

# NORTH COUNTY FIRE/EMS 2019-2024 STRATEGIC PLAN



# NORTH COUNTY



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## Executive Summary

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North County Regional Fire Authority, known as “North County Fire & EMS,” provides fire suppression and emergency medical service to 25,000 people over 110 square miles, including the City of Stanwood. More than 70 emergency personnel respond to approximately 4,200 calls per year. North County Fire & EMS is debt-free, operates under a balanced budget, and has passed all its independent audits by the state.

This Strategic Plan was initiated to assist in developing community-driven goals that guide North County Fire & EMS in prioritizing staffing, funding, and program development. The agency relied on community leaders, homeowners, businesses, and taxpayers for their input. The Plan will guide the agency in identifying future needs and community expectations for emergency services. It creates a blueprint for how the agency will meet the demand for service within an annually-approved budget.

Call volumes have increased 36.7% since 2013. Additional staffing and apparatus are required to maintain emergency response times and service levels required by the community. These challenges require the fire authority to consider revenue options, such as a voter approved lid lift to its Fire and EMS levies.

## Introduction

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The North County Fire/EMS (NCFE) provides an all-hazards approach in the protection of the lives and property of the residents, businesses, and visitors of the organization. NCFE is consistently working to achieve and/or maintain the highest level of professionalism and efficiency on behalf of those it serves, and thus, contracted with the Center for Public Safety Excellence (CPSE) to facilitate a method to document the department’s path into the future via a “Community-Driven Strategic Plan.” The following strategic plan was written in accordance with the guidelines set forth in the Commission on Fire Accreditation (CFAI) *Fire & Emergency Service Self-Assessment Manual 9<sup>th</sup> Ed.* and is intended to guide the organization within established parameters set forth by the authority having jurisdiction.

The CPSE utilized the community-driven strategic planning process to go beyond just the development of a document. It challenged the department’s members to critically examine paradigms, values, philosophies, beliefs and desires, and challenged individuals to work in the best interest of the “team.” It further provided the department with an opportunity to participate in the development of their organization’s long-term direction and focus. Members of the organization’s community and department stakeholders’ groups demonstrated commitment to this important project and remain committed to the document’s completion and future plan execution.

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## Organizational Background

The North County Regional Fire Authority was formally established in 2008 with the consolidation of Snohomish County Fire Protection Districts 14 and 18. The combination of districts consolidated services for Bryant, Freeborn, and Warm Beach under one Board of Commissioners. The department was one of the first in the state to form a regional fire authority to improve efficiency and conserve resources. Since then, the department has grown and evolved to what is now known as North County Fire/EMS (NCFE), which now also covers unincorporated and incorporated areas within the northern region of Snohomish County.



The proactivity of North County Fire/EMS is proven by its rich history and progressive growth to meet its jurisdictional demands. The district understands the challenges to keeping up with growth and continues to strategically prepare for change. Additionally, the department understands industry best practices and proactively pursues them.

Today, North County Fire/EMS remembers its history and remains committed to reducing risk and enhancing the

health, welfare, and preparedness of its entire community. The department continues to provide premier medical services, fire, and all-hazard emergency response to its risks from five stations that are located strategically throughout the 110 square miles of the district. Staffed with a variety of full-time, part-paid, and volunteer staff, NCFE embraces quality service and excellence in all they do.

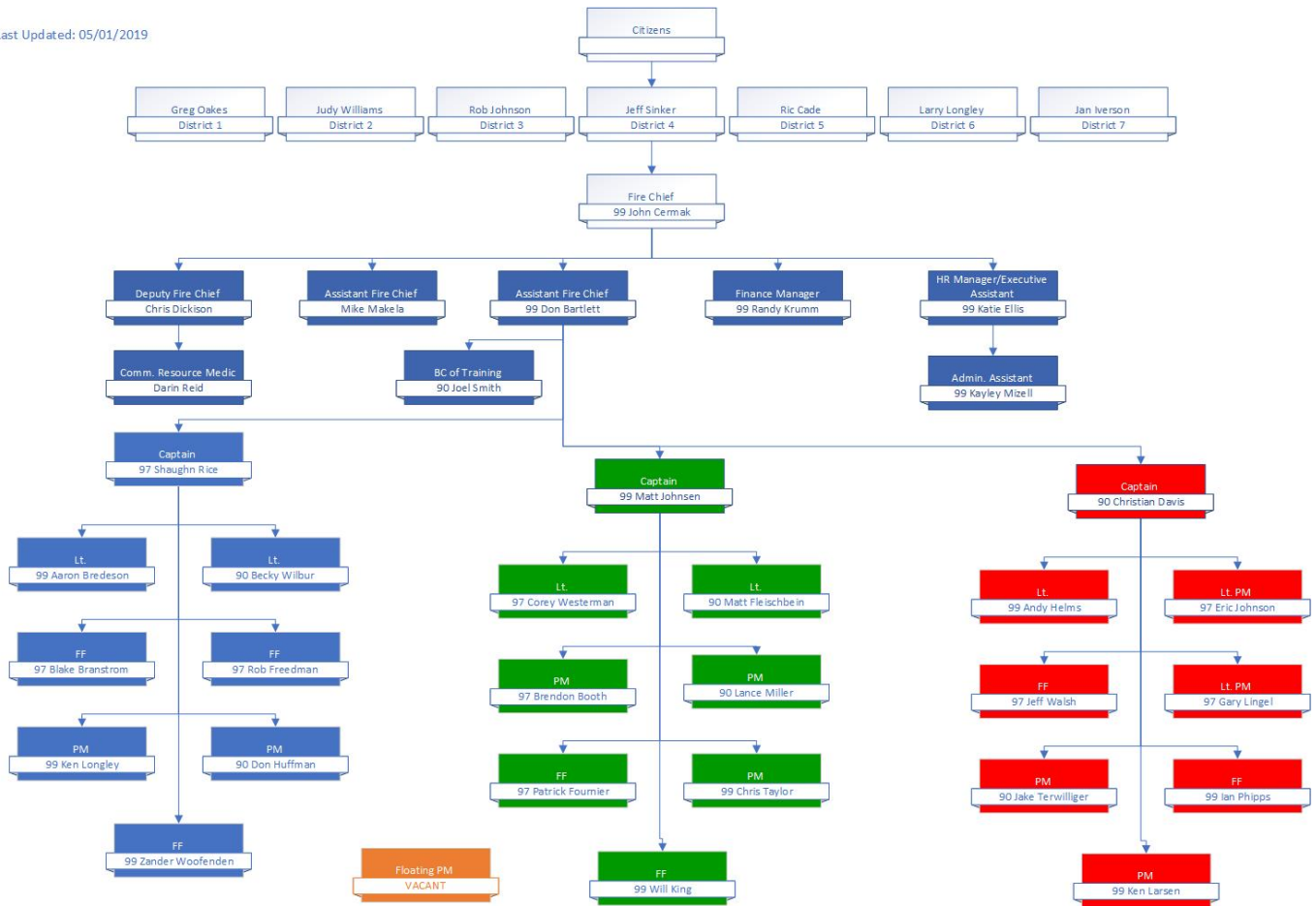




# NORTH COUNTY FIRE/EMS

## Organizational Structure

Last Updated: 05/01/2019



# STRATEGIC PLAN 2019-2024



## Community-Driven Strategic Planning

For many successful organizations, the voice of the community drives their operations and charts the course for their future. A community-driven emergency service organization is one that seeks to gather and utilize the needs and expectations of its community in the development and/or improvement of the services provided. To ensure that the community remains a focus of an organization's direction, a community-driven strategic planning process was used to develop this strategic plan.

A strategic plan is a living management tool that provides short-term direction, builds a shared vision, documents goals and objectives, and optimizes use of resources. The process of strategic planning can be defined as “a deliberative, disciplined approach to producing fundamental decisions and actions that shape and guide what an organization (or other entity) is, what it does, and why.”<sup>1</sup>

*Effective* strategic planning benefits from a consistent and cohesively structured process employed across all levels of the organization. Planning is a continuous process, one with no clear beginning and no defined end. While plans can be developed on a regular basis, it is the process of planning that is important, not the publication of the plan itself. Most importantly, strategic planning can be an opportunity to unify the management, employees, and stakeholders through a common understanding of where the organization is going, how everyone involved can work to that common purpose, and how progression and success will be measured.



**Community Stakeholders Work Session**

<sup>1</sup> See Definition, Purpose, and Benefits of Strategic Planning (Bryson 8)





# NORTH COUNTY FIRE/EMS

## The Community–Driven Strategic Planning Process Outline

1. Define the programs provided to the community.
2. Establish the community’s service program priorities and expectations of the organization.
3. Identify any concerns the community may have about the organization, along with aspects of the organization that the community views positively.
4. Revisit the mission statement, giving careful attention to the services and programs currently provided, and which logically can be provided in the future.
5. Revisit the values of the organization’s membership.
6. Identify the internal strengths and weaknesses of the organization.
7. Identify areas of opportunity or potential threats to the organization.
8. Identify the organization’s critical issues and service gaps.
9. Determine strategic initiatives for organizational improvement.
10. Establish a realistic goal and objectives for each initiative.
11. Identify implementation tasks for the accomplishment of each objective.
12. Determine the vision of the future.
13. Develop organizational and community commitment to accomplishing the plan.



**Community Stakeholders Work Session**





# STRATEGIC PLAN 2019-2024



## Process and Acknowledgements

The Center for Public Safety Excellence (CPSE) acknowledges and thanks the community and department stakeholders for their participation and input into this community-driven strategic planning process. The CPSE also recognizes Fire Chief John Cermak and the team of professionals that participated for their leadership and commitment to this process.

Development of this strategic plan took place in March 2019, beginning with meetings hosted by a representative from the CPSE for members of the community (as named in the following table). The department identified community stakeholders to ensure broad representation. The community stakeholders were comprised of some who reside or work within the North County Fire/EMS' coverage area, and some who were recipients of NCFE's service(s).

North County Fire/EMS Community Stakeholders				
Les Anderson	Cody Bagley	Peter Camp	Dave Kraski	Ben McCall
Kevin Stogner	Doug TenHoopen	Ty Trenary	Julie Vess	



Community Stakeholders Work Session





# NORTH COUNTY FIRE/EMS

## Community Group Findings

A key element of the North County Fire/EMS' organizational philosophy is having a high level of commitment to the community, as well as recognizing the importance of community satisfaction. Thus, the fire authority invited community representatives to provide feedback on services provided by the fire authority. Respondents were asked to provide a prioritized perspective of the programs and services provided by the department. Additionally, input was gathered during the meeting that revolved around community expectations and concerns (prioritized), as well as positive and other comments about the organization. Specific findings of the community stakeholders are provided in the appendix of this document. The department stakeholders utilized the full feedback from the community stakeholders in understanding the current challenges encountered within the organization. Additionally, the community stakeholders' feedback provided a process to ensure alignment with the work completed on the organizational mission, values, vision, and goals for improvement.



Community Stakeholders Work Session



# STRATEGIC PLAN 2019-2024



## Community Priorities

To best dedicate time, energy, and resources to services most desired by its community, the North County Fire/EMS needs to understand what the customers consider to be their priorities. With that, the community stakeholders were asked to prioritize the programs offered by the department through a process of direct comparison. The results were as follows:

Programs	Ranking	Score
Emergency Medical Services	1	70
Fire Suppression	2	61
Technical Rescue	3	50
Hazardous Materials Mitigation	4	33
Wildland Fire Services	5	29
Community Emergency Management Planning	6	28
Community Risk Reduction	7	21
Public Fire and Life Safety Education	8	19
Fire Investigation	9	13

See [Appendix 1](#) for a complete list of the community findings including expectations, areas of concern, positive feedback, and other thoughts and comments.



Community Stakeholders Work Session





# NORTH COUNTY FIRE/EMS

## Department Stakeholder Group Findings

The department stakeholder work sessions were conducted over the course of three days. These sessions served to discuss the organization’s approach to community-driven strategic planning, focusing on the department’s mission, values, core programs and support services. Additionally, focus was given to the organization’s perceived strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. The work sessions involved participation by a stakeholder group that represented a broad cross-section of the department, as named and pictured below.

North County Fire/EMS Department Stakeholders			
Don Bartlett <i>Assistant Chief</i>	Brendon Booth <i>Paramedic</i>	Aaron Bredeson <i>Lieutenant</i>	Ric Cade <i>Commissioner</i>
Katie Casey <i>Executive Assistant</i>	John Cermak <i>Fire Chief</i>	Kris Cruse <i>Firefighter</i>	Robert Freedman <i>Firefighter</i>
Tyler Henricksen <i>Firefighter</i>	Dylan Holbrook <i>Firefighter</i>	Don Huffman <i>Paramedic</i>	Rob Johnson <i>Commissioner</i>
Randy Krumm <i>Finance Manager</i>	Mike Makela <i>Assistant Chief</i>	Ruairi O’Connor <i>Firefighter</i>	Darin Reid <i>Paramedic</i>
Shaughn Rice <i>Captain</i>	Joel Smith <i>Battalion Chief</i>	Corey Westerman <i>Lieutenant</i>	



**Department Stakeholders**



# STRATEGIC PLAN 2019-2024



## Mission

The purpose of the mission is to answer the questions:

- Who are we?
- Why do we exist?
- What do we do?
- Why do we do it?
- For whom?

A workgroup met to revisit the existing mission and, after ensuring it answered the questions, the following mission statement was created, discussed, and accepted by the entire group:

**North County Fire/EMS provides premier medical services, fire, and all-hazard emergency response to reduce risk and enhance the health, welfare, and preparedness of our entire community.**



Department Stakeholders Work Session





# NORTH COUNTY FIRE/EMS

## Values

Values embraced by all members of an organization are extremely important, as they recognize the features that make up the personality and culture of the organization. A workgroup met to revisit the existing values and proposed a revision that was discussed, enhanced further, and agreed upon by the entire group:

**Integrity** - We take personal ownership of all facets of the organization and service we provide to the community, in an honest and trustworthy manner.

**Excellence** – We are committed to professionalism, progressive leadership, and fiscal responsibility.

**Communication** – We provide clear, transparent, and open communication.

**Innovation** – We continuously seek effective ways to carry out our mission.

**Family** – We believe in the importance of family, both personally and professionally.

The mission and values are the foundation of this organization. Thus, every effort will be made to keep these current and meaningful so that the individuals who make up the North County Fire/EMS are guided by them in the accomplishment of the goals, objectives, and day-to-day tasks.

## Programs and Services

The department stakeholders identified the core programs provided to the community, as well as many of the services that enable the organization to deliver those programs. The department’s core programs are provided below, while supporting services are provided in [Appendix 2](#).

Core Programs of the North County Fire/EMS		
Emergency Medical Services	Fire Suppression	Technical Rescue
Hazardous Materials Mitigation	Wildland Fire Services	Community Emergency Management Planning
Community Risk Reduction	Public Fire and Life Safety Education	Fire Investigation



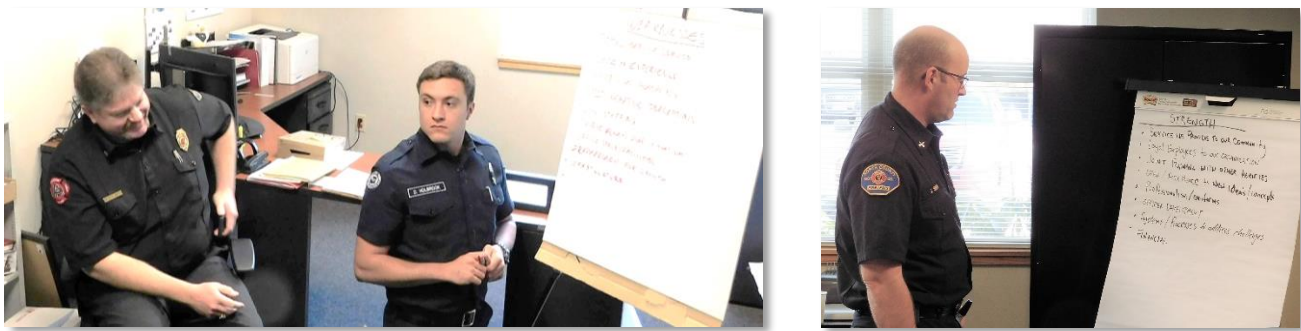
# STRATEGIC PLAN 2019-2024



## SWOT Analysis

Through a SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats), an organization candidly identifies its positive and negative attributes. The SWOT analysis also provides an opportunity for an organization to evaluate its operating environment for areas in which it can capitalize, as well as those that pose a danger. Department stakeholders participated in this activity to record NCFE’s strengths and weaknesses, as well as the possible opportunities and potential threats. Information gathered through this analysis provides guidance toward the larger issues and gaps that exist within the agency. The information gleaned will assist the agency in finding its broader critical issues and service gaps.

*Appendix 3 consists of the SWOT data and analysis collected by the department stakeholders.*



Department Stakeholders Work Session

## Critical Issues and Service Gaps

Following the identification and review of the department’s SWOT, two separate groups of department stakeholders met to identify themes as primary critical issues and service gaps (found in [Appendix 4](#)). The critical issues and services gaps identified by the stakeholders provides further guidance toward identification of the strategic initiatives, which will ultimately lend direction for the development of goals, objectives, critical tasks, and timelines.

## Strategic Initiatives

Based upon all previously captured information and the determination of critical issues and service gaps, the following strategic initiatives were identified as the foundation for the development of goals and objectives.

North County Fire/EMS’s Strategic Initiatives			
External Communications	Workforce Development	Financial Strategy	
Physical Resources	Internal Communications	Training	Accreditation





# NORTH COUNTY FIRE/EMS

## Goals and Objectives

To continuously achieve the mission of the North County Fire/EMS, realistic goals and objectives with timelines for completion must be established. These will serve to enhance strengths, address identified weaknesses, provide a clear direction, and address the concerns of the community. These should become a focus of the department's efforts, as they will direct the organization to its desired future while reducing the obstacles and distractions along the way. Leadership-established work groups should meet and manage progress toward accomplishing these goals and objectives and adjust timelines as needs and the environment change. Regular reports of progress and changes should be shared with the NCFE's leadership.

<b>Goal 1</b>	<b>Enhance external communication channels using clear and concise information in a positive manner with the community.</b>	
<b>Objective 1A</b>	<b>Establish public information leadership within the organization.</b>	
<b>Timeframe</b>	1 month	<b>Assigned to:</b>
<b>Critical Tasks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a single focal point within the organization to be the lead on public information, based upon type of job responsibilities that interact with our citizens.</li> <li>• Give individuals the ability to delegate various duties within the organization.</li> <li>• Review and amend current public information policies.</li> </ul>	
<b>Funding Estimate</b>	Capital Costs: Personnel Costs:	Consumable Costs: Contract Services Costs:
<b>Objective 1B</b>	<b>Identify and evaluate current means, methods, and content of communicating to citizens in the organization's response areas.</b>	
<b>Timeframe</b>	2 months	<b>Assigned to:</b>
<b>Critical Tasks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify all methods currently being utilized to communicate with the public to include, but not limited to:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Printed materials-Firewire</li> <li>- Social Media-Twitter, Facebook</li> <li>- Website</li> <li>- Press-newspaper, radio, TV</li> <li>- Public interaction.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Determine effectiveness and cost of each method currently being utilized.</li> <li>• Evaluate content of communications and determine if effective.</li> </ul>	
<b>Funding Estimate</b>	Capital Costs: Personnel Costs:	Consumable Costs: Contract Services Costs:





# STRATEGIC PLAN 2019-2024



**Objective 1C Identify new or additional communication techniques and opportunities.**

**Timeframe** 3 months **Assigned to:**

- Critical Tasks**
- Communicate with other departments to see what methods are effective for them.
  - Explore additional electronic or social media opportunities.
  - Consult with outside media experts for additional ideas or opportunities.
  - Utilize CERT team to acquire and disseminate critical information.
  - Create a findings and recommendations report.
  - Present the report to fire commission for possible action.

**Funding Estimate** Capital Costs: Consumable Costs:  
Personnel Costs: Contract Services Costs:

**Objective 1D Evaluate and update all current branding for consistency and uniformity to solidify community image.**

**Timeframe** 4 months **Assigned to:**

- Critical Tasks**
- Create a branding committee consisting of employees, commissioners, and citizens.
  - The committee’s purpose is to evaluate and determine the criteria for organizational branding i.e. names, images, and badging.
  - Compile findings and produce recommendation report.
  - Present the findings and recommendations report to fire commission for consideration.
  - Implement the branding plan into annual budget process.

**Funding Estimate** Capital Costs: Consumable Costs:  
Personnel Costs: Contract Services Costs:

**Objective 1E Enhance customer service skills and community interaction methods.**

**Timeframe** 1 month **Assigned to:**

- Critical Tasks**
- Conduct an initial survey of our customers to determine current public image and level of customer service skills.
  - Implement customer service skills improvement through training and educational opportunities.
  - Refresh customer service values as weaknesses or issues appear.
  - Perform annually, a survey of current public opinion of the organization to guide on-going training efforts.
  - Seek additional opportunities for community interaction.

**Funding Estimate** Capital Costs: Consumable Costs:  
Personnel Costs: Contract Services Costs:





# NORTH COUNTY FIRE/EMS

**Goal 2** Provide enhanced workforce development from entry level through retirement, to ensure a culture of accountability and responsibility within the organization.

**Objective 2A** Develop, implement, and maintain a comprehensive health and wellness program to ensure a healthy workforce.

**Timeframe** 6 months **Assigned to:**

- Form a committee to evaluate the issues, seek funding, and implement.
- Develop the processes to be used for evaluation.
- Evaluate physical fitness of members to include, but not limited to:
  - Education and determination of a tailored fitness plan
  - Proper diet options
  - Peer fitness trainers
  - Availability of equipment and time
  - YMCA membership possibilities
  - Firefighter fitness budget
  - Determine oversight for individual or team.
- Cancer awareness and prevention for members to include, but not limited to:
  - Education and implementation for a healthy in and healthy out plan
  - Perform an annual screening process.
- Increase awareness and promote the employee assistance program to include, but not limited to:
  - Mental health
  - Employee counseling.
- Create a report of findings for the leadership team with recommendations for any revisions.

**Funding Estimate** Capital Costs: Consumable Costs:  
Personnel Costs: Contract Services Costs:

**Objective 2B** Develop and implement a consistent, equitable, and objective-based performance evaluation system to include corrective actions, as needed.

**Timeframe** 6 months **Assigned to:**

- Form a committee to evaluate current annual evaluation process.
- Develop standards, SOPs, and policies.
- Develop the parameters for evaluation.
- Determine and seek funding.
- Determine number and select training evaluators.
- Conduct the evaluation.
- Create a report of findings for the leadership team with recommendations based on the evaluations.
- Annually review the evaluation system and update as needed.

**Funding Estimate** Capital Costs: Consumable Costs:  
Personnel Costs: Contract Services Costs:



# STRATEGIC PLAN 2019-2024



## Objective 2C

**Strengthen the qualified applicant pool to reflect a diverse workforce to meet the staffing and retention requirements of the organization.**

### Timeframe

12 months

### Assigned to:

- Form a committee to evaluate diversity within the department and the community.
- Identify any gaps.
- Develop and implement an all-inclusive hiring process to increase diversity.
- Promote and develop diversity training.
- Create recruiting videos for the department web site.
- Attend and participate in local career fairs, high school events, and college job fairs.
- Identify key factors affecting retention to include, but not limited to:
  - Evaluate the key factors and data for inclusion
  - Evaluate and include information from previous exit interviews.
- Identify personnel scheduling issues to include, but not limited to:
  - Part-time shift data and rank break downs
  - Overtime data
  - Staffing levels for all shifts and days of the week.
- Create a report of findings for the leadership team with recommendations for any revisions.

### Critical Tasks

### Funding

Capital Costs:

Consumable Costs:

### Estimate

Personnel Costs:

Contract Services Costs:



**Department Stakeholders Work Session**





# NORTH COUNTY FIRE/EMS

<b>Goal 3</b>	<b>Ensure our financial sustainability to support the mission of providing premier services to our community.</b>	
<b>Objective 3A</b>	<b>Evaluate current revenue sources for sustainability and potential growth.</b>	
<b>Timeframe</b>	3 months	<b>Assigned to:</b>
<b>Critical Tasks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a finance committee consisting of administrative, elected officials, and labor representatives.</li> <li>• Designate a chairperson to lead the committee.</li> <li>• Review historical actuals for current revenues.</li> <li>• Review and forecast current revenues.</li> <li>• Create summary of current revenue and present findings to fire commission.</li> <li>• Implement findings and recommendations through annual budget process.</li> </ul>	
<b>Funding Estimate</b>	Capital Costs: Personnel Costs:	Consumable Costs: Contract Services Costs:
<b>Objective 3B</b>	<b>Identify and evaluate additional revenue sources and their appropriateness for our organization.</b>	
<b>Timeframe</b>	3 months	<b>Assigned to:</b>
<b>Critical Tasks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Utilize the finance committee to research and review untapped potential revenues sources.</li> <li>• Review on-going grant funding opportunities and programs through ECivis or similar information sources.</li> <li>• Utilize data and public input information from our external communication sources to evaluate the public's acceptance of possible funding options.</li> <li>• Assemble findings and recommendations report.</li> <li>• Present findings and recommendations report to fire commission.</li> <li>• Implement findings and recommendations through annual budget process.</li> <li>• Consider utilizing the services of an external public relations consultant to present proposed revenue solution.</li> </ul>	
<b>Funding Estimate</b>	Capital Costs: Personnel Costs:	Consumable Costs: Contract Services Costs:



# STRATEGIC PLAN 2019-2024



**Objective 3C Evaluate expenditures for current services and programs.**

<b>Timeframe</b>	3 months	<b>Assigned to:</b>
<b>Critical Tasks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Convene finance committee to conduct detailed analysis of current programs and associated costs.</li> <li>• Identify possible cost alternatives for current programs, services, and vendors.</li> <li>• Communicate with cost program leaders for input and suggestions on possible cost alternatives.</li> <li>• Assemble collected information into a concise findings and recommendation report.</li> <li>• Present findings and recommendation report to fire commission.</li> <li>• Incorporate findings and recommendations into annual budget process.</li> </ul>	

<b>Funding Estimate</b>	Capital Costs: Personnel Costs:	Consumable Costs: Contract Services Costs:
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**Objective 3D Identify potential future services, programs, and related costs.**

<b>Timeframe</b>	3 months	<b>Assigned to:</b>
<b>Critical Tasks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Convene finance committee to evaluate findings and recommendations from strategic plan for new programs and services.</li> <li>• Develop detailed cost estimates for the creation or implementation of new programs or services.</li> <li>• Determine if there is a potential funding source for new programs or services.</li> <li>• Create detailed findings and recommendations report.</li> <li>• Present detailed findings and recommendations report to fire commission for consideration.</li> <li>• Incorporate fire commission’s direction for new programs and services into annual budget process.</li> </ul>	

<b>Funding Estimate</b>	Capital Costs: Personnel Costs:	Consumable Costs: Contract Services Costs:
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# NORTH COUNTY FIRE/EMS

<b>Goal 4</b>	<b>Improve and maintain the physical resources supporting the mission of North County Fire/EMS.</b>	
<b>Objective 4A</b>	<b>Develop and implement a comprehensive plan to address the maintenance and replacement of current and future facilities.</b>	
<b>Timeframe</b>	6 months	<b>Assigned to:</b>
<b>Critical Tasks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish facility creation and acquisition committee (CAC) with oversight position to lead the team and overall process.</li> <li>• Create current facility maintenance committee (FMC) to establish oversight position to lead team and overall process.</li> <li>• Establish overall facility needs, directions, and criteria.</li> <li>• CAC will create findings for current stations and future stations based upon current call volumes, expected population growth areas, life cycle of each station, and potential merger scenarios.</li> <li>• FMC will create findings for current stations based upon criteria that examine each major system or component of the individual stations. These findings will look at current conditions, current needed repairs, and future identified repairs with cost estimates.</li> <li>• Each committee will provide their findings along with recommendations to the fire commission.</li> <li>• Committees will continue to meet to develop detailed action plans. They will include necessary fire authority employees needed to implement action plans.</li> <li>• Seek approval of action plans including funding.</li> <li>• Committees will meet at least quarterly to monitor and evaluate progress of action plans.</li> </ul>	
<b>Funding Estimate</b>	Capital Costs: Personnel Costs:	Consumable Costs: Contract Services Costs:
<b>Objective 4B</b>	<b>Develop and implement a comprehensive plan to address the maintenance and replacement of current and future apparatus.</b>	
<b>Timeframe</b>	3 months	<b>Assigned to:</b>
<b>Critical Tasks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create apparatus committee and establish oversight position to determine the needs of vehicle maintenance and acquisition program.</li> <li>• Committee will review current replacement plan and make necessary changes to the plan based upon established criteria. Committee will also review current maintenance schedules against national standards to ensure compliance.</li> <li>• Establish overall fleet needs and criteria.</li> <li>• Committee will report findings and produce recommendations to the fire commission.</li> <li>• Committee will develop policies and procedures to assist the organization achieve its mission.</li> <li>• Seek approval of policies and procedures, including funding.</li> <li>• Committee will implement findings and recommendations by tasking the staff apparatus lead with policies and procedures.</li> <li>• Committee will convene quarterly to monitor and evaluate progress.</li> </ul>	
<b>Funding Estimate</b>	Capital Costs: Personnel Costs:	Consumable Costs: Contract Services Costs:



# STRATEGIC PLAN 2019-2024



**Objective 4C Develop and implement a comprehensive plan to address the maintenance and replacement of current and future IT systems.**

<b>Timeframe</b>	12 months	<b>Assigned to:</b>
<b>Critical Tasks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify a staff member to be the head liaison of IT, allowing all departmental IT issues to be coordinated with the liaison.</li> <li>Liaison will establish organization IT needs after reviewing detailed inventory of current IT hardware and software currently utilized.</li> <li>The needs assessment will be conducted with the assistance of the outside IT consultant.</li> <li>The liaison will create findings and recommendations based upon needs assessment.</li> <li>The needs assessment will be presented to the Fire Chief and other necessary staff members needed to assist with the implementation of the recommendations.</li> <li>The liaison will present the assessment and recommendations to the fire commission.</li> <li>Seek approval of action plans, including funding.</li> <li>The liaison's assessment and recommendations will be used to create the IT proposed budget each year.</li> </ul>	

<b>Funding Estimate</b>	Capital Costs: Personnel Costs:	Consumable Costs: Contract Services Costs:
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**Objective 4D Develop and implement a comprehensive plan to address the maintenance and replacement of current and future equipment.**

<b>Timeframe</b>	6 months	<b>Assigned to:</b>
<b>Critical Tasks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish overall equipment needs and criteria.</li> <li>Create equipment committee and establish oversight position to determine the needs of equipment maintenance and acquisition program.</li> <li>Have staff review current asset list at each station to verify actual equipment on hand and condition of each item.</li> <li>Create a report of findings and recommendations based upon the utilization of the updated asset, while focusing on the replacement plan.</li> <li>Committee will report findings and produce recommendations to the fire commission.</li> <li>Recommendations will be utilized in annual budget formation to assist the organization to achieve its mission.</li> <li>Committee will convene annually to evaluate progress of equipment replacement plan and make changes as necessary.</li> </ul>	

<b>Funding Estimate</b>	Capital Costs: Personnel Costs:	Consumable Costs: Contract Services Costs:
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# NORTH COUNTY FIRE/EMS

<b>Goal 5</b>	<b>Enhance internal communications by disseminating clear and concise info throughout the organization.</b>	
<b>Objective 5A</b>	<b>Identify current internal communications issues.</b>	
<b>Timeframe</b>	3 months	<b>Assigned to:</b>
<b>Critical Tasks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a committee consisting of one member of each rank.</li> <li>• Develop and disseminate a survey.</li> <li>• After 14 days, collect and analyze survey results.</li> <li>• Prioritize the communication issues.</li> <li>• Create a report of findings for the leadership team with recommendations for any revisions.</li> </ul>	
<b>Funding Estimate</b>	Capital Costs: Personnel Costs:	Consumable Costs: Contract Services Costs:
<b>Objective 5B</b>	<b>Develop a best practice for communicating information within the organization.</b>	
<b>Timeframe</b>	3 months	<b>Assigned to:</b>
<b>Critical Tasks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research best practices.</li> <li>• Select and create an intuitive communication model.</li> <li>• Develop requisite infrastructure for selected model.</li> <li>• Draft procedures for communication within the organization.</li> <li>• Seek final approval from the fire chief.</li> </ul>	
<b>Funding Estimate</b>	Capital Costs: Personnel Costs:	Consumable Costs: Contract Services Costs:
<b>Objective 5C</b>	<b>Train employees on the best practices for communicating within the organization.</b>	
<b>Timeframe</b>	2 months	<b>Assigned to:</b>
<b>Critical Tasks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a training process and plan.</li> <li>• Implement the selected training plan.</li> <li>• Establish a confirmation process to ensure all personnel receive training.</li> <li>• Create a report of findings for the leadership team with recommendations for any revisions.</li> </ul>	
<b>Funding Estimate</b>	Capital Costs: Personnel Costs:	Consumable Costs: Contract Services Costs:
<b>Objective 5D</b>	<b>Evaluate the effectiveness of the implemented communication plan.</b>	
<b>Timeframe</b>	1 month	<b>Assigned to:</b>
<b>Critical Tasks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disseminate the communication plan to all members.</li> <li>• Archive previous communication plans and models for research purposes.</li> <li>• Establish an end-date for the current communication process.</li> </ul>	
<b>Funding Estimate</b>	Capital Costs: Personnel Costs:	Consumable Costs: Contract Services Costs:





# STRATEGIC PLAN 2019-2024



<b>Objective 5E</b>	<b>Revise communication plan, as needed.</b>	
<b>Timeframe</b>	2 months	<b>Assigned to:</b>
<b>Critical Tasks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create an on-line survey to collect data from all employees.</li> <li>• Disseminate the survey to all employees.</li> <li>• Analyze the survey results.</li> <li>• Prioritize a list of items needing improvement.</li> <li>• Hold a meeting between the committee and all members to discuss the items needing improvement.</li> <li>• Create a report of findings for the leadership team with recommendations for any further action.</li> </ul>	
<b>Funding Estimate</b>	<b>Capital Costs:</b> <b>Personnel Costs:</b>	<b>Consumable Costs:</b> <b>Contract Services Costs:</b>



**Department Stakeholders Work Session**





# NORTH COUNTY FIRE/EMS

<b>Goal 6</b>	<b>Provide a safe and effective training program to fulfill the mission of the organization.</b>	
<b>Objective 6A</b>	<b>Improve EMS training to ensure it meets the needs of the organization.</b>	
<b>Timeframe</b>	6 months	<b>Assigned to:</b>
<b>Critical Tasks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish a committee to evaluate critical performance indicators.</li> <li>• Survey career EMS providers to establish a list of training deficiencies.</li> <li>• Prioritize the list of established deficiencies.</li> <li>• Develop training objectives to correct noted deficiencies.</li> <li>• Hold a meeting to include labor and management to discuss proposed changes.</li> <li>• Implement plan to address each training objective.</li> <li>• Re-evaluate critical performance indicators.</li> <li>• Use existing quality assurance processes to comply with standards.</li> </ul>	
<b>Funding Estimate</b>	Capital Costs: Personnel Costs:	Consumable Costs: Contract Services Costs:
<b>Objective 6B</b>	<b>Improve fire suppression training to ensure it meets the needs of the organization.</b>	
<b>Timeframe</b>	4 months	<b>Assigned to:</b>
<b>Critical Tasks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish a committee to determine how the department meets NFPA standards.</li> <li>• Survey career firefighters to determine a prioritized list of fire suppression training deficiencies.</li> <li>• Hold a meeting to include labor and management to discuss proposed changes.</li> <li>• Implement the training plan to correct fire suppression training deficiencies.</li> <li>• Re-evaluate compliance with adopted NFPA standards.</li> <li>• Establish the training battalion chief as the point of contact for determining effectiveness of the changes.</li> </ul>	
<b>Funding Estimate</b>	Capital Costs: Personnel Costs:	Consumable Costs: Contract Services Costs:
<b>Objective 6C</b>	<b>Improve recruit training to ensure it meets the needs of the organization.</b>	
<b>Timeframe</b>	6 months	<b>Assigned to:</b>
<b>Critical Tasks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish a committee to determine needed changes in the training and equipping of fire recruits.</li> <li>• Establish standards for academy instructors and officers.</li> <li>• Develop training objectives to support and guide academy instructors and officers.</li> <li>• Implement the training plan and objectives.</li> <li>• Re-evaluate the changes to determine their effectiveness.</li> </ul>	
<b>Funding Estimate</b>	Capital Costs: Personnel Costs:	Consumable Costs: Contract Services Costs:



# STRATEGIC PLAN 2019-2024



**Objective 6D Improve technical rescue training to ensure it meets the needs of the organization.**

**Timeframe** 6 months **Assigned to:**

**Critical Tasks**

- Establish a committee to evaluate how the organization will train to currently established standards.
- Survey career firefighters to determine a list of needed changes to technical rescue.
- Develop training objectives to correct the noted deficiencies.
- Hold a meeting to include labor and management to discuss proposed changes.
- Implement the training plan.
- Develop standards for all personnel in the technical rescue program.
- Use the technical rescue committee to evaluate if the changes are effective.

**Funding Estimate** Capital Costs: Consumable Costs:  
Personnel Costs: Contract Services Costs:

**Objective 6E Improve regionalized training to ensure it meets the needs of the organization.**

**Timeframe** 6 months **Assigned to:**

**Critical Tasks**

- Establish a committee to evaluate critical performance indicators for regionalized training.
- Survey all members who will be involved in the regionalization process to determine possible deficiencies.
- Prioritize a list of noted deficiencies for the regionalization process.
- Develop training objectives for noted deficiencies.
- Hold a meeting to include labor and management to discuss proposed changes.
- Implement action plan for the regionalization process.
- Re-evaluate critical performance indicators.
- Use existing quality assurance processes to ensure compliance with established standards.

**Funding Estimate** Capital Costs: Consumable Costs:  
Personnel Costs: Contract Services Costs:





# NORTH COUNTY FIRE/EMS

<b>Goal 7</b>	<b>Prepare for, pursue, achieve and maintain international accreditation to better serve our community and to embrace excellence.</b>	
<b>Objective 7A</b>	<b>Form team or committee structures with management components as needed to pursue and maintain accreditation.</b>	
<b>Timeframe</b>	30 days	<b>Assigned to:</b>
<b>Critical Tasks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify the needed team or committee structure(s) for the various components of the accreditation process.</li> <li>• Create the management oversight positions to lead the teams or committees, as well as the process overall.</li> <li>• Establish team or committee member criteria.</li> <li>• Determine the composition of the teams or committees.</li> <li>• Solicit participation to meet the composition of the teams or committees.</li> <li>• Develop and complete the selection process.</li> <li>• Provide for the needed educational components provided through the Commission on Fire Accreditation International to ensure the relevant members have the needed training.</li> </ul>	
<b>Funding Estimate</b>	Capital Costs: Personnel Costs:	Consumable Costs: Contract Services Costs:
<b>Objective 7B</b>	<b>Prepare a community-driven strategic plan.</b>	
<b>Timeframe</b>	3 months and on-going	<b>Assigned to:</b>
<b>Critical Tasks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hold an external stakeholder meeting where community members provide feedback on program priorities, service expectations, concerns and strengths perceived about NCFE.</li> <li>• Provide internal stakeholder work sessions to evaluate (and update if necessary) the mission, vision and values; determine internal strengths and weaknesses, external opportunities and threats; establish critical issues and service gaps, determine goals and objectives to achieve over five years.</li> <li>• Determine a work plan for the accomplishment of each goal and implement the plan.</li> <li>• Annually evaluate objectives accomplished with the plan.</li> <li>• Report annual plan progress to internal and external stakeholders.</li> </ul>	
<b>Funding Estimate</b>	Capital Costs: Personnel Costs:	Consumable Costs: Contract Services Costs:
<b>Objective 7C</b>	<b>Conduct a community hazards and risk assessment and publish a Community Risk Assessment - Standards of Cover document.</b>	
<b>Timeframe</b>	6 – 12 months	<b>Assigned to:</b>
<b>Critical Tasks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Obtain instruction on hazard and risk assessment, and standards of cover preparation.</li> <li>• Perform community hazards and risk assessment.</li> <li>• Evaluate historical community emergency response performance and coverage.</li> <li>• Establish benchmark and baseline emergency response performance objectives.</li> <li>• Establish and publish the Community Risk Assessment - Standards of Cover.</li> <li>• Maintain, and annually update the Standards of Cover document.</li> </ul>	
<b>Funding Estimate</b>	Capital Costs: Personnel Costs:	Consumable Costs: Contract Services Costs:



# STRATEGIC PLAN 2019-2024



<b>Objective 7D</b>	<b>Conduct and document a self-assessment of the department utilizing the CPSE/CFAI Fire and Emergency Services Self-Assessment Manual criteria.</b>	
<b>Timeframe</b>	6 months	<b>Assigned to:</b>
<b>Critical Tasks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Obtain instruction on writing a CFAI self-assessment manual.</li> <li>• Assign self-assessment manual category and criterion writing to the department accreditation committee/team members as appropriate.</li> <li>• Review self-assessment and ensure all reference items are in order.</li> </ul>	
<b>Funding Estimate</b>	Capital Costs: Personnel Costs:	Consumable Costs: Contract Services Costs:
<b>Objective 7E</b>	<b>Achieve agency accreditation by the CFAI.</b>	
<b>Timeframe</b>	4 months	<b>Assigned to:</b>
<b>Critical Tasks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Apply for “Candidate Agency” status with the CFAI.</li> <li>• Prepare for CFAI Peer Assessor Team visit.</li> <li>• Upload Strategic Plan, Standards of Cover, and Self-Assessment Categories and Criterion for review and comment by CFAI Peer Team.</li> <li>• Host CFAI Peer Team site visit for accreditation review.</li> <li>• Receive CFAI Peer Team recommendation to CFAI for Accredited status.</li> <li>• Receive vote during the CFAI hearings in favor of Accredited status.</li> </ul>	
<b>Funding Estimate</b>	Capital Costs: Personnel Costs:	Consumable Costs: Contract Services Costs:
<b>Objective 7F</b>	<b>Maintain accreditation with the CFAI.</b>	
<b>Timeframe</b>	Ongoing	<b>Assigned to:</b>
<b>Critical Tasks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Submit required Annual Compliance Reports.</li> <li>• Attend CFAI “Dayroom Discussion” web-meetings for continued education.</li> <li>• Participate in the accreditation process by providing “peer assessors” for external department review and identification of possible best practices.</li> <li>• Participate in the annual CPSE Excellence Conference for continued education and networking with other accreditation teams and accredited agencies.</li> <li>• Submit Annual Compliance Reports as required by CFAI policies.</li> <li>• Establish succession development of internal accreditation team in preparation for next accreditation cycle.</li> </ul>	
<b>Funding Estimate</b>	Capital Costs: Personnel Costs:	Consumable Costs: Contract Services Costs:





# NORTH COUNTY FIRE/EMS

## Vision

On the final day of the process, the CPSE presented a strategic plan vision of where the organization will be in the future if the strategic plan is accomplished. This is not to override the department's global vision but rather, to confirm the futurity of the work that was designed by the department stakeholders.

This vision is intended as a target of excellence to strive toward and provides a basis for its goals and objectives.

**“Vision is knowing who you are, where you’re going, and what will guide your journey”**

Ken Blanchard

### North County Fire/EMS' 2024 Vision

is to be widely known as an accredited organization that embraces excellence. We will continue to fulfill our commitment to reduce risk and enhance the health, welfare, and preparedness of our entire community, while embodying all core values as we deliver premier all-hazard responses and services. This vision, our true futurity, will only become reality by striving to accomplish our goals.

#### **We will become this future by:**

Needing to always pursue efficacies for the good of those we serve. With our concentration on the management of our physical resources, we will be prepared now and in the future for those challenges we will encounter. As we engage in a responsible financial strategy, we will demonstrate our integrity as good stewards of those fiscal resources entrusted to us. Through this, we will embrace innovation to always provide a return for all stakeholders.

Continuously focusing on family, as we invest in our most important asset, our members. With our emphasis on workforce development and strengthened training, we will ensure we remain mission-based and ready to meet our calling. In the course of this, North County will be a safer and better place to live, work, and play, while striving to be the best of the best.

Formulating processes toward greater transparency and communication. Our concentration on external communications will ensure an informed public and will further bolster our relationships with them. As we improve the way we communicate internally, more effectiveness will be revealed, and consistency will be realized. Altogether, we will see a relationship that supports our dedication to our calling of service.

Embracing our history, while always persevering for future change. Together we will unceasingly do what is best for our community in all that we do, while striving to bring this vision to fruition.



## Performance Measurement

To assess and ensure that an organization is delivering on the promises made in their strategic plan, the organization's leaders must determine performance measures for which they are fully accountable. As output measurement can be challenging, the organization must focus on the assessment of progress toward achieving improved output. Jim Collins states, "What matters is not finding the perfect indicator, but settling upon a *consistent and intelligent* method of assessing your output results, and then tracking your trajectory with rigor."<sup>2</sup> Organizations must further be prepared to revisit and revise their goals, objectives, and performance measures to keep up with accomplishments and environmental changes.

To establish that the department's strategic plan is achieving results, performance measurement data will be implemented and integrated as part of the plan. An integrated process, known as "Managing for Results," will be utilized, which is based upon:

- The identification of strategic goals and objectives;
- The determination of resources necessary to achieve them;
- The analyzing and evaluation of performance data; and
- The use of that data to drive continuous improvement in the organization.

- **If you don't measure the results of your plan, you can't tell success from failure.**
- **If you can't see success, you can't reward it.**
- **If you can't reward success, you're probably rewarding failure.**
- **If you can't see success, you can't learn from it.**
- **If you can't recognize failure, you can't correct it.**
- **If you can demonstrate results, you can win public support.**

Reinventing Government

David Osborn and Ted Gaebler

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<sup>2</sup> Collins Good to Great and the Social Sectors. Boulder, 2009





# NORTH COUNTY FIRE/EMS

A “family of measures” typically utilized to indicate and measure performance includes:

- **Inputs** - Value of resource used to produce an output.
- **Outputs** – Quantifiable units produced which are activity-oriented and measurable.
- **Efficiency** - Inputs used per output (or outputs per input).
- **Service Quality** - The degree to which customers are satisfied with a program, or how accurately or timely a service is provided.
- **Outcome** - Qualitative consequences associated with a program/service; i.e., the ultimate benefit to the customer. Focused on the “why” of providing a service.

## The Success of the Strategic Plan

The department has approached its desire to develop and implement a strategic plan by asking for and receiving input from the community and members of the organization during the development stage of the planning process. To assist in the development of this plan, the department used professional guidance to conduct a community-driven strategic planning process. The success of this strategic plan will not depend upon implementation of the goals and their related objectives, but from support received from the authority having jurisdiction, the members of the organization, and the community-at-large.

**“No matter how much you have achieved, you will always be merely good relative to what you can become. Greatness is an inherently dynamic process, not an end point.”**

Good to Great and the Social Sectors  
Jim Collins

Provided the community-driven strategic planning process is kept dynamic and supported by effective leadership and active participation, it will be a considerable opportunity to unify department and community stakeholders. This can be accomplished through a jointly developed understanding of organizational direction, focusing on all vested parties working to achieve the mission, goals, and vision. Further consideration must be made on how the organization will measure and be accountable for its progress and successes.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Matthews (2005). *Strategic Planning and Management for Library Managers*





# STRATEGIC PLAN 2019-2024



## Glossary of Terms, Acronyms, and Initialisms

<b>Accreditation</b>	A process by which an association or agency evaluates and recognizes a program of study or an institution as meeting certain predetermined standards or qualifications. It applies only to institutions or agencies and their programs of study or their services. Accreditation ensures a basic level of quality in the services received from an agency.
<b>ALS</b>	Advanced Life Support
<b>BLS</b>	Basic Life Support
<b>CERT</b>	Community emergency response team
<b>CFAI</b>	Commission on Fire Accreditation International
<b>CPSE</b>	Center for Public Safety Excellence
<b>CRP</b>	Community resource paramedic
<b>CRR</b>	Community risk reduction
<b>Customer(s)</b>	The person or group who establishes the requirement of a process and receives or uses the outputs of that process; or the person or entity directly served by the department or agency.
<b>DNR</b>	Department of Natural Resources
<b>Efficiency</b>	A performance indication where inputs are measured per unit of output (or vice versa).
<b>EMS</b>	Emergency Medical Services
<b>Environment</b>	Circumstances and conditions that interact with and affect an organization. These can include economic, political, cultural, and physical conditions inside or outside the boundaries of the organization
<b>FEMA</b>	Federal Emergency Management Agency
<b>FTE</b>	Full-time employee
<b>IAFC</b>	International Association of Fire Chiefs
<b>IAFF</b>	International Association of Firefighters
<b>IFSAC</b>	International Fires Service Accreditation Council
<b>IFSTA</b>	International Fire Service Training Association
<b>Input</b>	A performance indication where the value of resources is used to produce an output.
<b>IT</b>	Information Technology
<b>MCO</b>	Multi-company operations





# NORTH COUNTY FIRE/EMS

<b>Mission</b>	An enduring statement of purpose; the organization's reason for existence. Describes what the organization does, for whom it does it, and how it does it.
<b>NCFE</b>	North County Fire/EMS
<b>NFPA</b>	National Fire Protection Association
<b>NIST</b>	National Institute for Science and Technology
<b>Outcome</b>	A performance indication where qualitative consequences are associated with a program/service; i.e., the ultimate benefit to the customer.
<b>Output</b>	A performance indication where a quality or number of units produced is identified.
<b>PPE</b>	Personal protective equipment
<b>PTE</b>	Part-time employee
<b>SCSO</b>	Snohomish County Sheriff's Office
<b>SOP</b>	Standard Operating Procedure
<b>Stakeholder</b>	Any person, group, or organization that can place a claim on, or influence the organization's resources or outputs, is affected by those outputs, or has an interest in or expectation of the organization.
<b>Strategic Goal</b>	A broad target that defines how the agency will carry out its mission over a specific period of time. An aim. The final result of an action. Something to accomplish in assisting the agency to move forward.
<b>Strategic Objective</b>	A specific, measurable accomplishment required to realize the successful completion of a strategic goal.
<b>Strategic Plan</b>	A long-range planning document that defines the mission of the agency and broadly identifies how it will be accomplished, and that provides the framework for more detailed annual and operational plans.
<b>Strategic Planning</b>	The continuous and systematic process whereby guiding members of an organization make decisions about its future, develop procedures and operations to achieve that future, and determine how success is to be measured.
<b>Strategy</b>	A description of how a strategic objective will be achieved. A possibility. A plan or methodology for achieving a goal.
<b>SWOT</b>	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats.
<b>Vision</b>	An idealized view of a desirable and potentially achievable future state - where or what an organization would like to be in the future.
<b>WSP</b>	Washington State Patrol
<b>WSRB</b>	Washington Surveying and Rating Bureau
<b>YMCA</b>	Young Men's Christian Agency



# STRATEGIC PLAN 2019-2024



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# NORTH COUNTY FIRE/EMS

## Appendix 1

### Community Expectations

Understanding what the community expects of its fire service organization is critically important to developing a long-range perspective. With this knowledge, internal emphasis may need to be changed or bolstered to fulfill the community needs.

Respondents were asked to list, in priority order, up to five subjects relative to the expectations they have for the North County Fire/EMS. Responses were then analyzed for themes and weighted. The weighting of the prioritized responses was as follows: if it was the respondent's first entry, then it received five weighted points. Weighting gradually decreased so that if it was the respondent's fifth entry, then it received one weighted point. The weighted themes were then sorted from the highest cumulative weight to the lowest cumulative weight and listed below. The numbers in the parentheses are the cumulative weighted value that correlated with the theme identified. While the themes are listed in prioritized, weighted order, all responses were important in the planning process. The following are the expectation responses of the community stakeholders:

#### Community Expectations of the North County Fire/EMS (in priority order)

1. Quick response time. Provide excellent service - quick response time. Quick response time. Prompt response time. That when I call 911, the fire department will show up in a matter of minutes (less than 10). Respond quickly and efficiently to all calls for service. (29)
2. Fire stations staffed 24/7/365. Properly staffed. Recruit, hire and training a professional workforce. Consistently staff apparatus with enough personnel to accomplish the mission - no brown outs. (15)
3. Trained to interact with all works of life individuals. Trained in all fire/EMS/rescue aspects. Adequate, appropriate training. Consistent training to keep employees at the top of their skills. (13)
4. EMS response from the nearest station. The service I receive from an EMS provider is appropriate, adequate, and competent. Respond to medical calls with appropriate personnel to handle both BLS and ALS calls in a timely manner. (13)
5. Cost effective spending on equipment and training. Fiscal responsibility. Proper use of funding. Good stewards of resources. (7)
6. Fire response from the nearest station. Respond to fire calls with enough resources to keep the fire to the room of origin as much as possible. (7)
7. Training for the community, reference risk. Public safety training. (6)



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8. Interaction with other organizations. Collaborate with other public safety organizations in the region. (5)
9. Crews to engage with the community. Be involved in community activities - make sure they know who the fire department is. (5)
10. Functional and adequate amount of apparatus. Adequate/appropriate equipment. (5)
11. To safely transport me or a family member, if EMS transport is required. (3)
12. Prepare for unplanned disasters, events within the district. (3)
13. That I will be treated courteously by firefighters/EMS personnel. (2)
14. Risk reduction. (1)
15. Transparency and communication with citizens/stakeholders. (1)
16. That my community's firefighters are and remain professional. (1)
17. Plan appropriately for future growth and funding. (1)





# NORTH COUNTY FIRE/EMS

## Areas of Community Concern

The planning process would be incomplete without an expression from the community stakeholders regarding concerns about the organization. Some areas of concern may in fact be a weakness within the delivery system, while some weaknesses may also be misperceptions based upon a lack of information, understanding, or incorrect information.

Respondents were asked to list, in priority order, up to five concerns they have about or for the department. Responses were then analyzed for themes and weighted. The weighting of the prioritized concerns was as follows: if it was the respondent's first entry, then it received five weighted points. Weighting gradually decreased so that if it was the respondent's fifth entry, then it received one weighted point. The weighted themes were then sorted from the highest cumulative weight to the lowest cumulative weight and listed below. The numbers in the parentheses are the cumulative weighted value that correlated with the theme identified. While the themes are listed in prioritized, weighted order, all responses were important in the planning process. The following are the concerns of the community stakeholders prioritized and weighted accordingly:

### Areas of Community Concern about the North County Fire/EMS (verbatim, in priority order)

1. Turnover of staff. Lack of staffing. Are current staffing levels adequate? Staffing/recruitment. That sufficient staffing exists each day. (17)
2. Wasted time and money. Stable and adequate funding. Funding today and future funding opportunities and options. (15)
3. Response times - how often are units leaving their first due area for activities other than 911 response? Area coverage and response times when multiple incidents area going on in the district. Being able to respond to my call for help in a timely manner. Response and deployment of assets throughout the district. (12)
4. Planning for future growth and needs of the service area. Having sufficient time/resources for planning for growth on a continual basis. Population growth - Snohomish County is growing at a fast pace - are we prepared? (10)
5. Interaction with community businesses may not be a positive one. (5)
6. Lack of training/making sure training fits this area. (5)
7. Respond to medical calls with appropriate personnel to handle both BLS and ALS calls in a timely manner. (5)
8. Community opinion of interactions with fire not positive. (4)





9. "Browned out" fire stations. (4)
10. Sending staff to mobilizations with lack of staffing to backfill. Stations being browned out so crews could deploy to wildland incidents. (4)
11. Ability to respond to fires in rural areas of the district. (4)
12. That there are sufficient resources to handle my needs when required. (4)
13. Is North County RFA willing to participate in a larger effort at merger for efficiency and growth? (4)
14. Respond to fire calls with enough resources to keep the fire to the room of origin as much as possible. (4)
15. That the vehicles/apparatus are properly maintained and replaced with newer apparatus when needed. (3)
16. Communication of information to other staff of pertinent information. (2)
17. Maintaining crew response readiness - in their area. (2)
18. Frequent flyers/super-users. (1)
19. Increase in taxes. (1)

## Positive Community Feedback

The CPSE promotes the belief that, for a strategic plan to be valid, the community's view on the organization's strengths must be established. Needless efforts are often put forth in over-developing areas that are already successful. However, proper utilization and promotion of the strengths may often help the organization overcome or offset some of the identified weaknesses.

### Positive Community Comments about the North County Fire/EMS (verbatim, in no particular order)

- Open to community input.
- Relations with other agencies.
- Positive community image.
- The chief has the best interest of the community in mind.
- The leadership of the department is focused on making the department a more professional organization.
- The administration personnel are friendly and courteous.





# NORTH COUNTY FIRE/EMS

- The effort being made are to utilize taxpayer's money as efficiently as possible.
- I believe the community engagement by this agency is outstanding.
- The staff and leadership are responsive and professional.
- I have greatly appreciated how well North County works with its law enforcement partners.
- Progressive.
- Leadership.
- Vision.
- Community based decisions.
- Forward looking and engaged administration.
- Impressed with the consolidation of the cities of Bryant and Arlington. Good move to group the service area.
- Fall prevention class talk impressive and very well done.
- Interaction with older adults in the community very positive.
- Great interactions with chiefs and businesses.
- This process I feel is a great step forward to asking for help from the community as a great start.

## Other Thoughts and Comments

The community was asked to share any other comments they had about the department or its services. The following written comments were received:

### Other Community Comments about the North County Fire/EMS (verbatim, in no particular order)

- I would like to see more engagement with different communities in the district.
- Would like to see events or info sessions for communities to engage with the department to learn how the department responds to our areas.
- Excited to follow the outcome!
- I live in a large rural area and my use of the fire department and EMS system over the last 10 years has been zero.
- The interactions with the crews have not been positive. Although I have seen some of these bad habits change.
- Try to answer EMS calls to medical facilities with one rig.





# STRATEGIC PLAN 2019-2024



## Appendix 2

Supporting Services of the North County Fire/EMS		
Training Division	Local businesses	Law enforcement
Water Department	Public Utility District	Local school district
State Department of Public Safety	Mutual aid departments	Snohomish 911
Tribal nations	Local hospitals	Urgent care clinics
Local elected officials	IAFF	US Coast Guard
Vendors	Public Works	IAFF Local 4033
Colleges	IAFC	FEMA
US Navy	Public Health District	Railroads
Department of Emergency Management	WSP Fire Bureau	NW Incident Management Team
Chaplains	State Department of Health	Snohomish County EMS
Department of Homeland Security	National Fire Academy	Puget Sound Clean Air
CPSE	Child protective services	CERT
NIST	IFSAC	IFSTA
NFPA	Canadian agreements	Administrative staff
Finance	State Department of Natural Resources	Washington State Council of Firefighters
Department of Ecology		





# NORTH COUNTY FIRE/EMS

## Appendix 3

### Strengths

It is important for any organization to identify its strengths to ensure that it can provide the services requested by the community, and that strengths are consistent with the issues facing the organization. Often, identification of organizational strengths leads to the channeling of efforts toward primary community needs that match those strengths. Programs that do not match organizational strengths, or the primary function of the organization, should be seriously reviewed to evaluate the rate of return on staff time and allocated funds.

Through a consensus process, the department stakeholders identified the department’s strengths as follows:

Strengths of the North County Fire/EMS	
Service we provide to our community	Loyal employees to our community
Joint training with other agencies	Open/acceptance to new ideas and concepts
Professionalism/uniforms	Officer development
Systems, processes to address challenges	Financial stability
Pride and ownership in our department	Grants acquisition
Training division/employee certification	Aligned regional concept
Public trust/reputation	Range of experience
Adaptability	Broad commission experience/values
Quality equipment/ correct equipment	Station locations
Relationship with tribes, cities, schools, county	Proactive education outreach
Recruitment reputation-building PTE staff base	Young work force FTE (low turnover)
Call volume capacity	Good external partners
Family culture	Resiliency
Fire academy involvement	High employee expectations
Strategic planning/ CPSE	Administrative infrastructure
Age of fleet	Unified labor force
Software/CBT/Target Solutions/Invest in technology	Financial investment into employee’s professional development



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## Weaknesses

For any organization to either begin or to continue to move progressively forward, it must not only be able to identify its strengths, but also those areas where it functions poorly or not at all. These areas of needed enhancements are not the same as threats to be identified later in this document, but rather those day-to-day issues and concerns that may slow or inhibit progress. The following items were identified by the department stakeholders as weaknesses:

Weaknesses of the North County Fire/EMS	
Total years of service	Office space and facilities
Lack of experience	Preparedness for growth
Succession planning	Infrastructure
Previous negative perceptions	Fleet age of staff vehicles and apparatus
Low staffing numbers	Lack of second set of PPE
“We’ve always done it that way”	Over-all response times not met
No peer fitness program	Cancer prevention program lacking
Station placement for future growth	Lack of EMS training
Lack of commercial fire inspection	Lack of public education
Personality conflict	Crew continuity
All part-time stations	Implementation phase of programs/ concepts
More PTE vs. FTE (too few full-time employees)	Coverage gaps based on geographical area/rural
Cross-staffing (dedicated apparatus)	Rural taxation limitation
Following chain of command	Reactive culture
If you don’t like it, leave!	Lack of support to individual grow and change
Accountability	Position training (acting, etc.)
Communication process - up and down	Out-dated equipment
Performance evaluation process	Age of stations
Culture	Generation gaps
1% property tax limitation	Large response area
Terrastar	Duality and honesty
Consistency between crews ... staffing levels, expectations, experience	





# NORTH COUNTY FIRE/EMS

## Opportunities

The opportunities for an organization depend on the identification of strengths and weaknesses and how they can be enhanced. The focus of opportunities is not solely on existing service, but on expanding and developing new possibilities both inside and beyond the traditional service area. The department stakeholders identified the following potential opportunities:

Opportunities for the North County Fire/EMS	
Training regionalization	Financial regionalization
Administrational regionalization	Partnership with colleges
Economic development – impact fees	Union assisted college education
Join apprenticeship training committee	External organization success/failures
Local paramedic academy	Local fire academy
Regional training facility – Cadman	CPSE
Capitalize on community relationships	Grant funding
Washington Surveying and Rating Bureau	CFAI Accreditation
Mergers	Recruitment and retention
Union training conference	Local tribal partnerships
Private training groups	Outside agency partnerships (SCSO)
Partnership with the school district	To work with hospitals/MCO funding
Training consortium	Working with the state DNR
Veterans apprenticeship program	Technological advances
Accountable communities of health funding – community resource paramedics	Emergency management – large-scale event



# STRATEGIC PLAN 2019-2024



## Threats

By recognizing possible threats, an organization can reduce the potential for loss. Fundamental to the success of any strategic plan is the understanding that threats are not completely and/or directly controlled by the organization. Some of the current and potential threats identified by the department stakeholders were as follows:

Potential Threats to the North County Fire/EMS	
Economic downturn	Changes in laws/politics/funding
Public trust/image	Ability to handle natural disasters
Legal liability	Information systems security
Operating costs	Social media negativity/misinformation
Opioid epidemic – staff/resources shortage	Mental health crisis impact
Inflation	Vendor availability/water/diesel/gas
General epidemics	Terrorism
Loss of taxable property	Lack of qualified workforce
Social values	Target hazards
Cost of healthcare	Infrastructure degradation
Old bad blood inhibiting mergers	Maintaining relevance amid societal changes
Parasitic mutual aid	The war on labor
Community growth without funding	Political radicals
Generational changes affecting blue collar workforce	Privatization organization – Northwest Ambulance and Fire
Set in your ways – public	Provide more with less – expectation city





# NORTH COUNTY FIRE/EMS

## Appendix 4

Critical and Service Gap Issues Identified by the Department Stakeholders	
Group 1	Group 2
<p>External Communications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Public perception</li> <li>○ Politics, demands, financial, etc.</li> <li>○ Public education</li> <li>○ Response area size</li> <li>○ Expanded services</li> <li>○ Cross-staffing</li> <li>○ Old negative perceptions</li> <li>○ Commercial fire inspection</li> </ul>	<p>External Communication</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Risk reduction</li> <li>○ Public education</li> <li>○ Department image</li> <li>○ Always done it that way</li> <li>○ Old negative perceptions</li> <li>○ Culture</li> <li>○ Don't like it, leave</li> <li>○ Lack of preparedness to grow</li> <li>○ Lack of public education</li> <li>○ Lack of commercial fire inspections</li> <li>○ Community interactions not positive</li> <li>○ Frequent flyers and super users</li> <li>○ Engagement with different communities</li> </ul>
<p>Human Resource Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Position training</li> <li>○ Performance evaluation process</li> <li>○ Consistency between crews, staffing levels, expectations, experience</li> <li>○ Culture</li> <li>○ Accountability</li> <li>○ Cancer prevention program</li> <li>○ No peer fitness program</li> <li>○ Succession planning</li> <li>○ Lack of EMS training</li> <li>○ Total years of service</li> <li>○ If you don't like it, leave</li> <li>○ Lack of support for individual growth and change</li> <li>○ Duality and honesty</li> </ul>	<p>Human Resources Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Years of service and lack of experience</li> <li>○ Succession planning</li> <li>○ Low staffing</li> <li>○ Always done it that way</li> <li>○ Lack of staff accountability</li> <li>○ Communication process</li> <li>○ Performance evaluation process</li> <li>○ Culture</li> <li>○ Don't like it, leave</li> <li>○ Cross-staffing</li> <li>○ Reactive culture</li> <li>○ Crew continuity</li> <li>○ Lack of support to grow or change</li> <li>○ Duality and honesty</li> <li>○ Browned out stations</li> <li>○ More FTE vs. PTE</li> <li>○ All PT stations</li> <li>○ Accountability</li> </ul>



# STRATEGIC PLAN 2019-2024



## Critical and Service Gap Issues Identified by the Department Stakeholders (continued)

Group 1	Group 2
<p>Economic Capabilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 1% property tax</li> <li>○ Rural taxation limitation</li> <li>○ Loss of taxable property</li> <li>○ Inflation</li> <li>○ All PTE stations</li> <li>○ Too few FTE</li> </ul>	<p>Finance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Stewardship of available resources</li> <li>○ Time and money</li> <li>○ Brown out stations</li> <li>○ Tax limitations</li> <li>○ Planning for growth</li> </ul>
<p>Physical Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Station placement for future growth</li> <li>○ Fleet age of staff vehicles and apparatus</li> <li>○ Office space and facilities</li> <li>○ PPE</li> <li>○ Equipment</li> <li>○ Terrastar</li> <li>○ Preparedness for growth</li> <li>○ Infrastructure</li> <li>○ Age of stations</li> </ul>	<p>Physical Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Aging stations</li> <li>○ Station placement</li> <li>○ Office space and facilities</li> <li>○ Infrastructure</li> <li>○ Fleet age of staff vehicles and apparatus</li> <li>○ Lack of PPE</li> <li>○ Equipment</li> <li>○ Overall response times and coverage gaps</li> </ul>
<p>Internal Communications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Crew continuity</li> <li>○ Teamwork</li> <li>○ Chain of command</li> <li>○ Personality conflict</li> <li>○ Professionalism and respect</li> <li>○ Overall response times</li> <li>○ Checking email</li> <li>○ We've always done it that way</li> <li>○ Reactive culture</li> </ul>	<p>Training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Position training</li> <li>○ No peer fitness program</li> <li>○ Lack of cancer prevention training</li> <li>○ Lack of training for area</li> <li>○ Lack of EMS training</li> <li>○ Succession planning</li> </ul>

