content area, and teaching experience. At this stage the individual's actual abilities are unknown, but extrapolated from these documents. Agencies and academic institutions usually attempt to verify these claims prior to allowing an individual to teach. This verification is rarely done at the NFA. However, even among those agencies that do verify claimed credentials far too many use this verification as the only measure of ability. Some allow contract instructors to begin teaching and continue to do so (in some cases for long periods of time) without further attempts to determine ability, content knowledge or understanding of administrative procedures.

The NFA, on occasion, also may designate an instructor as a “lead instructor.” Although no additional preparation is associated with this designation the lead instructor is usually the most experienced in a team of two instructors and handles administrative duties that a less experienced instructor would find difficult to accomplish.

This lack of uniformity in the process of instructor selection and career path causes a concomitant lack of clarity in instructor relationships, especially as it relates to the failure to designate a “lead” instructor. Contract instructors are left to fend for themselves as to who is “in charge” of the various administrative matters associated with a course delivery. A more rational approach is to verify entry criteria, then have individuals begin a known career path as instructor candidates. A few of NFA's Program Chairs do designate new instructors as candidates, however, this method of designation has never been formalized. Ideally, this period of candidacy would continue until an individual demonstrates competence in teaching ability (by completing a specified number of instructional presentations, which are evaluated by students and the appropriate agency or academic representatives) and completes an orientation to the specific agency. Simultaneously, the candidate's subject matter expertise and ability to communicate

content to students is verified. If necessary these abilities can be addressed by a number of professional development options.

Using features of the existing formal NFA two-step method shown in Figure 1, and adding proposed features to it the career path for professional development would initially appear as shown in Figure 2, Proposed NFA Career Path, Phase 1:



**Figure 2**  
**Proposed NFA Career Path, Phase 1**

Each step would have both options and/or requirements before advancement to the next step. After the entry criteria are verified the applicant would complete a required orientation. The purpose is to provide information to the applicant about the goals and the objectives of the organization, its history and mission, target audience demographics, and administrative procedures. If an instructor has already taught at the training organization for a number of years he/she may, at the Program Chair’s discretion, be permitted to “skip” the instructor candidate phase. Most often this would occur when an instructor, who has taught in one program series, begins teaching in a related program series. The delivery method of the orientation can be an on-site program, an instructor handbook which can be mailed to the individual or material that can be reviewed on the Internet.

Many academic and governmental training organizations already offer an orientation to new instructors. Gappa and Leslie (1993) recommend the orientation as a practice with several purposes: to welcome new instructors, to present useful information about how and why the training organization functions (administratively as well as philosophically), and as the first step in an on-going professional development effort. The NFA does not normally hold an orientation. But, a majority of the instructors surveyed and a majority of the Program Chairs interviewed believed an orientation was needed. The agency had an instructor handbook which is now obsolete. This handbook should be updated and once again issued to new instructors. But, more than a handbook alone, or even an orientation is needed.

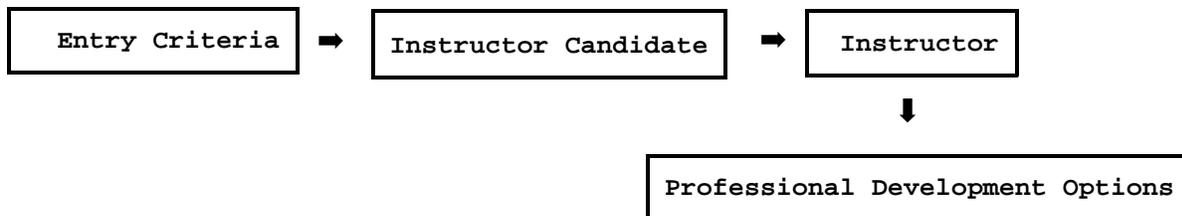
Unfortunately, an orientation does not usually address the applicant's need for improvements in teaching ability or subject matter expertise. Again, training organizations have a number of options available to address these areas. One is a required train-the-trainer program. The NFA does not usually offer a train-the-trainer program, except when bringing a newly-developed course on line. In that case the agency seeks to gauge potential instructors' teaching ability and subject matter expertise. One such program, coordinated by former Program Chair Noel Waters, involved extensive efforts to determine teaching ability and subject matter expertise.

Mr. Waters had potential instructors for the “Chemistry of Hazardous Materials” course complete a proctored chemistry examination, for which they received a numerical grade. The minimum acceptable score was an 80. In addition, applicants submitted a 20-minute videotape of an instructional presentation, which was evaluated against a standardized score sheet. This video presentation was also given a numerical score. Both scores (chemistry examination and video presentation) were added together. This combined score was then used to select the top 150 applicants, from a pool of approximately 500 applicants. The successful applicants attended a two-week instructor train-the-trainer program. The program content was a review of both chemistry and instructional techniques. Each day attendees completed a chemistry quiz and an instructional techniques quiz. At the end of the first week each presented an evaluated ten-minute presentation and completed a graded chemistry examination. This procedure was replicated the second week with daily chemistry and instructional techniques quizzes followed on the final class day by an evaluated 20-minute presentation and a graded chemistry final examination. Most of the applicants successfully completed the entire course. The result was a program known for its outstanding instructors.

Each training organization should consider some version of this process, with the purpose being to determine the candidate's teaching ability and subject matter expertise. In fairness to both the candidates and the training organizations the period of instructor candidacy should be finite. For example, each candidate would have one year to complete the orientation process and attend and successfully complete the train-the-trainer program.

Once the candidacy phase is successfully completed the new instructors should have had their credentials verified, be oriented to the training organizations' administrative procedures and

have demonstrated their teaching ability and subject matter expertise. The next step in the model, “Instructor”, as shown in Figure 3, titled as Proposed NFA Career Path, Phase 2, is where professional development options proliferate:



**Figure 3**  
**Proposed NFA Career Path, Phase 2**

First of all, contract instructors in this phase should continue to be evaluated by the training organization. This is especially important as they first emerge from their candidacy and teach for the first few times as full-fledged instructors. But, even after that settling in period contract instructors should continue to be observed, evaluated, and if needed, counseled.

Regardless of the length of the instructors' candidacy period the training organization has by now already made a significant investment in the initial development of its instructors. More is needed. However, as discussed earlier, the financial burden for professional development can be distributed equitably between the organization and the instructors. Here are some examples of the professional development options that could be made available:

**Conferences:** While the NFA questionnaire specifically addressed the need for an on-site conference the actual location is immaterial. The thrust of these periodic gatherings would be to present new tools and techniques. Training organizations must recognize a secondary purpose for these events: they offer opportunities, before and after formal presentations, to conduct team-building and share information. These conferences do not have to be developed in-house since there are a number of annual national conferences within the field of adult education, and in the case of the fire service within that field as well. Based on some objective criteria --teaching ability, research conducted-- contract instructors could be selected to attend these national training programs. Often training organizations, in a quest for new enrollments, have staffed displays in the exhibition halls of these

conferences. Perhaps selected contractors could “work” as the training organization's representatives at these booths and attend training sessions while not “on duty.” In return they would receive a paid registration.

**Fellowship program:** The training organization can sponsor the training or research of an instructor. For example, the methodology used to allow the research for this doctoral project was to award a no-cost contract to the researcher. Similar awards could be made to other contract instructors to further research of interest to the training organization. In essence this is similar to the sabbatical leave that is used in academe to allow employees to conduct research useful to the organization, and to “recharge the batteries” of the employee.

**Preferred Admission:** Contract instructors could be given preferred admission into other programs offered by the training organization. By preferred admission is meant an abbreviated and selective admission process. Using the NFA as an example, a contract instructor could conceivably be enrolled in another resident training program, space permitting, with no more formal requirement than the approval of the Program Chair and the Registrar's Office. The surveyed NFA contract instructors indicated great interest in this professional development option. For training organizations that charge for attendance, such as a college or university, the preferred admission could be accompanied by a reduced price of admission as well. Or the previously mentioned “token economy” could be used to “pay” for enrollment costs. In this case a contract instructor would teach a predetermined number of courses, which would each earn “money” that could be used to pay for attendance at other of the training organization's programs.

**Master Trainer Program:** Many trainers in the field of adult education could “sharpen” their instructional skills. One way to accomplish this would be the development of a specific program or program series to foster this. The NFA does not now offer such a program, although it did offer a two-week “Fire Service Instructional Methodology” course on-campus. Its only two courses that now specifically relate to instructional methodology are “Fire Service Course Design”

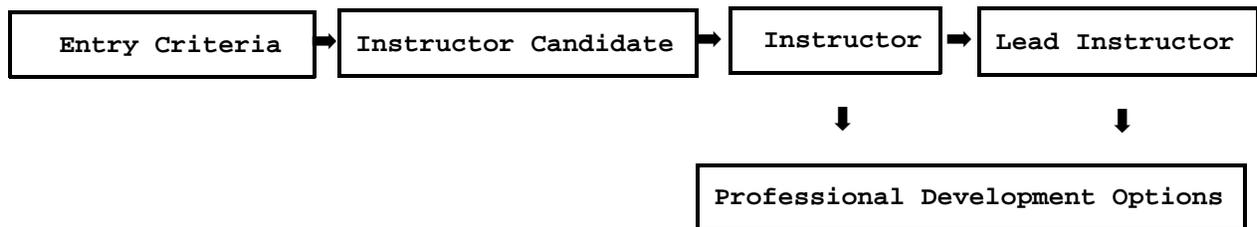
and “Training Program Management.” A more comprehensive program series is the Master Trainer Program conducted by the Emergency Management Institute (EMI), another Federal Emergency Management Agency training organization located in Emmitsburg, MD. This program is comprised of six one-week courses: “Management and Supervision of Training”, “Performance and Needs Assessment”, “Instructional Design”, “Course Development”, “Instructional Delivery”, and “Course Evaluation.” At the completion of all of the six courses students must submit a report that describes a training-related practicum project that they performed. This report is evaluated by a designated EMI staff member. While the courses were designed to be taken in sequence, a contract instructor could choose to complete only those most pertinent to his/her needs. This Master Trainer Program would be equally useful to the NFA Program Chairs. Most academic institutions have either an existing instructional skills program for their full-time faculty, which could be made available to their contract instructors, or the resources on hand to develop one for their contract instructors.

**Best Practices:** Many training organizations seek out those in their system who excel in what they do--teaching, research, etc.-- and use their techniques as examples for others. This method, also known as “exemplary practices,” would be a useful professional development option. A training organization would determine who its best trainers are, study their techniques -- developing case studies, facilitating group productivity, eliciting students’ discussion-- and present these techniques to less skilled trainers for their incorporation.

**Team-building Activities:** Gappa and Leslie (1993) noted the crucial role that department chairs play in the acceptance of contract instructors. Team-building activities could foster improvements in the relationship of department (or program) chairs and contract instructors, as well as serving as a way to improve instructional skills. Oftentimes department chairs have had no specific training in program management, the supervision of instruction, or supervision preparation in general, and readily admit the need for this. Thus, training in these areas could be offered

to Program Chairs, at the same time other content is offered to contract instructors attending a conference. Team-building activities should also foster a sense of organizational interdependence. This would assist in counteracting the prevailing belief of many contract instructors that they are not really accepted as an integral part of the training organization.

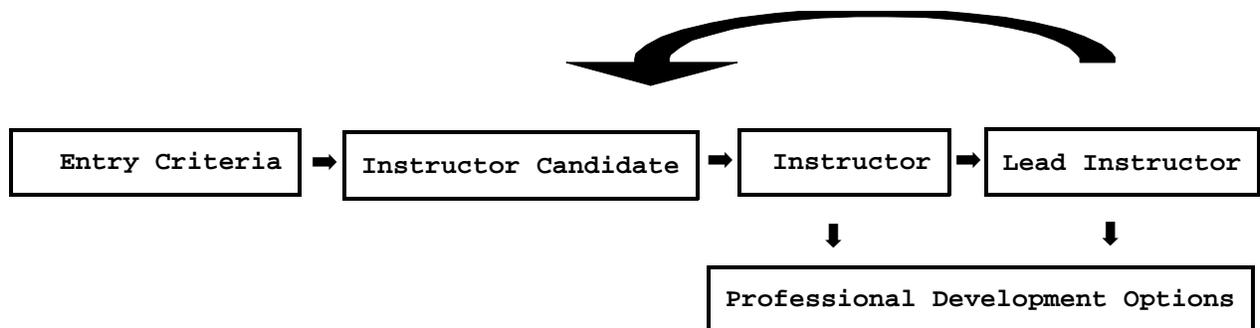
The next step in the professional development career path is “lead instructor,” as shown in Figure 4, titled as Proposed NFA Career Path, Phase 3:



**Figure 4**  
**Proposed NFA Career Path, Phase 3**

Movement from the “Instructor” stage to the “Lead Instructor” one should be dependant on the accomplishment of several pre-determined items. While each training organization, using a consensual process involving contract instructors, management and other stakeholders, must decide the specific requirements for advancement to this stage it should be clear that an individual that is designated a “Lead Instructor” should represent the pinnacle of teaching ability, subject matter expertise and knowledge of the training organization’s administrative procedures. As such this person serves as an informal role model for other instructors.

While no new professional development options are associated with this position the lead instructor should be actively involved in these options, both as a student and as a presenter. More to the point this informal role model can serve as a formal role model to instructor candidates, as shown in Figure 5, Proposed NFA Career Path, Phase 4:



**Figure 5**  
**Proposed NFA Career Path, Phase 4**

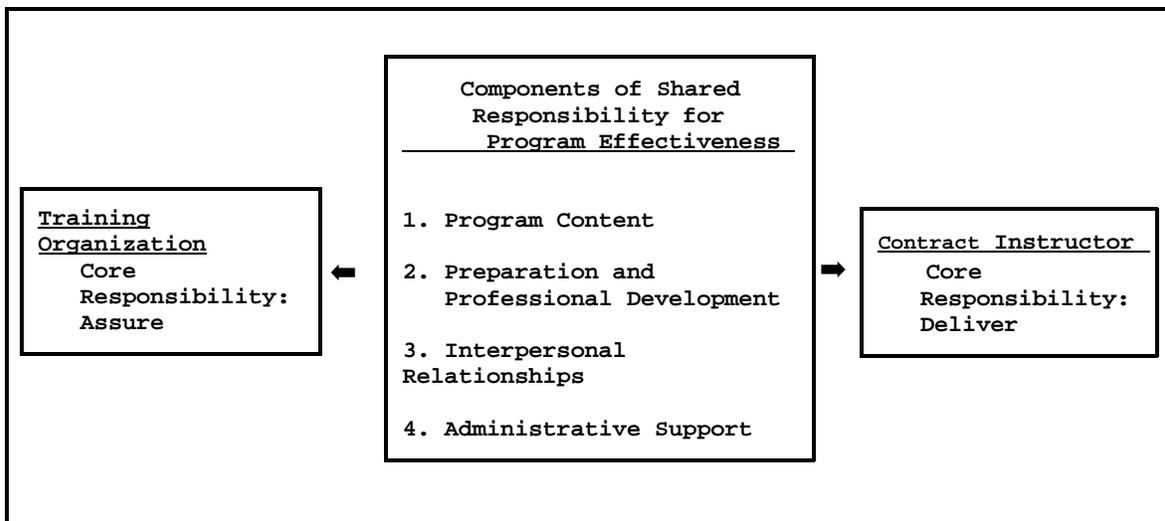
Each lead instructor could serve as a designated mentor to a designated instructor candidate, providing advise and guidance as needed. Further, each lead instructor could serve as a presenter in the orientation program for new instructor candidates. In this way the experience and informal learning of lead instructors can be passed along to newer instructors. Naturally, there may be potential adverse “side effects.” Low bid contracting procedures are no respecters of age or experience. In reality lead instructors may be in competition, now or at some future point, with instructor candidates and, thus, hesitant to impart their hard-earned “secrets.” However, using a voluntary participation process would allow those lead instructors that are motivated and comfortable with serving as mentors to do so as active and willing participants.

While this proposed NFA career path model was designed specifically with the needs of that agency in mind it could be adapted to any training organization. However, one consideration is that of parallel structure. The more that the contract instructors’ career path resembles the existing career path for full-time employees -- similar titles, training or education requirements, etc. -- the more smoothly the implementation process will be. This may be due to the practical ease of adding to a known, and accepted concept. Unfortunately, this could not be done with the NFA model since they no longer have any full-time government employees as training instructors. Attempts to develop such a model at another training agency must also factor in that

organization's specific culture and context, while using a consensual decision-making process to allow all stakeholders to give input.

### Shared Responsibility Management Model

The career path model addresses many of the concerns that the NFA contract instructors' expressed -- the need for an orientation program for new instructors, the provision of an instructor handbook, a variety of professional development options. But, it does not address many of the other concerns that both the NFA contract instructors and Program Chairs felt strongly about. In addition it does not fully address many of the concerns discovered in the literature reviewed. Thus, another recommendation is to develop an additional model. As shown in Figure 6, the Shared Responsibility Management Model has as its goal determining the components of shared responsibility for program effectiveness:



**Figure 6**  
**Shared Responsibility Management Model**

There are a number of factors needed to obtain effective program delivery. This conceptual model addresses several of them as they specifically relate to decisions about responsibility. There are many other factors outside of the scope of the model. For example, this model does not supplant the necessity of conducting a thorough needs assessment or task analysis or any of the commonly accepted features of methodical instructional system design. Similarly,

the model does not deal with audience analysis, or the training organization's need to have rigorous admission processes: without these the wrong audience may be invited to attend and considerably lessen chances for an effective program delivery. Rather the central box of the model illustrates four broad areas of shared responsibility: program content, preparation and professional development, interpersonal relationships, and administrative support. As a group, or individually, these four components can be, by prior agreement, the responsibility of either the training organization or the contract instructor or shared equally by both.

The contract instructor, represented by the box on the right, has a core responsibility: to deliver an effective program. Usually in training organizations this core responsibility is codified in a contractual written agreement, although some training organizations still operate quite successfully with "handshake" agreements.

The training organization, represented by the box on the left, also has a core responsibility: to assure an effective program delivery. Given these interrelated responsibilities decisions must be made about the areas of shared responsibility, shown in the central box:

1. Program content -- By pre-agreement decisions must be made about how the content will be developed. For example, at the NFA the program content (student manuals, instructor guides, audio-visuals) is developed by the agency. The instructor's responsibility is to update the content, as necessary, during the program delivery by adding articles, information and techniques that were not available during the initial program development. On the other hand this researcher has contracted to conduct training programs for other agencies that require the contract instructor to provide the entire program's content (again, student manuals, instructor guides, audiovisuals). By pre-agreement both the training organization and the contract instructor decide how the responsibility for the provision of program content will be shared. The responding contract instructors and the interviewed Program Chairs both were concerned about the currency of the NFA's program content.

2. Preparation and professional development -- By pre-agreement decisions must be made about how the instructor will prepare to teach a program, and for his/her associated professional development. For example, at the NFA if a new course has been developed potential instructors must prepare by completing an instructor training program. If they do not do so they usually will

not be placed on the instructors' procurement bid list. In other cases at the NFA if a course has been revised in-house (by the Program Chair) an instructor may, perhaps, be advised to read a book that was added to the students' reading list. As for professional development the NFA does not now offer any of the options suggested in the career path model. The responding contract instructors and the interviewed Program Chairs both were concerned about the initial preparation of new instructors and their professional development. Other training organizations and contract instructors may find other ways of dividing these shared responsibilities.

3. Interpersonal relationships: By pre-agreement decisions must be made on the interpersonal relationships that must evolve between employees of the training organization and the contract instructor. In their open-ended comments the responding contract instructors indicated that they did not believe that the NFA treated them as full partners. Program Chairs, on the other hand, believed that their overall relationship with contract instructors was positive. It appears that this difference in perception could be addressed by a dialogue about the shared responsibility for interpersonal relationships. In other cases, by pre-agreement, there is no relationship. This researcher has completed numerous instructional contracts over the previous two decades where he had only telephone contact with the training organization's representatives. While these telephone conversations were cordial they could hardly be considered a "relationship." Other training organizations and contract instructors may find other ways of dividing these shared responsibilities.

4. Administrative support -- By pre-agreement decisions must be made about the provision of administrative support needs: will the training organization provide all, some, or none of them. The NFA provides many administrative support items: classroom set-up and supplies, but could offer more. Both the responding contract instructors and the interviewed Program Chairs provided several examples of other administrative support needs that could be addressed. These included having a support person handle audio-visual problems and photocopying, providing computers and printers for instructor use, dorm room preference, and more consistent and more frequent feedback (from Program Chairs and program evaluations.)

All three of the foregoing boxes (Training organization core responsibility, Components of Shared Responsibility for program effectiveness, and Contract instructor core responsibility) are

superimposed upon another box, which represents the organizational culture and context. The organizational culture includes the traditions and philosophy of the organization, its core values, mission and goals and objectives. The organization's context includes the unique characteristics of its operating environment. These include, in the case of the NFA, its federal procurement system, its position in the Federal Emergency Management Agency's organizational chart and similar characteristics. Each training organization will have a different organizational culture and context. Thus, this model must be tailored for use at each such training organization and for each individual or group of contract instructors.

Finally, the model must have as part of its context a conflict resolution mechanism so that disagreements between training agency and contract instructor can be collaboratively solved.

### **Areas for Future Research**

This research touched on many issues related to the central one of contract instructor administrative support and professional development. Other researchers may seek to further explore these related issues:

1. Procurement system and program quality -- Nothing in the literature addressed the effect of the federal government's low bid instructional procurement system on the quality of programs offered. Many state and local training organization's and academe, to some extent, replicate the federal procurement system. The apparent assumption is that the current system is satisfactory. Yet, several of the responding contract instructors voiced concerns that the more experienced contract instructors were unable to successfully bid against less experienced (or more available) competitors. Ultimately, this may impact on program effectiveness and student learning.

2. Outdated program content -- Of great concern to the surveyed NFA contract instructors this issue deserves further investigation. This researcher believes that a thorough analysis will reveal the need for the development of an additional model. This model will illustrate a program maintenance plan for course content. The model will indicate what are the desired periodic and scheduled review and revision points.

3. Procurement regulations and professional development -- For those trainers working in the governmental sector and academe it appears that procurement regulations are used as the

“whipping boy” for failures to provide professional development to contractors. Research, especially by one with a legal background, sorely needs to be conducted to determine exactly what these regulations prohibit. Further, the research should determine the mechanisms needed to change such regulations, if necessary.

4. Evaluation planning -- It appears that many of the NFA contract instructors severest criticisms related to that agency’s failure to provide feedback to instructors on performance during and after program delivery. This is not a problem for the NFA alone, many other training organizations do not plan out the evaluation process. Perhaps another researcher could “blueprint” an existing exemplary method, or develop one “from scratch”, that would indicate the practicalities of planning for student, instructor, program, and training organization evaluation processes.

### **Chapter Summary**

This chapter included an overview of the research, a discussion of the results, and implications of the research for adult educators. The recommendations section included two models: a career path model, and a shared responsibility management model. Finally, the chapter concluded with suggestions for areas of future research.