Speaker 1:	From the Vision 20/20 Project, welcome to CRR Radio.
Ed Comeau:	Welcome to this episode of CRR Radio. My name is Ed Comeau, and on this episode we're going to be talking with Steve Hrustich about a new program from Vision 20/20. Steve, could you take a moment and introduce yourself to our listeners?
Steve Hrustich:	You bet, Ed. Thanks for welcoming me on today, and from everyone here at Vision 20/20 I'd like to welcome everyone to the podcast. My name's Steven Hrustich, and I'm the Project Manager here at Vision 20/20. Previously to taking over last year, I spent 36 years in the fire service, retiring as Fire Chief of multiple career organizations in New York State, and more recently as the Assistant Chief of Community Risk Reduction Division at Gwinnett County Department of Fire Emergency Services here in Metro Atlanta.
Ed Comeau:	We're here talking about the new program from Vision 20/20, the new statewide collaboration and engagement framework, so could you just tell us a little bit about that, Steve?
Steve Hrustich:	Sure, we are very excited about the new statewide collaboration and engagement framework. It's been close to a year in the making. The SCEF, as we call it, focuses on helping each state in the nation foster diverse and inclusive statewide CRR teams, to help them build momentum for supporting CRR within their respective states.
	Our goal here is really sustainability. Building diverse and inclusive statewide teams where every discipline in the fire service has a voice on community risk reduction, really rings in a new era that focuses on the long haul and the bigger picture. The SCEF is truly very unique approach to state and national strategies, and is poised to become the diverse voice of the U.S. Fire Service. We find that is truly a critical part of the framework and the foundation of our efforts.
	We see these statewide teams coming together not only to address CRR, but to tackle wicked problems, emerging issues, and even support programs and legislation that connect not only the fire service, but our communities across the United States. The framework is based on measured steps and small goals, and objectives to help these states gain and sustain momentum for the application of the CRR principles and practices all across fire service disciplines.
	The driving force behind our SCEF framework is Vision 20/20's three new Es of educate, equip, and engage. We have the five Es for mitigation strategies, but these three Es really fit truly into the program and are precisely aligned with our mission and goals of the framework.
Ed Comeau:	How did this program come together?

Steve Hrustich:	Well Vision 20/20 has a technical advisor group that we have been working with high risk states for the better part of 10 years. Our goal, with the SCEF, was to really take a fresh look, and we went through this nine month, strategic planning process with our TA group to look at the best practices that we've learned over the years, while working to prevent common failure points that could derail momentum and success.
	We found that learning from failures is really an important lesson. I say that in the nicest of ways, to understand what we were doing and really to clean the slate, and start over, and ask the tough question of what good would look like really helped us mold the SCEF into what it is today.
	One of the goals of Vision 20/20 from early on was the integration of CRR across the U.S. Fire Service. When we looked at that problem, the complexity is just staggering. When we're faced with a problem such as that, what we do is typically break it down. In this case, breaking it down to a 50 state approach makes a much more manageable concept, and allowed us to work the solution there.
	When we brought the TAs together to talk about this, we wanted to focus on strong, well-documented program that clearly builds on the five Es of the mitigation strategies. One thing we know, while each state is unique, they have some similar challenges when it comes to integrating CRR principles and practices.
	One thing that the SCEF does is really to build in those measurement pieces, so we can start to look at CRR momentum integration on a national scale by breaking it down to this statewide level. One thing that's very important for us, and we're always looking to walk the walk when it comes to model performance and evaluation.
Ed Comeau:	Obviously being a state program, how many states do you have currently engaged in it right now?
Steve Hrustich:	Right now we have 11 states engaged in the early stages of SCEF, and some of those were the ones that we were working with, the high risk states, that we've been working with for some years. Looking at some of the changes that took place over the last nine months, we've added a number of new states that include Tennessee, Illinois, Michigan, Washington, and Colorado, and we are in discussions with new states, really every day. I think what we'll see is this continue to build forward as we move into 2021.
Ed Comeau:	What are those plans for moving forward? Do you have any goals or objectives that you're looking at to build out the program even further?

Steve Hrustich:	From a statewide approach, our goal is obviously 50 states, and when we look at what we've put on paper for goals and objectives moving forward, we're very aggressive in our approach, yet taking measured steps along the way. We know that the SCEF is really based on program substance, quality, and the experience, not so much just getting states into the pipeline, so our goal here is to move from 11 states right now, to 22 by the end of the second quarter of 2021 and then moving forward exponentially grow that number to 44 states a year from that timeframe, essentially by the second quarter of 2022.
	Since the press release came out about two weeks ago, we currently have 10 states that have reached out to us to get into the pipeline. We still have some spots available for this next phase, and the reason we're taking that phase approach is really to get states into the program early, set them up with virtual meetings, and put them on a solid path. We know that adding too many states too quickly could lead to confusion and delays, which we really want to avoid.
	There's a small amount of prep work for the state to complete for their initial virtual meeting. We typically schedule that out about two weeks, and that meeting takes one hour. Have discussions on exactly what the SCEF is, look at some of the program documentation, as well as the matrix that is associated with the SCEF.
	The nice part about the framework is states can go as fast or slow as the state needs.
Ed Comeau:	You mentioned the program matrix, and one of the things I should have mentioned at the top of the podcast is if people are looking for information, they can go to strategicfire.org/scef, and on that page is a matrix, which lays out different tiers for the level that a state may be at. Can you talk about that a little bit?
Steve Hrustich:	The program matrix is really a critical piece within the framework. It helps us to build re-creatable aspects across the nation, based on best practices, diversity, and inclusivity. The reason for the matrix, building these strategic features into the plan are to create measurable aspects on the program, not only on a statewide, but the national level.
	When we take this matrix, we can apply it to any state in the nation, to determine a couple things. Number one, relationships that exist out there, the resources and skill sets that are available to the state right now, the political landscape, and really any CRR plans that are currently already taking place.
	Again, I'll just reiterate that our goal here is not to change anything that the states are doing. If a state is focused on a particular program such as ... I'll just mention Fire Safe South Carolina, is one, or turn your attention to fire prevention. Our goal is not to change any of that. It's really to help build in these

measurable elements into that program, and help move that forward on a statewide scale.

After we determine these pieces within the matrix, we can place a state within one of five tiers. Tier 1 being the aspired state. Tier 5 being on the bottom of the spectrum there, but our goal is, we always tell people that when we look at the SCEF, our goal is to help a state move from the tier they're in, to the next step, to the next tier in the matrix. It's not moving from a 4 to a 1. It's really moving from a 4 to a 3. The way we do that is build in those smart goals and objectives, things that are measured that we can look at, that are time bound, and help people to engage and on a wider platform within the state, and bring those groups in to have these discussions.

One thing that we have found, the states that are most successful in using, or implementing these CRR plans and principles, and practices is the fact they have a large, diverse group that they're attached to. It also helps build in sustainability as well. We all know what happens when a new person comes in and takes over. Things may change or things may go by the wayside. Well being a part of this large, diverse group of fire service organizations within the state, it helps to keep the momentum for CRR.

Within the matrix, no matter what tier that you're placed in, we typically look at three to five goals within that tier that are jointly developed between our technical advisor staff and the stakeholders within the state. I believe that having a small number of manageable goals really helps people to be successful, number one, when we can meet those goals. It helps to build that, again, momentum.

The SECF obviously focuses on a statewide risk assessment. I think that's critically important for any discussions when we talk about CRR. Having the ability to have that statewide risk assessment, that needs not to be a daunting task. I think a lot of times, what we see is people shy away from that for a number of reasons. That's fine. The statewide efforts are pretty entrenched and focused on fire, which they should be. We see that as being a strong focus.

When we look at it on a national scale, it's important to understand fire deaths within a state. Not only that, but when we look at it across the nation, where do we see pockets that we can work collaboratively to help those things. When we look at the pace that states can go at within here, we provide detailed guidance, support, integrate their goals into the plan. I think that's the strong point here. Again, our goal is to be there to support each of these states in what they want to do. I think this is something that we see coming out of the SCEF as a very critical piece of information.

Ed Comeau: Do you have any partners that are working with Vision 20/20 and these states within SCEF?

Steve Hrustich:	We do have some partners that are already engaged in the SCEF. We are in discussions with folks talking about these opportunities for a wide variety of not only organizations, but vendors as well. I think that there are a lot of common goals and missions for many of the organizations within our steering committee, so we'll likely see a large number of our steering committee members taking part with their organizations in the SCEF.
	Vision 20/20 believes that providing opportunities for organizations and partners really to align themselves around a compelling common purpose, and that's what this is, provides a way to meet those shared goals and objectives that are key to the success of the SCEF. Each of these member organizations or vendor folks will be able to bring in skill sets that align with the mission and goals to enhance that program experience.
Ed Comeau:	If a state or a partnering organization wants to get involved in the program, how do they go about doing that?
Steve Hrustich:	Well the first thing that I would suggest, from a statewide perspective, I would encourage prospective states to visit Vision 20/20 website, strategicfire.org, and really follow that link to the SCEF Program. The program documentation, the matrix is there for them to learn more. If you're interested in getting your state involved, I would reach out to us. There's a contact link on the form. There's a contact form on the website that they can just put in their information, and even if you're not involved in a state agency, that's fine. At least it gets us the contacts to start building those relationships within the states.
	As I previously mentioned, our goal is to add another 11 states to SCEF by the second quarter. Currently we look like we have nine or 10 right now, but there are spots available. Again, just to get in the pipeline is important, and when we do that we can start those initial meetings, even if you'll be phased in early 2021, so the process is really painless for these states. It's a one hour virtual meeting to learn more about the SCEF. We'd have a 30 minute question and answer period, and this is really built around all those fire service organizational stakeholders within the state.
	From there, we move forward with another short meeting that looks at the matrix, and tries to sit down and identify just those discussions on where do you think you are in the matrix. We help guide that and facilitate that conversation. From that, we can start to put together more of a monthly schedule to have discussions and focus on some goals moving forward. The nice part about this is in the world we're in right now, doesn't put this on hold. We can do the vast majority of this virtually, and then we can meet with states as travel seems to free up here.
	The other side of that is partner organizations or vendors that are out there. Again, the contact form is on the website to get involved with the SCEF. You can

reach out to us and select just a fire service organization entity from the drop down list, and that way we can contact you with opportunities that we see arise within the SCEF. Could be with a single state. It could be from a national standpoint as well. The SCEF framework can help to get folks involved on many different levels. It doesn't matter what discipline we're talking about within the fire service, if it's a fire chiefs organization or a state fire marshall, state inspectors, educators, or investigators. There are so many facets that build into that conversation from maybe a vendor standpoint. I think there's opportunities to get out and support this on a national scale.

Ed Comeau: Steve, what are the benefits to the states that are engaged in the framework?

Steve Hrustich: Well Ed, we've really put those together in a nice package. The benefits range from looking at a statewide CRR, a planning and implementation piece, but some of the biggest things that we see is really having the guidance support from our technical advisor group with experience in CRR principles, practices, planning and implementation. They're really subject matter experts. They have real world experience, and can help mold those conversations.

Sometimes we have tough discussions with some of these things, and that's fine. I think that's just part of the plan. A group facilitation is another, looking at that to build strong cohesive teams within the state, building on that and setting goals is really key. Setting goals that help these task forces, teams, coalitions, whatever you want to call it, to help focus on what the prize is.

Again, some of the other issues there, providing assistance, creating a statewide risk assessment. We have some new tools coming out here in the near future that can really help with that process. One thing we always hear is training, "We need training." That's fine, we can provide training both virtually and in-person for classes on CRR, classes on data collection and analysis. We'll have a couple new course offering in 2021 as well.

The one thing that we did want to mention is the Illinois model, that works with the state training arm of whatever state that we're working in to offload some of the classes, these pre-packaged classes so they can deliver them locally within the state as well. We see that as being a great win for the SCEF.

A couple other benefits here are really the statewide CRR Leadership Summit, where they can learn from their peers across the United States, as well as a statewide summit at the Symposium Seven that will be held in Murfreesboro, Tennessee in the first quarter of 2022.

Ed Comeau: Well we've covered a lot of ground here. Is there anything you'd like to add as we wrap up?

Steve Hrustich: Finally, I'd like to thank DHS FEMA for their support through grant funding for the Vision 20/20 Project, to really help move the SCEF forward across the state in starting in 2021.

Ed Comeau: All right. Well, we've been talking with Steve Hrustich, who's the Program Manager for Vision 20/20, about the new program coming out from Vision 20/20 called the State Collaboration and Engagement Framework, or SCEF, and if you're looking for more information on it, be sure to stop at the website at strategicfire.org/scef, where you can find a lot more information. You can see the SCEF matrix, and there's also a contact us button on that page, if you want to get involved with SCEF, or are just looking for more information.

Steve, I really appreciate you taking the time to talk with us today on CRR Radio.

Steve Hrustich: Thanks Ed. We truly appreciate taking the time today to discuss the SCEF with everyone, and look forward to engaging with these states on a higher level, starting here in 2021.

Ed Comeau: Well you've been listening to CRR Radio. CRR Radio is a production of the Vision 20/20 Project, and is produced by myself, Ed Comeau, and edited by Rich Palmer. Be sure to follow us on your favorite podcast app. We come out on a regular basis, and we'll see you on the next episode of CRR Radio.

Speaker 2:   This is CRR Radio.