From Months to Days: How GFSTC Transformed Certification Management with Acadis

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>
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> *IT and Business Analyst II for GFSTC*

Challenges in Managing Certification Testing at Scale

Georgia Firefighter Standards & Training Council (GFSTC) oversees more than 31,000 firefighters across 523 departments, totaling 3,500 stations in 159 counties.

Responsible for maintaining training records and ensuring annual certification compliance for every firefighter in the state of Georgia, GFSTC faced a mounting administrative burden. Between manual processes for registering candidates for certification testing, ensuring all prerequisites were met, and physically transporting test booklets across the state, firefighter testing was a slow, daunting process that presented logistical challenges and security risks.

"One of the major frustrations for our firefighters was the up to three-month bottleneck they faced to start working at their department or get promoted; they had to wait months for a test grade before they can start serving," shared Christina Tipton, IT and Business Analyst II for GFSTC. "It was unacceptable."

Because exam booklets were delivered in person, departments were required to request tests 30 days in advance of the test date, and no one could sign up for the test within the 10 days prior to the test date to ensure the right number of tests were prepared. This further extended the time candidates had to wait from preparing for their exam to receiving their certificate.

Overcoming months-long wait times and relieving its overburdened staff and area reps to better service Georgia firefighters was a top objective of GFSTC. The Council knew it needed a less manual, more efficient, and highly customizable solution to meet its unique needs.

Streamlined Registration and Online Testing Expedites Certification Processes

GFSTC selected the *Acadis® Readiness Suite* to help improve the management of its diverse certification operations. Through simplified test registration workflows, automated prerequisite validation, and online certification testing, the Council dramatically increased the number certifications it was able to process.

In 2023, GFSTC moved certification testing online in Acadis and saw dramatic improvement in a short amount of time. "In 2022, when we were doing paper testing, we administered about 2,700 tests," Christina shared. "With Acadis, within the first year of implementing the system, we had increased our capability dramatically—administering over 14,000 tests. It's mind-boggling having that ability."

Acadis empowers GFSTC with a seamless process that's revolutionized certification management from start to finish:

Test Requests
What used to require a 30-day advance notice and manual test delivery by area reps now takes one person just a few minutes to create a test event and get online tests into candidates' hands.

Test Registration
Instead of manually assessing a candidate's prerequisites, Acadis has tremendously sped up this process by validating that a person has met the criteria, and then automatically enrolling them in the right test.

Test Administration
By transitioning from physical test booklets transported in vaults in area reps' vehicles to online testing via a lockdown browser for secure online testing, GFSTC has saved significant time and strengthened testing security.

Test Processing
Using a class template in Acadis, GFSTC can easily process all materials related to a certification, provide students with missed learning objectives for enhanced enrichment, and graduate students— and everything gets documented in their Acadis person record.

With the help of Acadis, the Council has been able to turn a certification process that once took more than three months into one that can take as little as a few days.

Automating Department Training Submissions Across the State

As an early adopter of *AgencyConnect*, the only technology solution connecting local agencies with state level certifying bodies and academies, Georgia fire departments leveraging *TargetSolutions* for comprehensive training management can now automatically submit fireground, fire suppression, and other fire training-related activities directly into GFSTC's Acadis system.

In Georgia, every firefighter is required to complete 24 hours of annual continuing education.

In less than a year since AgencyConnect launched in Georgia, more than 100 departments across the state are using it to automate training submission to GFSTC, totaling over 1,500 entries in the portal already.

"I encourage all our departments to check it out, I couldn't even begin to fathom how much administrative time it's cut down for local departments. Firefighters are not big on change, but this one has really taken off. It's easy to set up and is a straightforward process."

— Christina Tipton
IT and Business Analyst II for GFSTC

With Acadis, Council staff can quickly run reports to see who has met the requirements and follow up with departments where there are gaps. "There's a lot more checks and balances where we didn't have that insight before, as it was a more manual process," Christina explained.

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