East County Fire and Rescue

Strategic Plan

Integrity • Compassion • Professionalism • Equity

Acknowledgements

The district developed this strategic plan for the citizens we serve and the East County Fire and Rescue (ECFR) Board of Fire Commissioners.

- 2024 Board Chairperson Joshua Seeds

- 2023 Board Chairperson Martha Martin

- Board Vice Chairperson Mike Taggart

- Commissioner Sherry Petty

- Commissioner Steve Hofmaster

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Editorial Review

Sue Hartin

The strategic plan working group would also like to acknowledge the support and commitment of the district's full-time, part-time, and volunteer members in translating this plan into operational day-to-day reality.

Introduction

East County Fire and Rescue (ECFR) has implemented a comprehensive strategic planning process to guide its ongoing operations with a forward-looking orientation (ECFR, 2024). Use of integrated comprehensive planning reduces duplication of effort and maximizes the effectiveness of the district's planning process. Figure 1 illustrates the six components of the integrated comprehensive plan, their relationships to one another and connection to the district's annual budget process and work plan.

Figure 1. ECFR Integrated Comprehensive Plan Components
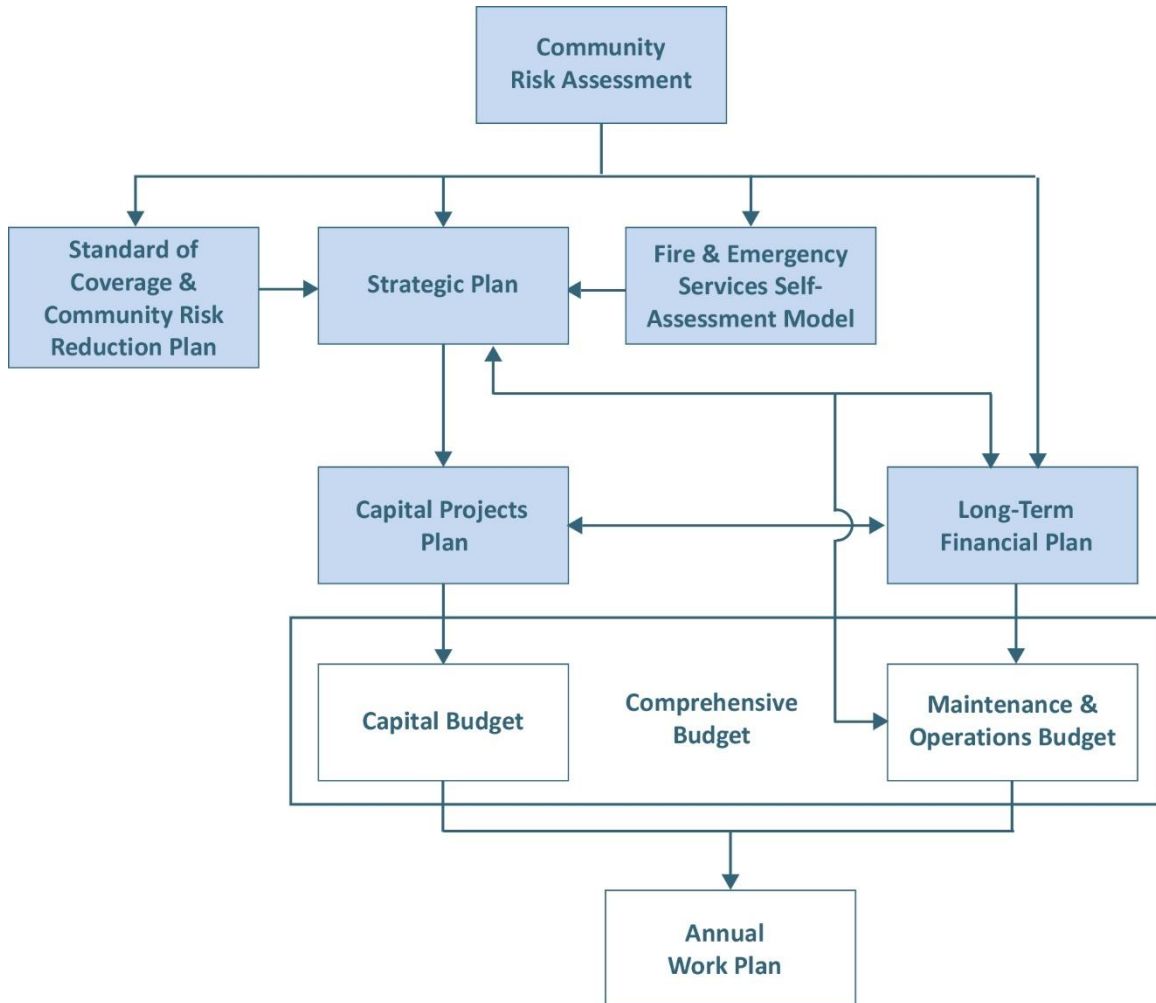
Volume 1-Community Risk Assessment: Each element of the district's comprehensive planning process is rooted in a sound understanding of the nature, characteristics, and risk profile of the community. This volume of the comprehensive plan provides an overview of the community including demographics, geography, economic profile, and critical infrastructure. In addition, it provides a comprehensive risk assessment for the district, and by fire management zone.

Volume 2-Strategic Plan: ECFR's strategic plan sets our organizational direction by establishing goals and identifies specific initiatives necessary to accomplish these goals and a means for measuring progress. This plan is a living document, intended to guide and support ongoing operations. The district has integrated the strategic plan with the district's budgetary and operational business planning processes.

Volume 3-Standard of Coverage, & Community Risk Reduction Plan: The standard of coverage (SOC) and community risk reduction (CRR) plan provides a rational and systematic method of reducing and responding to the risks identified in the community risk assessment. This document establishes baseline and benchmark response performance standards, provides a basis for measuring service delivery performance, and identifies strategies and performance measures for proactive risk reduction.

Volume 4-Fire and Emergency Services Self-Assessment Model: The *Fire and Emergency Services Self-Assessment Model (FESSAM)* (CPSE, 2020) provides a structured approach to examining the district's current performance, assessment of this performance against criteria established by the Center for Public Safety Excellence (CPSE) Commission on Fire Accreditation International (CFAI) and developing a plan for continuous improvement.

Volume 6-Capital Projects Plan: This volume of the integrated comprehensive plan establishes a long term, prioritized schedule of capital investments to ensure that the district has sufficient resources to fulfill its mission and repair or replacement of critical assets before they reach their end of useful life. The capital projects plan provides a basis for development of the district's annual capital budget.

The district develops an annual budget for all funds including general fund, capital projects fund, leave accrual fund, debt service fund and grant management fund. The district's annual budget and long-term financial plan provide additional details regarding budget structure and organization.

The annual work plan is a task focused plan that operationalizes the projects and programs funded in the district's annual budget.

Table of Contents
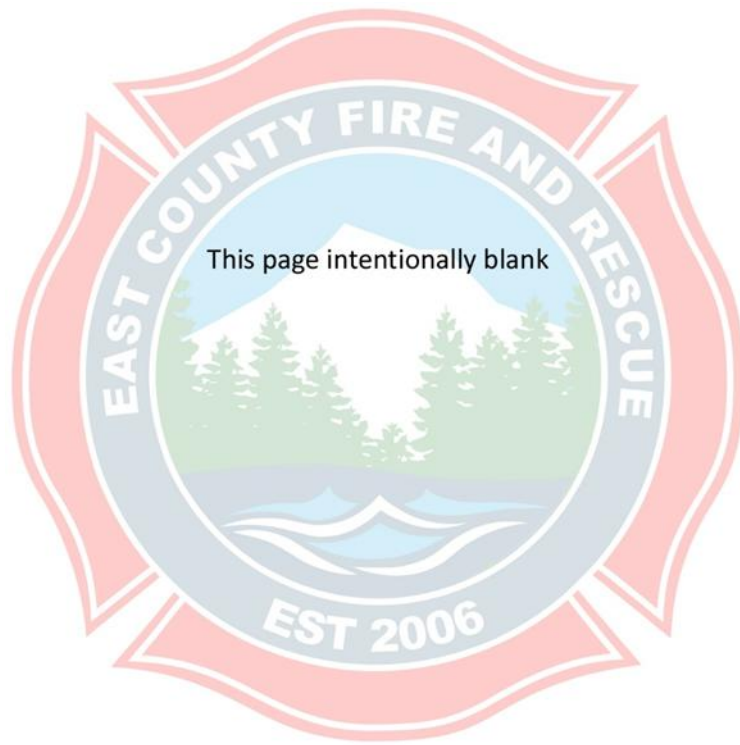
Executive Summary

East County Fire and Rescue has maintained a strategic plan since 2015 and a community risk assessment and standard of coverage since 2016. In 2023, the district began the process of developing an integrated comprehensive plan (ICP) to guide its ongoing operations with a forward-looking orientation. This planning process began with development of a long-term financial plan and revision of the district's strategic plan to address critical financial needs and chart a course for the future.

In his remarks at the National Defense Executive Reserve Conference in 1957, President Dwight D. Eisenhower stated that "Plans are worthless, but planning is everything" (The Eisenhower Presidential Library, 2011). However, contemporary research (Boyne & Walker, 2005) indicates that strategy content is more significant than process in its influence on government performance. It is likely that there is an element of truth to both perspectives!

The 2023 strategic planning process clarified the district's mission and values as well as establishing a vision of continuous improvement. In *Measure What Matters*, John Doerr (2018) stated "ideas are easy, execution is everything" (p. 6). The district's strategic planning process engaged with members across the organization as well as the board of fire commissioners elected to represent the community and oversee the delivery of fire and rescue services. This process resulted in generation of a diversity of excellent ideas, now it is time for execution.

Adoption of this strategic plan defines the board of fire commissioners' intent. Intent is comprised of purpose, method, and desired end state. As such, the district's strategic plan provides clarity of purpose and vision as well as set the district on the path of continuous improvement.

Other elements of the ICP such as the standard of coverage and long-term financial plan inform the strategic plan. Similarly, the strategic plan informs the other elements of the ICP. This integration ensures strategic, operational, and financial alignment delivery of fire and rescue services and achievement of the district's mission to improve community safety by reducing risk through education, prevention, and response.

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Strategic Planning

Alice asked the Cheshire Cat:

> Would you tell me please, which way I ought to go from here?
> That depends a good deal on where you want to get to, said the Cat.
> I don't much care where – said Alice.
> Then it doesn't matter which way you go, said the Cat.
> —so long as I get *somewhere*, Alice added as an explanation.
> Oh, you're sure to do that, said the Cat, if only you walk long enough (Carroll, L. 1998, p. 56).

Like Alice, organizations are sure to get somewhere. However, getting somewhere in particular requires an intended destination and a plan of action to reach it.

All public services are facing significant pressure with increasing demands for service, limited revenue, and challenging economic times. These changing conditions result in five implications for public sector organizations (Barber, Levy, & Mendonca, 2007).

- Increase productivity.

- Develop and maintain a close relationship with our constituents.

- Organizational changes to improve service.

- Develop a data driven culture.

- Attract and retain scarce talent.

ECFR's leaders; elected officials, managers, and members recognize the importance of meeting the community's needs while being good stewards of funds provided by our taxpayers. To work most effectively with our limited resources, ECFR has established and continues to refine its direction based on constructive efforts to meet well-defined community needs.

Strategic planning provides an opportunity to unify elected officials, managers, members, stakeholders, and customers through a collective understanding of where ECFR is going, how each of us can work to that common purpose and how we will measure success.

Community Focused Planning

To be successful, the voice of the community must continue to drive our operations and chart our course for the future.

> A community driven organization maintains a **focus** on the **needs and expectations**, both **spoken and unspoken** of customers, both **present and future**, in the creation and/or improvement of services provided (Federal Benchmarking Consortium, 1997).

ECFR examines its services and processes through the eyes of its customers on an ongoing basis. Planning for service delivery must integrate the community's preferences and requirements as well

as standards for performance, timeliness, and cost to provide the greatest value to the community. One of the greatest challenges in developing a plan of action is that such a plan must not only consider needs and expectations expressed by the community, but also data related to current service demands and demographics. Primarily, ECFR's planning must continue to be proactive, including present service delivery requirements as well as potential needs and expectations that may arise in the future. Figure 2 illustrates ECFR's strategic planning process.

Applied Strategic Planning and Balanced Scorecard

ECFR integrated concepts from the Applied Strategic Planning Model (Nolan, Goodstein, & Goodstein, 2008) and Balanced Score Card (Kaplan & Norton, 1996) to provide an effective framework for development of the district's strategic plan and ongoing strategic management processes.

Figure 2. Applied Strategic Planning Model
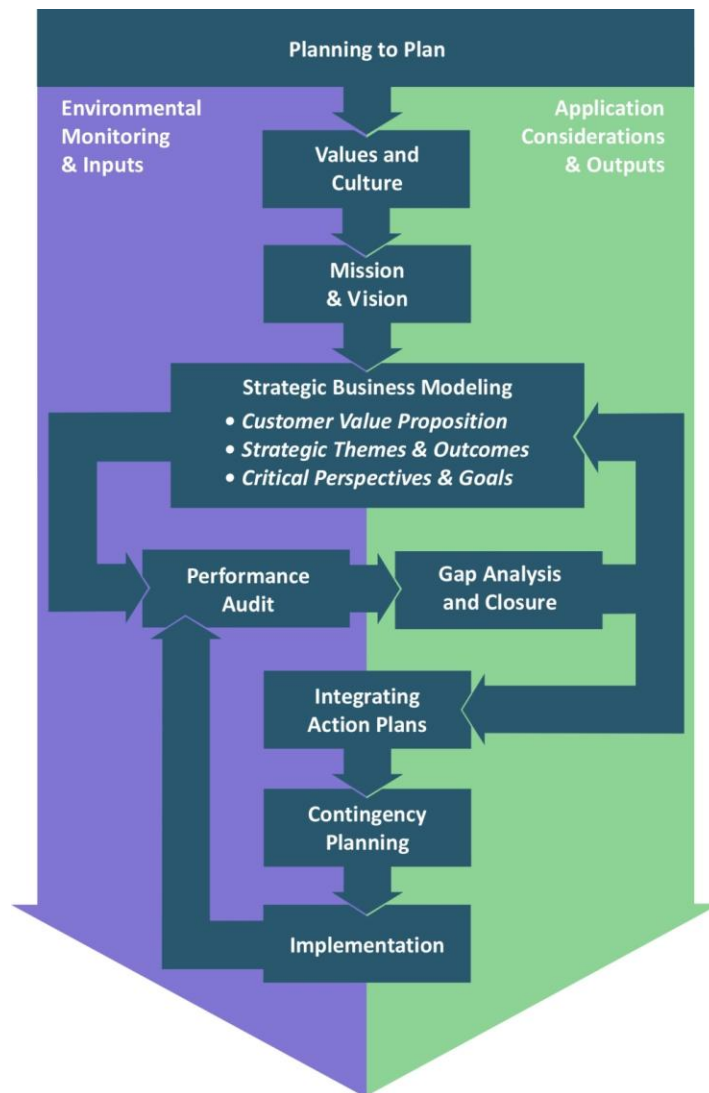
Note: Adapted from *Applied Strategic Planning: An Introduction* (2nd ed.) by Timothy Nolan, Leonard Goodstein, and Janette Goodstein, 2008, San Francisco: Pfeiffer

Planning to Plan

Developing organizational commitment to the planning process and subsequent implementation is critical. From its inception, this revision of East County Fire and Rescue's strategic plan engaged members from across the organization at all levels including volunteers, part-time and full-time staff, and elected officials.

Environmental Monitoring/ Application Considerations

Strategic planning is a dynamic process that must consider ongoing environmental (e.g., political, fiscal, operational) influences throughout the planning process. In addition, the planning process results in actionable items which the district may adopt or implement prior to the completion of the plan.

Mission, Values, & Vision

The mission defines the organization's essential purpose. Values identify what an organization stands for (and what it will not stand for). The vision provides a clear and compelling view of the intended future. Clearly defined and articulated values, mission, and vision, provide a solid foundation for development of a strategic plan. The district's mission, values, and vision adopted on April 18, 2023 (ECFR, 2023a), serve as the foundation for revision of the district's strategic plan.

Strategic Business Modeling

In the process of strategic business modeling, ECFR incorporated several components of the Balanced Scorecard (Kaplan & Norton, 1996) concept: 1) development of a customer value proposition that identified the unique value provided to the community, 2) strategic themes essential to achievement of ECFR's mission and vision, 3) development of strategy maps that outline key goals within four critical perspectives (community, fiscal stewardship, internal processes, and required resources).

Performance Audit

Before embarking on a trip to reach a specific destination, it is essential to know where you are (the starting point). ECFR examined internal strengths and weaknesses as well as external opportunities and challenges (SWOC Analysis). In the process of revision, the district's commissioners and staff completed a SWOC based on the current internal and external environment.

Critical Issues and Service Gaps

The district identified critical issues and service gaps based on integration of the mission, vision, and SWOC analysis with environmental data.

Action Planning

Without action, the strategic plan is simply a document gathering dust on a shelf. District staff identified a series of strategic initiatives to address critical issues and service gaps that will move the district towards accomplishment of its strategic goals.

Contingency Planning

Fire districts, like all other public services, operate in a dynamic environment with an ever-changing political and fiscal landscape. Ensuring successful implementation of the strategic plan requires identification of potential future challenges and alternative courses of action.

Implementation

The board of fire commissioners adopted the refined mission, values, and new organizational vision prior to completion of the strategic plan (ECFR, 2023a). Similarly, the district integrated the draft strategic goals into the 2024 comprehensive budget. Full implementation of the strategic plan will commence upon adoption by the board of fire commissioners, continuing the ongoing process of moving East County Fire and Rescue (ECFR) towards meeting its mission and vision. The process of assessment, evaluation, updating, and revision must continue to maintain currency of the plan as time progresses and the district completes milestones.

Mission

Improve community safety by reducing risk through education, prevention, and response.

At their inception, fire departments and districts responded to and controlled fires. This role has expanded over time to include more diverse types of emergency response services including care of the sick and injured, rescue from dangerous conditions, control of utility hazards and hazardous materials releases. However, once an emergency has occurred, harm has already occurred and will increase without intervention. The best way to mitigate the risk of harm is to prevent an emergency.

Proactive Risk Reduction

The three most common causes of fires are men, women, and children. While said in jest, there is considerable truth to this statement, and it can apply to include other types of emergency incidents. Traditionally fire services have provided fire prevention and public education services focused on reducing fire risk. In examining the breadth of the scope of our emergency response service to the community, it is prudent to also address potential risk from other types of emergencies as well. Proactive risk reduction efforts focus on prevention but recognize that the district cannot prevent all emergencies. A second risk reduction measure is to assist individuals within the community in developing the knowledge and skills to respond appropriately when an emergency occurs.

Effective Response

Effective response to emergency incidents requires that the district deploy an adequate number of well-trained personnel. The district must train its full-time, part-time, and volunteer members to respond to medical emergencies (the district's most frequent type of emergency response), fire incidents, technical rescue incidents such as rescue from height, rough terrain, or swiftwater, and hazardous materials incidents. In addition, members must have the ability to respond to a wide range of non-emergency service calls that can blend the response and risk reduction roles.

Community Partnerships

Community is a term used often, but seldom defined adequately. As a term with multiple and even contradictory meanings, community may refer to geographical locations and configurations, or to shared identities and values (Smith, as cited in Blaug, Horner, Kenyon, & Lekhi, 2006). Reducing community risk must be a community wide effort involving East County Fire and Rescue (ECFR), other public agencies, and members of the community. In this effort ECFR may have the leading role (e.g., reducing fire risk) or may have a supporting role (e.g., reducing risk of heart disease and stroke).

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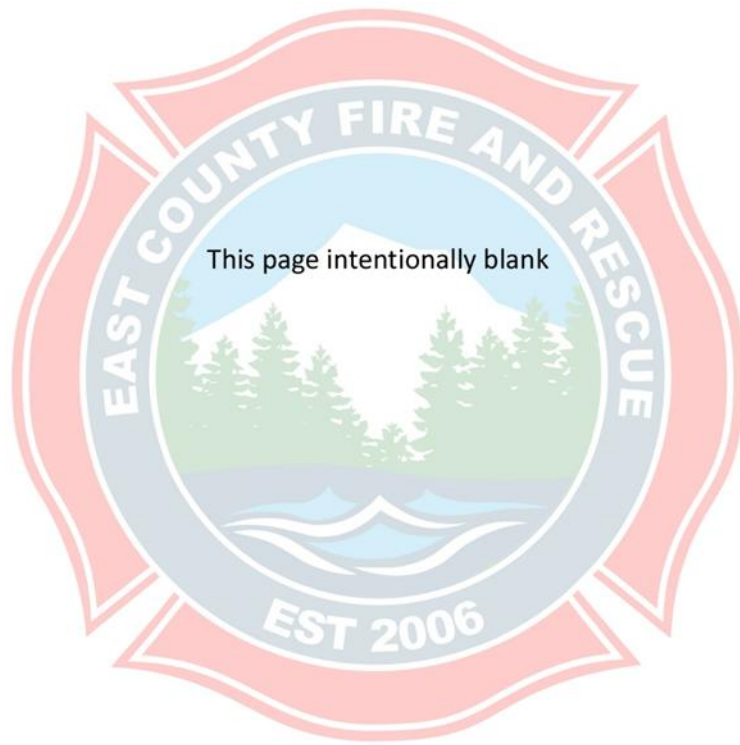
Values

East County Fire and Rescue and its members operate in a manner which is consistent with the values illustrated in Figure 3.

Figure 3. ECFR's Organizational Values
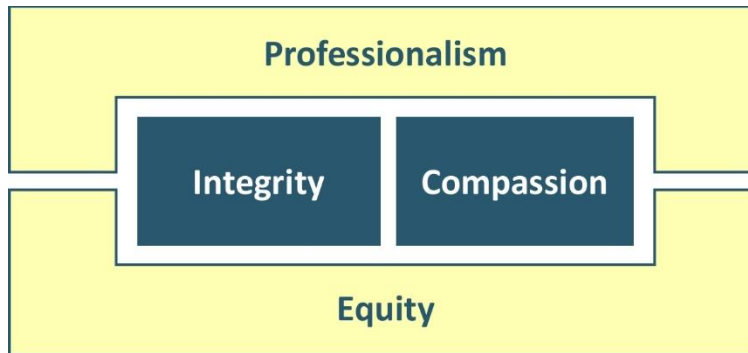
Understanding

Organizational values define what we stand for (and what we will not stand for). East County Fire and Rescue is committed to this common set of values that drive our interactions with the community and one another. Our value of *equity* serves as the foundation, *integrity* and *compassion* are at the core of our values, and *professionalism* is the capstone.

Integrity

- Do the right thing, at the right time, and for the right reasons.
- Act consistently with East County Fire & Rescue's organizational values.

Compassion

- Treat others with respect and dignity.
- Have empathy and consistently provide help and support to others.

Professionalism

- Maintain high standards and perform with confidence and humility.
- Engage in deliberate practice and strive for continuous improvement.
- Be a good steward of district resources.

Equity

- Provide our members with opportunities based on their individual capabilities and needs.
- Deliver consistent and systematically fair, just, and impartial service.

Application

The district communicates these values to our members and our community by displaying them prominently in our facilities, on our apparatus, and by integrating them into the format of internal and external communication.

ECFR will apply these values in recruitment and hiring processes, member performance evaluations, promotional process, awards, recognition, and organizational decision-making. Our expectation is that members will use these values to guide their behavior in interactions with one another and with those whom we serve.

It is not sufficient for our members to espouse these values; we must walk the walk by demonstrating our commitment through our actions daily.

Vision

Continuous improvement!

East County Fire and Rescue's (ECFR's) vision of continuous improvement creates a continuous pull towards delivery of effective, efficient, and affordable service. By consistently evaluating and refining processes, the district can eliminate wasteful practices and redirect resources where they matter most. A focus on continuous improvement also fosters a culture of adaptability and resilience. As the community's needs evolve and unexpected challenges arise, a government that emphasizes continuous improvement can adapt quickly and remain relevant. Moreover, this commitment to improvement cultivates public trust, as citizens can see their government is committed to continuously improving service.

Continuous improvement in local government is not just about refining processes, but about guaranteeing that the government remains responsive, accountable, and best serves the needs of its community.

Community Value Proposition

ECFR's community value proposition is the unique added value that we offer through the services that we provide; the logical link between action and payoff that we must create to be effective. This serves as the foundation for building our vision of continuous improvement.

Table 1. Service Attributes and Community Relationships

Service Attributes	Community Relationship
The services that ECFR provides have the following characteristics:	*The relationship that ECFR wants to have with its community:*
Timely: ECFR responds quickly to emergency incidents and provides non-emergency services in a timely manner.	**Compassionate:** ECFR members provide service with kindness and compassion.
Effective: ECFR members consistently provide quality emergency and non-emergency services to the community.	**Friendly & Helpful:** ECFR members present a friendly, positive, and helpful perspective.
Efficient & Affordable: ECFR is a good steward of the funds provided by the taxpayers within our district.	

Figure 4 graphically represents the ECFR community value proposition with organizational performance targeted on the point where service delivery attributes and community relationships intersect.

Figure 4. Community Value Proposition
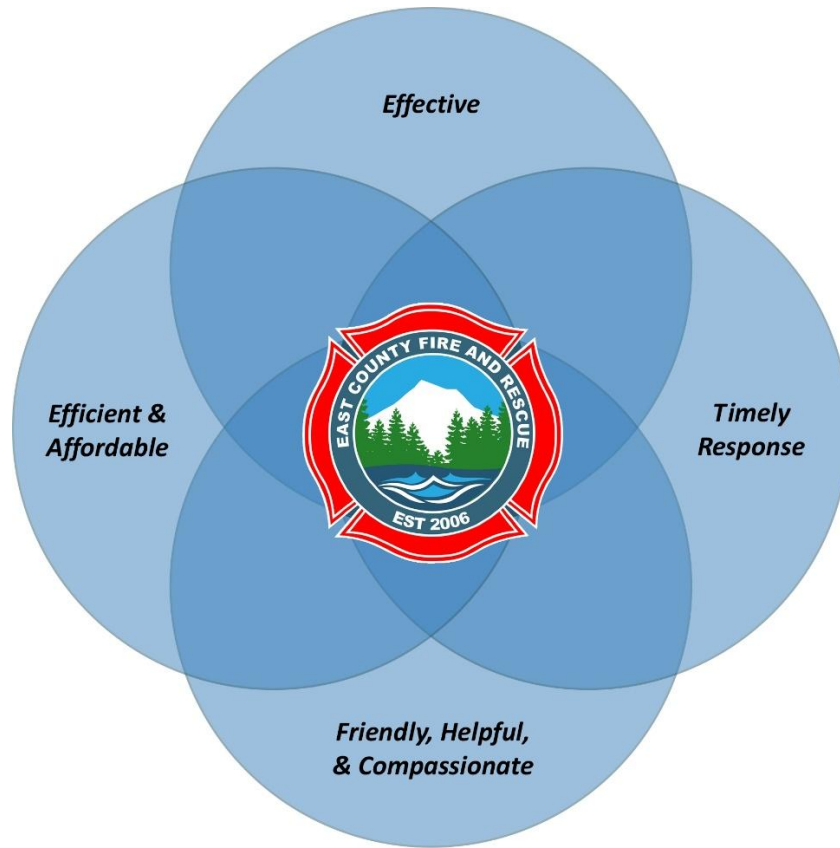
The private sector defines value as return on investment. While not directly applicable to public sector organizations such as ECFR, the concept still may be useful. The public sector creates value through generating improved outcomes in a more cost-effective manner.

Outcomes are based on the mission of the organization. In the case of ECFR, our mission involves improving community safety by reducing risk through education, prevention, and response. With this mission, outcomes are related to reduction of injury, death, property, and other economic and social loss that can result from emergency incidents. Cost effectiveness assesses the cost of achieving these outcomes. Increasing outcomes or cost effectiveness results in greater public value.

Strategic Themes & Critical Perspectives

Strategic themes and critical perspectives are key components of the balanced scorecard strategic planning framework (Kaplan & Norton, 1996).

Figure 5. Strategic Themes & Critical Perspectives
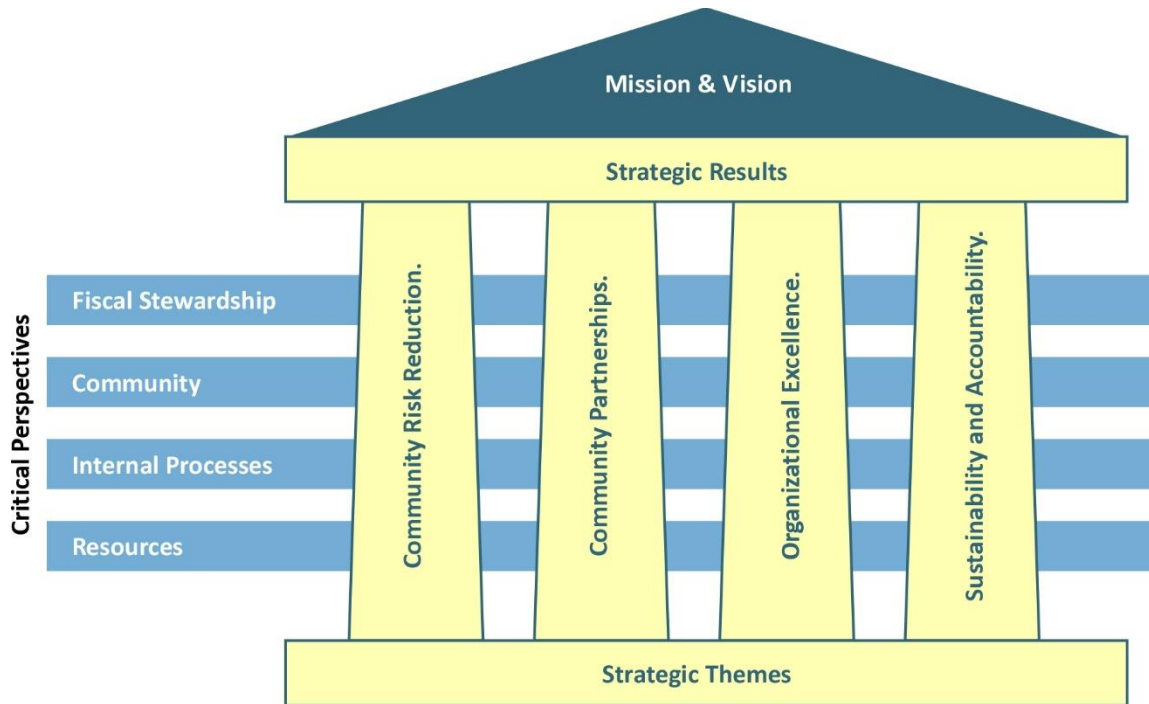
Note: Adapted from Perry, G. (2008). *Strategic themes – how are they used and why?*

Strategic Themes

Strategic themes are supporting elements of the district's strategic plan. This is like load bearing walls or columns supporting the load of a building and its contents. The themes provide structure, support, and boundaries for the strategic plan. More importantly, they define the high-level strategies and provide a framework for the district's service delivery model (Perry, 2008).

The district deconstructed the mission and vision to identify four broad themes that apply to all parts of our organization and provide clear strategic direction. East County Fire and Rescue's strategic themes are:

- Community Risk Reduction.
- Community Partnerships.
- Organizational Excellence.
- Sustainability and Accountability.

Each theme has a specific strategic result, stated as a desired end state.

Community Risk Reduction

The community risk reduction strategic theme connects to ECFR's mission *to improve community safety by reducing risk through education, prevention, and response.* The district's origin lies in the traditional fire service role of fire suppression. However, developing a safe and resilient community requires a broad-based approach to reduction of risk. The Fire and Emergency Services Self-Assessment Model (CPSE, 2020) identifies that community risk reduction includes "enforcement, education, economic incentive, engineering, technology, and emergency response" (p. 78).

It is important to note that ECFR's approach to risk reduction must be comprehensive, inclusive of prevention and mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery and extending beyond fire risk to include injury and illness. Response, education, and prevention have the same goal: to prevent or reduce harm to the public. Integration of emergency operations, education, and prevention initiatives make both functions more effective.

Clarification of the district's mission and focus on risk reduction places an emphasis on this critical role in serving our community. Benefits include:

- Decreased frequency and severity of emergency incidents.

- Increased community engagement.

- Enhanced value of fire and rescue services.

- Improved firefighter safety.

Strategic Result: ECFR's services provide a safer and more resilient community by reducing the rate at which emergency incidents occur and reducing the severity of those that do occur.

Community Partnerships

As with community risk reduction, the community partnership's strategic theme connects to ECFR's mission *to improve community safety by reducing risk through education, prevention, and response.* Community partnerships and community risk reduction are separate but interrelated themes. Risk is a community problem. The process of community risk reduction must also involve the community, its leaders, its groups, and its neighborhoods.

While having partnerships within the public safety arena, ECFR must expand and extend its working partnerships outside governmental service providers (e.g., special purpose districts, cities, and county government) to maximize its impact on community safety and resiliency by working with, not simply for those that we serve. Partnerships help us create more for less, pooling resources can help partners achieve results in a more cost-effective way and access extra resources.

Strategic Result: ECFR collaborates effectively with our partners to maintain a close relationship with the community and provide effective and efficient service delivery.

Organizational Excellence

The organizational excellence strategic theme focuses on ECFR's vision for continuous improvement through the four elements of our community value proposition: Effective; timely; friendly, helpful, & compassionate service; delivered in an efficient and affordable manner. Organizational excellence is compatible with efficiency and affordability. High performance systems must meet one or more of the following criteria (adapted from Vail, 1982):

- Performing excellently against a known external standard.

- Performing excellently in comparison with potential.

- Performing excellently in relationship to prior performance.

- Informed observers judge them to be doing better (qualitatively) than comparable systems.

- *Doing whatever they do efficiently* [emphasis added].

- Perception as an exemplar of the way to do whatever they do.

Developing organizational excellence requires consistency with ECFR's values of integrity, compassion, professionalism, and equity as well as commitment to our mission and vision. As Vince Lombardi, Coach of the Green Bay Packers stated shortly after becoming head coach in 1959:

> We are going to relentlessly pursue perfection, knowing full well that we will not catch it. We are going to relentlessly chase it; because in the process we catch excellence….I am not remotely interested in just being good (Eisenberg, 2010, p. 76).

Strategic Result: ECFR consistently provides services needed by the community in a timely, effective, and efficient manner.

Sustainability and Accountability

As with all municipal corporations in Washington State, the district has an ongoing struggle with the gap between increasing expenses and constitutionally limited increases in tax revenue. To address this challenge, the district completed a long-term financial plan in 2023 to support its conservative fiscal philosophy and has established the following financial goals.

- Ensure adequate and sustainable funding.

- Be fiscally responsible and operate with transparency.

Maintaining transparency in finance and governance, exploring alternative funding sources, and ensuring cost-effectiveness in operations is fundamental for the long-term ability of the district to provide essential services and engage in continuous improvement.

Strategic Result: ECFR is fiscally responsible and is transparent in its governance and fiscal affairs.

The Strategic Bull's Eye

ECFR's strategic themes, community risk reduction, community partnerships, organizational excellence, and sustainability and accountability provide structure and a solid foundation for the district's strategic plan and serve as a strategic *bull's eye* (see Figure 6).

Figure 6. Strategic Bull's Eye

ECFR's services provide a safer and more resilient community by reducing the rate at which emergency incidents occur and reducing the severity of those that do occur.

ECFR works effectively with our partners to maintain a close relationship with the community and provide effective and efficient service delivery.

ECFR is fiscally responsible and is transparent in its governance and fiscal affairs.

ECFR consistently provides services needed by the community in a timely, effective, and efficient manner.

Providing Public Value

The high-level strategy provided by East County Fire and Rescue's strategic themes and outcomes are the basis for our value to the community. This reinforces our philosophy of improving not only the quality of our services but also our value to the community. At the end of the day, community perception defines quality and value. This is not to say that ECFR cannot or should not define specific service delivery performance measures, but objective measures may not fully capture the community's perception of ECFR's public value.

As illustrated in Figure 7, high performing public service organizations provide improved outcomes in a more cost-effective manner (it is not simply one or the other).

Figure 7. Public Sector Value Model
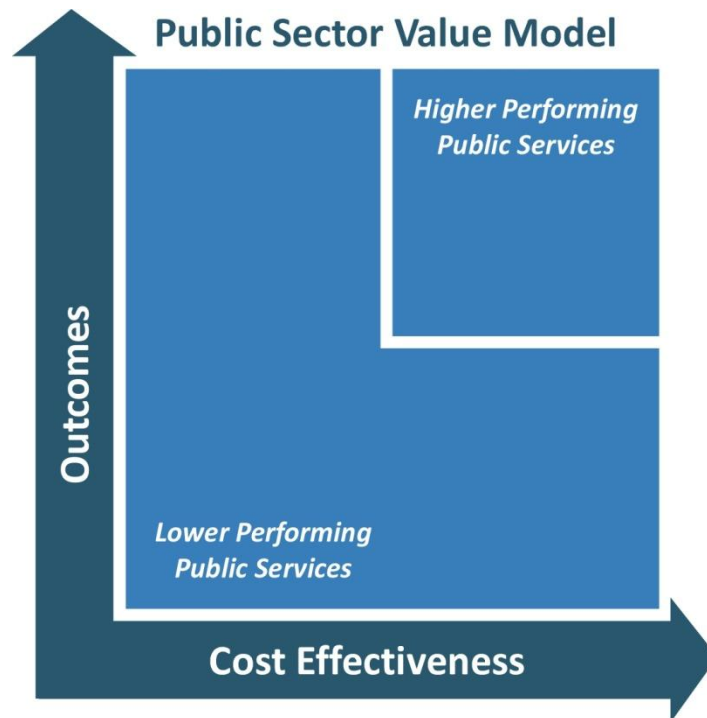
Note: Adapted from Unlocking Public Value: A New Model for Achieving High Performance in Public Service Organizations (p. 3) by Martin Cole & Greg Patterson,2006, San Francisco, CA: Wiley. Copyright 2006 by Accenture LLP.

One of the greatest challenges to measurement of public value is the need to incorporate hard evidence, unambiguous outcome measures, and the need for public accountability. Examination of public value requires simplicity while recognizing that the impact of ECFR's services and our value to the community is more complex.

> Causality is complex and multifaceted, evidence is negotiated and contested, the boundary between values and facts is blurred, and the purpose of public service provision is subject to ongoing public debate. (Hills & Sullivan, 2006, p. 8).

The debate regarding the nature and scope of services provided by government (at the local, county, state, and federal level) is ongoing. For fire districts, purpose, nature, and scope of services has been politically defined and expressed in the legislation providing for establishment of fire districts in the State of Washington: "Fire protection districts for the provision of fire prevention services, fire suppression services, emergency medical services, and for the protection of life and property are authorized to be established as provided in this title" (RCW 52.02.020(1)).

The enabling legislation that permits formation of fire districts in the State of Washington simply defines the services fire districts may legally provide, but the question of exactly what services and the level of service that is desired remain a question for the local community.

> The goal for public managers and institutions aiming to produce public value is one that seeks to improve institutional responsiveness to the refined preference of the public. This is about the capacity of a public body to listen to and engage with the public and shape and inform the public's preferences, rather than just give the public what it wants at a particular point in time (Blaug, Horner, Lekhi, 2006a, p. 9).

Clarification of public value requires engagement and dialog with the community about shared values. In addition, "public value encourages managers to conceive of goals that go beyond organizational survival and the mere meeting of targets" (Blaug, Horner, Lekhi, 2006a, p. 17).

In the end, East County Fire and Rescue must answer the following question:

What is in the best interest of the community that we serve?

Critical Perspectives

The balanced scorecard strategic planning framework looks at organizational performance from various perspectives to put strategy in context (Kaplan & Norton, 1996). The district uses four lenses to examine organizational strategy:

- Community
- Financial stewardship
- Internal processes
- Resources

Each of these perspectives seeks to answer a specific question about the district's performance.

Community
This perspective emphasizes the needs and satisfaction of the citizens and other stakeholders who receive services from the local government. This perspective focuses on the district meeting or exceeding the expectations and needs of its community members.

Financial Stewardship
This perspective focuses on financial measures and outcomes, assessing the financial health and sustainability of the district. This perspective ensures that the district can provide essential services while maintaining fiscal responsibility and transparency.

Internal Processes
This perspective looks at the internal processes and operations of the local government that contribute to its ability to deliver services efficiently and effectively. This perspective identifies potential process improvement to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of service delivery.

Resources

This perspective examines the resources required to deliver effective fire and rescue services to the community. Resources are inclusive of revenue streams (also considered from the fiscal stewardship perspective), human resources, and operational infrastructure such as fire stations, fire apparatus, and equipment.

Figure 8 illustrates the relationship between each of these perspectives and the questions that each perspective seeks to answer.

Figure 8. Relationship of Critical Perspectives to the Mission

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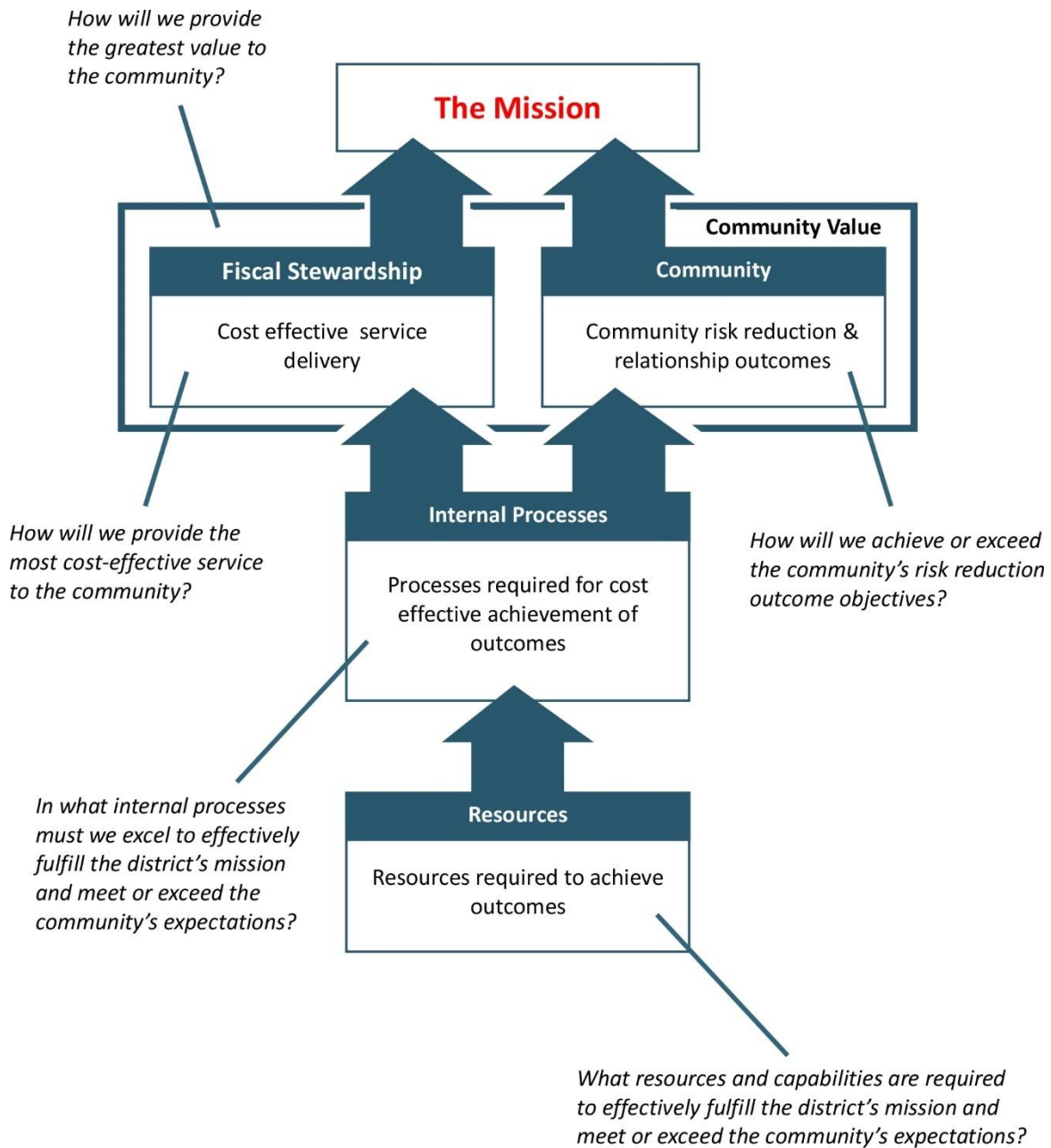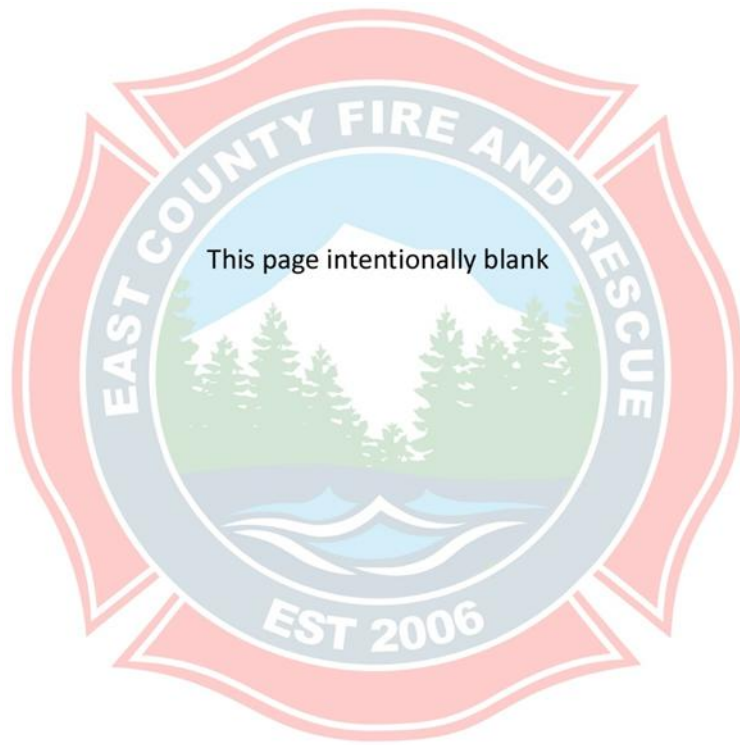
Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Challenges (SWOC)

SWOC analysis is a tool for auditing an organization and its environment. This process involves identification of an organization's internal strengths and weaknesses as well as opportunities and challenges in the external environment. Used by itself, SWOC framework tends to oversimplify complex situations but is effective when used as one element in development of a strategic plan.

Overview

In mid-2023, East County Fire and Rescue (ECFR) elected officials and members across the organization engaged in identification of the district's strengths weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges. This process required multiple sessions and identified both commonality and diverging viewpoints, depending on the participant's role in the organization.

Raw SWOC data was analyzed by groups of ECFR members to group data elements based on commonality of theme. The fire chief used the ChatGPT 3.5 large language data model to generate thematic topic headings for each group of data elements. The fire chief then identified and diagrammed relationships between each of the themes identified in the SWOC. Multiple relationships presented dichotomies between strengths or opportunities and weaknesses or challenges and in other cases these relationships identified commonality between themes in a specific category (e.g., strength, weakness, opportunity, challenge).

Groups of ECFR members who participated in generation of the raw SWOC data and/or grouping of data elements were engaged in a member check, reviewing the data, grouping, thematic topic headings and relationships between themes.

Use of member checks as a last step in the SWOC verified the entirety and completeness, and accuracy of the findings by providing an opportunity to correct errors and challenge areas where the findings may have been inaccurate or misinterpreted. The member checks were also useful in building understanding of the process of strategic planning which parallels qualitative action research where the researchers collaborate with participants on an ongoing basis to effect change.

Internal Environment

Examination of the district's internal environment identified strengths and weaknesses related to governance, management, financial and physical resources, staffing, and organizational culture and identity.

Strengths

- Provide good service (within resource constraints).

- Staff have a good mindset.

- Ability and commitment to get better.

- Positive public perception.

- Good relations with CWFD.

- Members have diverse experiences.

- Attract and hire talented people.

- Good training.

- Good fiscal management (clean audits).

- Treat people with respect.

- Welcoming environment.

- Resilience.

- Opportunities for growth.

- Developing identity and cultural change.

- Collaborative governance.

- Public communications.

- EMS knowledge and skill.

- Quick turnout time.

- Have time to train.

- Firefighters have the knowledge and skill to work out of class.

- Good facilities (for the most part) at Station 91.

- Full-time staff want to work for ECFR.

- Nimble organization (small size, commitment to improvement).

- Potential for full-time member longevity (youth).

Weaknesses

- Lack of operational staff.

- Loss of command officer staffing.

- Planning and fiscal processes (prior).

- Fiscal constraints/budget.

- Capital assets (apparatus & facilities).

- Low call volume=low experience level.

- Lack of diversity.

- Limited depth of experience.

- Potential loss of institutional knowledge.

- Limited training and professional development (prior).

- Internal communication.

- Dated and limited documentation of policies and procedures.

- Inconsistent policies and procedures.

- Lack of transparency.

- Turnover (particularly part-time).

- Limited use of external training.

- Line/elected officials disconnect (perspective), trust.

- Outdated technological infrastructure.

- Administrative trauma (people playing old tapes).

- Workload.

- History of reactive versus proactive decision-making.

External Environment

Examination of the district's external environment identified opportunities and challenges related to regional service delivery, revenue and revenue limitations, engagement with the district's residents, political perspectives of the district's residents, geographic features of the district, and limitations in fire protection infrastructure.

Opportunities

- Education of citizens/brand recognition.
- Explanation of automatic & mutual aid.
- Alternative revenue streams (one time and ongoing).
- Shared service.
- Rezoning (smaller lot sizes, increased development & AV).
- Fire district annexation/RFA/merger.
- Functional consolidation.
- Lid lift.
- Interagency cooperation.
- Grants.
- Voted bonds.
- Regional service delivery.
- Joint training.
- Increased use of external training.

Challenges

- Geography (district split by the Washougal River).

- Road network.

- Limited water supply.

- Hiring frenzy by other agencies (full-time firefighters).

- Brand recognition.

- Interagency relationships.

- Gates & non-rated bridges.

- Washington tax structure (1% limit on levy increase).

- Politics (fire district annexation/RFA/merger).

- City annexation (loss of AV).

- Historically static population.

- Differences in policy and procedure with other agencies (and other agencies between themselves).

- Interagency trust.

Thematic Analysis

Figure 9 illustrates the common themes identified in the SWOC. This analysis shows that the district is an organization amid significant organizational change. During the member check participants identified that multiple data elements and themes were historically focused while others were more forward-looking. The need for professional development as a weakness and continuous professional development as a strength is one example of this important finding.
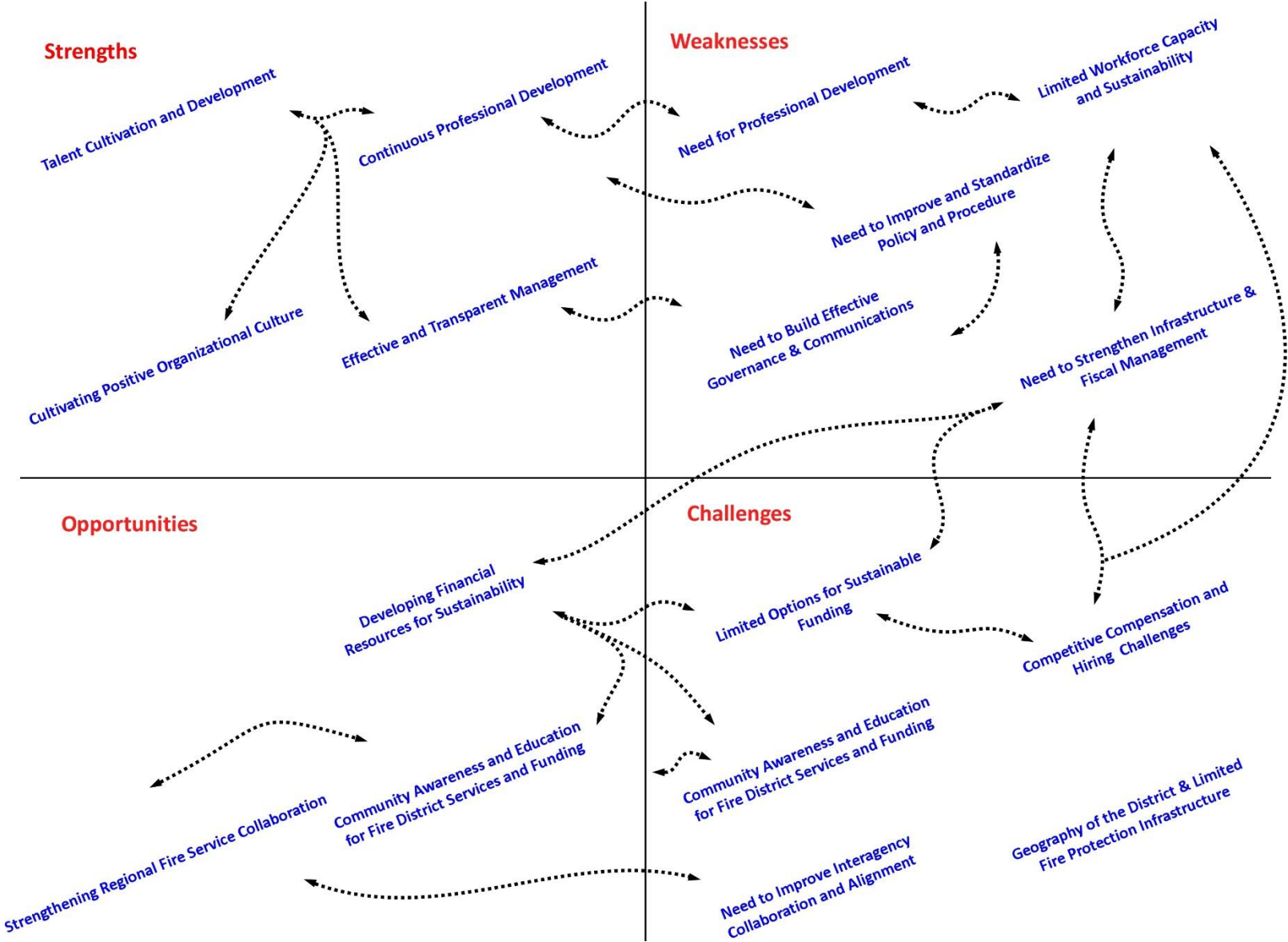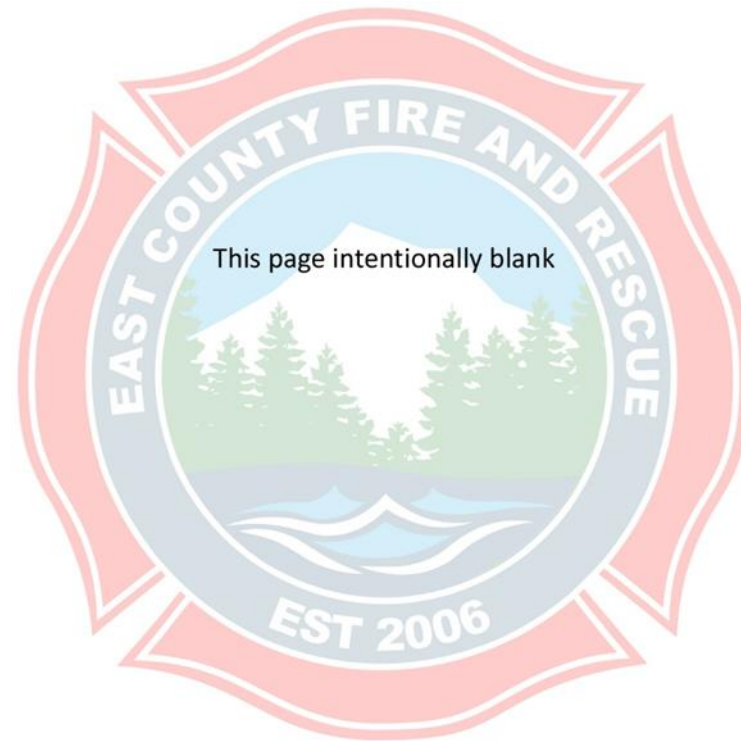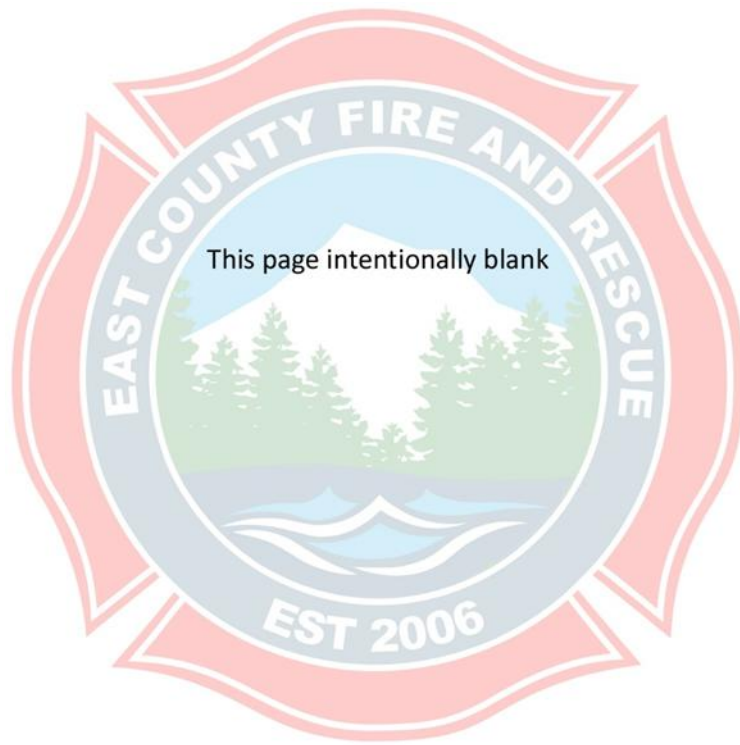
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Figure 9. Thematic Map

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Critical Issues and Service Gaps

Strategies to address the district's critical issues and related service gaps provide a starting point for continuous improvement.

Critical Issues

Critical issues are problems or challenges that have a significant impact on the operational effectiveness and sustainability of the district. These issues include limits on fiscal sustainability, geography, infrastructure, deployment, and staffing.

Limits on Fiscal Sustainability

Fiscal constraints present a significant challenge to developing and maintaining the resources necessary to meet the community's service level demands. This issue results from constitutional and statutory limitations on tax revenue as well as the nature and scope of the district's tax base.

- As a fire district, East County Fire and Rescue is approximately 98% funded by property tax revenue.

- The district's general tax levy can only increase by 1% (excluding newly constructed properties added to the tax rolls) on an annual basis.

- The district has seen slow growth in new construction, limiting addition of property to the tax rolls.

- Increased assessed valuation due to appreciation of the value of existing property does not increase revenue. Increases in AV result in a decreased tax levy rate, providing constitutionally limited increases in the tax levy.

- Historically, inflation has increased approximately two percent annually, but it has increased to a much greater extent in recent years.

- The district has had moderate success in increasing reserves for replacement of apparatus and equipment along with liabilities for accrued leave payout on separation of members from district employment. However, reserves are insufficient to meet mid-term needs for apparatus and equipment replacement.

- The district cannot meet the requirements for major capital facilities projects along with operational expenses and apparatus and equipment capital projects requirements with general levy funds.

- These factors require the district to place a levy lid lift measure on the ballot from time to time to have sufficient funding to maintain service delivery levels expected by the community.

The district's *Integrated Comprehensive Plan Volume 5-Long Term Financial Plan* (ECFR, 2023c) explores challenges to fiscal sustainability in greater detail.

Geography & Infrastructure

The Washougal River divides ECFR's 60 square mile response area with approximately 18 square miles on the southeast side of the river and 42 square miles on the northwest side of the river. There are limited bridge crossings that provide access between the southeast and northwest areas of the district, on Northeast Vernon Road at Washougal River Road, and in Washougal on Washougal River Road at North Shepherd Road, and on Evergreen Road at North Shepherd Road. Access limitations imposed by the Washougal River and bridge locations impact fire station locations and staffing.

While division of the district by the Washougal River is the most significant geographic factor, there are other geographic factors that impact service delivery. These include:

- Limited response routes interconnecting areas within the district. While two state highways (SR 500 and SR 14) pass through the district, the road network is comprised of rural collectors and minor roads.

- Most roads in the district are narrow, winding, and have little to no shoulder between the road surface and drainage ditches.

- There are many dead-end roads within the district.

- The district also has a large number of private, single lane roads, some of which have gates and/or non-rated bridges.

The configuration of the road network has a major negative influence on response time for both the first arriving resource, an effective response force, and water supply using water tender shuttle.

There is no municipal water system serving the district. The City of Camas water system passes through the district with limited hydrant service. There are hydrants along the southern and southwestern border of the district within the Cities of Camas and Washougal. The district uses these hydrants as water tender fill points. To this point, little information is available about the flow rates available from these hydrants.

The Washougal River and Little Washougal River have areas with access for water supply, However, use of static sources limited by lack of hard suction hose on district apparatus and automatic and mutual aid apparatus from the Camas Washougal and Vancouver Fire Departments. Other technologies such as a large eductor (turbodraft) can be used to develop water supply from static water sources such as the rivers or ponds that do not have close apparatus access. But as with hard suction hose, these resources are not currently available on district apparatus or the apparatus of our automatic and mutual aid partners.

Revision of the district's community risk assessment and standard of coverage (CRA/SOC) will develop additional details on geography and infrastructure. The district has scheduled revision of the CRA/SOC for 2024.

Deployment and Staffing

Prior to annexation of Clark County Fire District 1 into Clark County Fire District 9, District 1 maintained two fire stations on the east side of the Washougal River (Station 94 on SE 352nd Street and Station 95 on 39th Street) and Fire District 9 maintained three fire stations on the west side of the Washougal River (Station 91 on NE 267th, Station 92 on 292nd Avenue, and Station 93 on NE 312th Avenue). After annexation, East County Fire and Rescue purchased a residential occupancy on NE 397th Street in Bear Prairie with the intention of using the property for a fire station, Station 96. While these six fire stations provided good geographic distribution, limited staffing precluded effective operations from all six stations. Due to zoning and permitting restrictions on fire station construction, the district sold Station 96 in 2016. The City of Washougal annexed the area surrounding Station 95 and in 2021, East County Fire and Rescue sold this station to the city for use as a building department permitting center.

As illustrated in Figure 10, the district currently maintains four fire stations. A combination of full-time, part-time, and volunteer personnel staff Stations 91 and 94. Volunteer water tender operators staff Station 93. In addition, this station houses a Washington Department of Natural Resources fire engine during wildfire season. The district uses this station as a training facility and for storage of reserve fire apparatus. Silver Star Search and Rescue occupies Station 92 under a co-locate agreement.

The district endeavors to maintain two on-duty personnel at Station 91 and two on-duty personnel at Station 94. These personnel cross staff a type one engine, a squad (type six wildland engine that carries emergency medical equipment), and a water tender. Both the type one engine and squad are non-transport aid vehicles licensed by the Washington Department of Health to provide basic life support (BLS) emergency medical services (EMS) response.

Figure 10. District Map
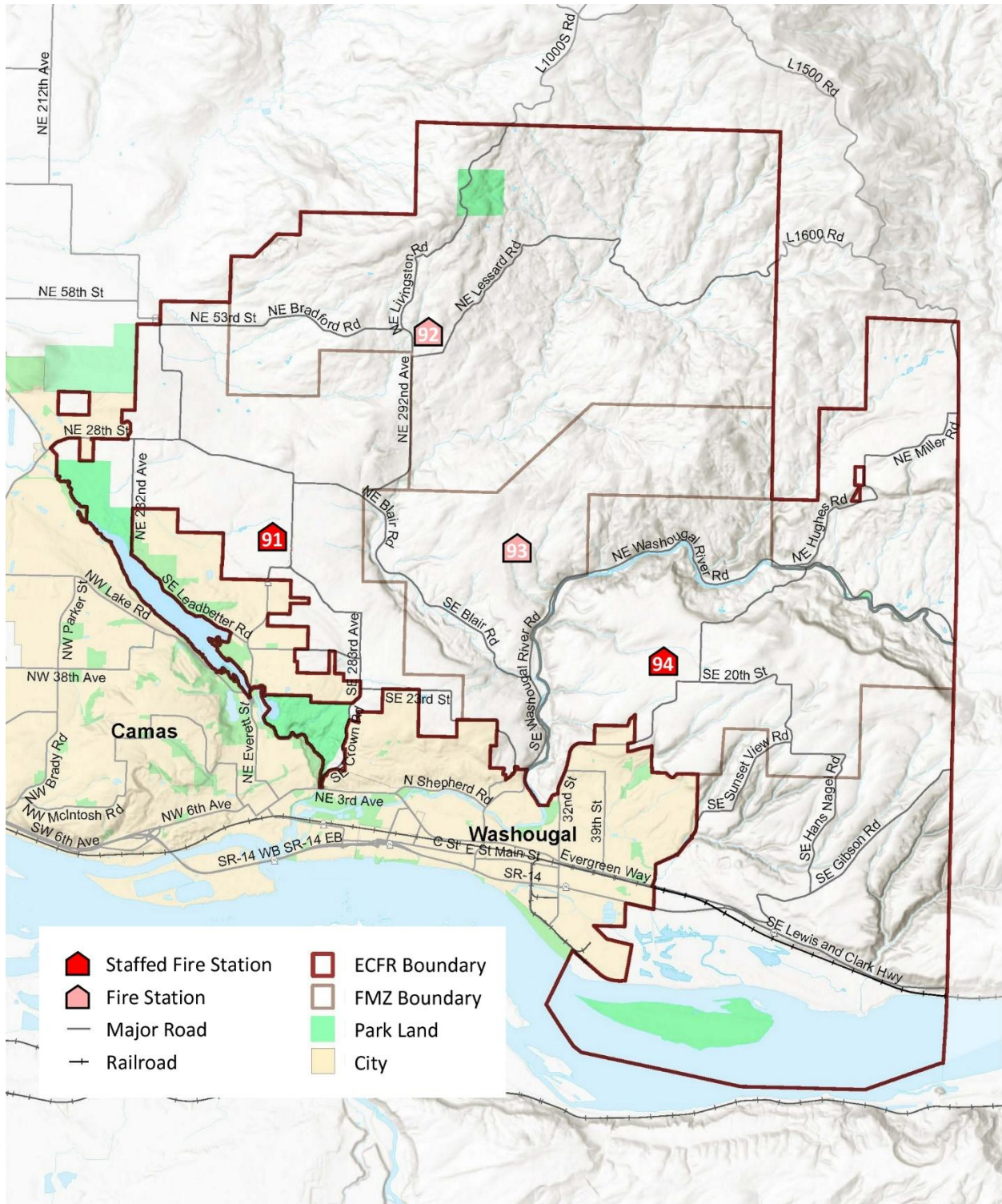
A combination of full-time and part-time personnel have historically provided on-duty staffing with three full-time staff (captain and two firefighters) on each shift along with two part-time personnel providing the fourth full-time equivalent (FTE) to maintain the minimum shift staffing needed for two,

two-person companies (the term company refers to apparatus and staffing). Full-time personnel have one shift per month that they are off the work schedule, this is a Kelly shift. An additional full-time firefighter referred to as the "Kelly float" (because they move between shifts filling vacancies caused by Kelly shifts) can minimize the overtime impact of the district's shift staffing model. The fragility of this staffing model has had a significant impact on the district's service levels and ability to consistently maintain service on both sides of the Washougal River from Stations 91 and 94.

In 2023, the district reduced the number of part-time firefighter positions from six to four and concurrently increased the number of full-time firefighters by one. Due to the number of probationary firefighters in training, the Kelly float firefighter moved to a regular shift assignment. This increased the reliability of staffing, but at the expense of increased overtime. The district added one additional full-time firefighter in 2024, refilling the Kelly float position, minimizing overtime expense, and increasing reliability of staffing.

- Providing timely response to areas of the district on both sides of the Washougal River requires on-duty staffing at a fire station in each of these geographic areas. The district has three fire stations on the west side of the Washougal River, Stations 91, 92, and 93. The district has a single station on the East Side of the Washougal River, Station 94.

- Stations 91, 93, and 94 can house on-duty staffing. Station 92 has no running water, toilets, or living quarters.

- Two person, on-duty company staffing allows rapid response, but limited tactical capability. Two personnel can effectively deal with low acuity incidents. However, this level of staffing has extremely limited ability to address high-acuity incidents such as a vehicle accident with extrication or a structure fire.

- In the case of structure fires, a two-person company can only perform exterior operations, even if there is an immediate threat to life based on the requirements of the Department of Labor and Industries Safety Standard for Firefighters (WAC 296-305). This regulation requires a standby team of at least two when two or more firefighters are engaged in interior firefighting operations. There is an exception allowing a single standby firefighter when there is an imminent life threat. So, if company is staffed with two personnel, interior firefighting operations of necessity must wait until the arrival of automatic aid companies or the engine from the other district station.

- Increased hiring of full-time firefighters by larger agencies, with higher wages and benefits, has resulted in turnover and the loss of part-time staff (in 2023 the district was only able to fill one of four positions). Turnover has also impacted full-time staffing with the loss of three experienced firefighters. The district was able to replace full-time staff, but there has been a loss of institutional knowledge and experience base.

- Staffing levels have resulted in a large amount of overtime, increasing expense to the district, and having an ongoing negative impact on employees' stress levels and work-life balance. This often results in the unavailability of full shift staffing on a regular basis.

- When the district is unable to staff both stations with two personnel, the district closes Station 94. The district selected this station for temporary closure when staffing is unavailable due to the lower call volume in this area of the district.

In the past volunteer firefighters responded from home to staff apparatus for response to augment on-duty staffing. Over time the number of volunteer firefighters dwindled. At the start of 2023, volunteer staffing was an assistant chief and three water tender operators. Increased emphasis on volunteer recruitment and training has increased volunteer staffing to an assistant chief, six water tender operators (three in training) and twelve volunteer firefighters (all in training). The volunteer water tender operators all live in the district and respond from home when available. Most volunteer firefighters live outside the district and volunteer by working shifts to augment full- and part-time staffing.

- Volunteer recruitment has seen considerable success with the number of volunteer firefighters projected to reach 20 and water tender operators to reach 10 by the second quarter of 2024.

- Most volunteer firefighters who have joined East County Fire and Rescue since January 2023 are fire and rescue service career oriented and live outside the district. Given their career orientation, it is likely that the district will see considerable turnover among this component of the workforce as they gain training, certification, and experience.

- Most volunteer water tender operators live in the district. These members typically do not have fire and rescue service career aspirations. The district anticipates turnover among this component of the workforce, but the district anticipates that turnover among water tender operators will be less than volunteer or part-time firefighters.

- The district has experimented with a blended learning concept which blends independent study, cohort training, and on-the-job skills training while working shifts alongside the district's full-time and part-time staff. It is likely that this model, or a variation on the current training model will continue for initial volunteer training.

- The district recruited volunteer firefighters from the Portland Community College fire science program. These firefighters came to the district with certification as an emergency medical technician (EMT) and/or firefighter. Individuals with the requisite training and certification completed on-the-job training and orientation over a period of 120 hours (ten 12-hour shifts).

Facilities

The district maintains four facilities; Stations 91, 92, 93, and 94 illustrated in Figure 11. As previously discussed, the district has consolidated its operations to Stations 91, 93, and 94.

Figure 11. District Facilities

Station 91-Staffed Station
600 NE 267th Avenue, Camas, WA 98607

Station 92-Silver Star Search and Rescue
4909 NE 292nd Avenue, Camas, WA 98607

Station 93-Training and Reserve Apparatus
121 NE 312th Avenue, Washougal, WA 98671

Station 94-Staffed Station
1808 SE 352nd Avenue, Washougal, WA 98671

Critical issues related to facilities include location to provide equitable service throughout the district's 60 square miles, building configuration to meet operational requirements, physical condition, and deferred maintenance.

- The first questions are the number of fire stations needed and their location? The district can examine these questions from the perspective of the district as an isolated entity or from a regional perspective, considering the location of fire stations from other agencies that provide automatic aid to the district and who receive automatic aid from the district. The district will examine both options to generate an effective and efficient solution.

- If the existing facilities are in good locations (or at least reasonably so) the district will need to conduct an evaluation to determine if they meet the programmatic needs of the district, meet relevant codes and standards, and best practices in fire station design. This data will allow development of capital project plans to improve existing facilities.

- If the district's existing facilities are not in good locations, facilities planning should include identification of future fire station locations and this information used in development of capital project plans for new fire station construction.

- Voter approved debt (unlimited tax general obligation (UTGO) bonds) would provide revenue for significant capital facilities projects. The district will consider this option in subsequent revisions to the district's long-term financial plan.

- The district should establish strategic triggers for construction of new stations based on factors such as response time, call volume, population, and projected new residential and commercial construction.

Fleet

In 2023, the district downsized its fleet, auctioning off two engines, a squad, and water tender that had reached the end of their useful life or were otherwise unserviceable. There are multiple issues related to the fleet and related equipment.

- Two of the district's three type one engines are nearing the end of their useful lives (Apparatus 1014 and 916).

- One of the district's three water tenders is past its useful life (Apparatus 914).

- All the district's support vehicles are at or nearing the end of their useful lives (Apparatus 1018, 1012, 915, and 1019).

- Delivery time on a new type one engine or water tender is currently between 13 and 18 months.

- Rigorous maintenance should allow existing apparatus to remain in-service until schedule replacement (as specified in the district's capital projects plan).

- While most fire and rescue equipment on the district's apparatus is in good condition, there are gaps in equipment inventory that impact on tactical operations, particularly related to water supply. The district will begin to address these equipment deficiencies in 2024.

The district has and continues to evaluate options for keeping the district's fleet in-service, ensure timely replacement, and minimize life-cycle expenses.

Service Gaps

These critical issues impact on the district's ability to provide effective service throughout our response area. In some cases, service gaps are driven by geography and in other cases, they are pervasive throughout the district.

Travel Distance and Response Time
There are several service gaps related to response time. These include:

- Increased response time in Fire Management Zone (FMZ) 94 due to this station being unstaffed a significant percentage of time. When this station is unstaffed, initial response into FMZ 94 for high acuity incidents is from Camas Washougal Fire Department Station 43 located at 1400 A Street in Washougal. Based on travel distance, this increases response time by approximately 8 minutes when Station 94 is unstaffed.

- Remote areas of the district, particularly in Fire Management Zones 92 (Ireland), 95 (Northeast of Washougal), and 96 (Bear Prairie) are more than five road miles from a fire station (on-duty staffed or with adequate volunteers to be credible as a fire station) and have Washington Survey and Rating Bureau protection class of 9. Given the travel distance to these areas of the district, response times are long.

Water Supply
As there are few fire hydrants within the district the district is often dependent on water tenders to supply water for fire control purposes.

- A minimally acceptable water supply for structural firefighting is 500 gallons per minute. There are few areas of the district where this flow rate is available using water tenders.

- Initial response of four engines and two water tenders (if volunteer staffed tenders respond) provides effective water supply for initial attack, but sustained water delivery capability is often less than 250 gpm due to distance and characteristics of the district's road network and location of water supply points.

Tactical Capability
Fire and rescue services are labor intensive. While district's staffing levels are acceptable for low acuity incidents, they result in multiple service gaps related to higher acuity incidents such as vehicle accidents with extrication and structure fires:

- Two-person company staffing precludes ECFR engine companies from interior structural firefighting operations even if there is a report of trapped occupants.

- Two-person company staffing not only impacts initial, single company operations, but also limits firefighting operations after additional resources arrive as one member of the crew is committed as the apparatus operator. It is possible to integrate the other member with another company, but this creates potential challenges in accountability.

Comprehensive Community Risk Reduction

The district has historically focused on response operations and has placed limited emphasis on public education, prevention, and pre-incident planning. This results in multiple service gaps:

- The district has not had a program to address residential occupancies without working smoke alarms, placing the occupants at increased risk. The district will address this gap in the 1st quarter of 2024.

- The district does not have a comprehensive plan for community risk reduction. The district will address this gap in 2024 through development of a community risk assessment, standard of coverage, and community risk reduction plan.

- The district does not have pre-plans for commercial or other high-risk occupancies. The district will address this gap by the end of the 4th quarter of 2024.
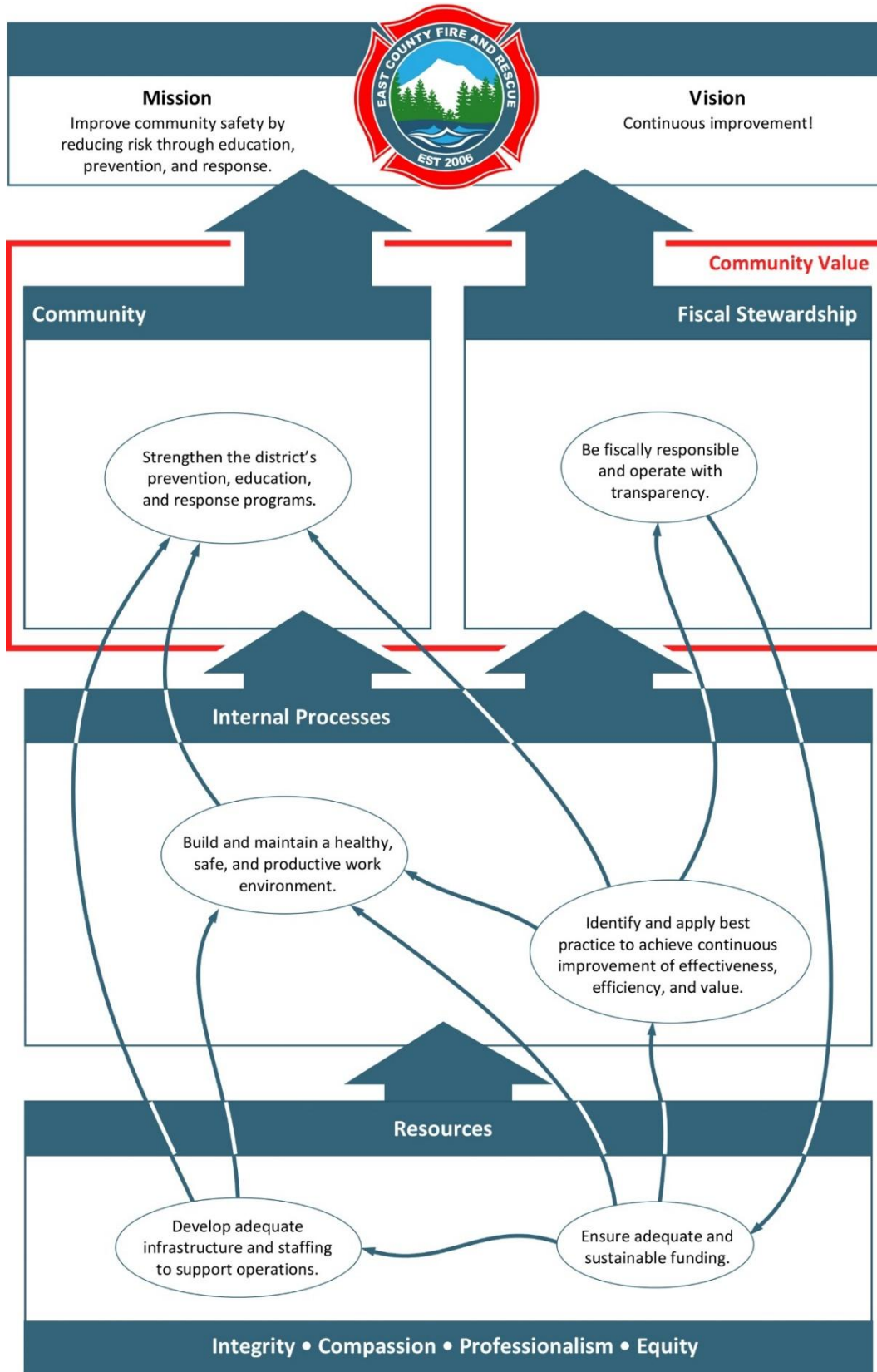
Strategy

Strategy Map

A strategy map is a concise, visual representation of the goals for an organization to create value for its stakeholders. Strategy maps illustrate the cause-and-effect relationships among the components of an organization's strategy (Kaplan & Norton, 2004, p. 9).

The district developed a strategy map to identify interrelationships between goals in each of four critical perspectives: community, fiscal stewardship, internal processes, and resources. In general, goals identified in the resources and internal processes perspectives support achievement of goals in the fiscal stewardship and community perspectives. It is useful to read the map from the bottom up and ask the question why (does East County Fire and Rescue (ECFR) want to achieve this goal) or to read the map from the top down and ask how (will ECFR achieve this goal)?

Development of East County Fire and Rescue's comprehensive strategy required consideration of each strategic theme (community risk reduction, community partnerships, organizational excellence, and sustainability and accountability) and each of the four perspectives (community, fiscal stewardship, internal processes, and human and physical resources).

Figure 12. ECFR Strategy Map

Strategic Goals as Intended Outcomes

Clarity of purpose and goals is critical to measuring progress towards an intended outcome. Goals are qualitative statements that generalize an intended outcome in words rather than numbers.

East County Fire and Rescue evaluated its strategic goals (outcomes) using the following criteria:

- **Mission Focused:** Is the outcome aligned with ECFR's mission and values?

- **Measurable & Action Oriented:** Do the outcomes drive quantifiable improvements?

- **Comprehensive:** Do the outcomes reflect all ECFR's capabilities, functions, and strategies?

- **Crafted to Create Value:** Do the outcomes address shared agreement within ECFR and the community and will the community value these outcomes?

Given the goals identified in the district's comprehensive strategy, specific measures and metrics are necessary to assess performance and progress in implementing these strategies.

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Strategic Initiatives & Performance Measures

Strategic Initiatives

Strategic initiatives are programs or projects that turn strategy into clear and well-defined operational terms. East County Fire and Rescue's (ECFR's) initiatives provide a structured way to prioritize projects based on strategic impact. Strategic initiatives answer the question: What strategic projects must the district complete to meet its goals and achieve our mission and vision?

Performance Measures

Why measure performance? "Neither the act of measuring performance nor the resulting data accomplishes anything itself; only when someone uses these measures in some way do they accomplish something" (Behn, 2003, p. 586). Measuring performance is essential to both defining a starting point and for evaluating progress. As Kaplan and Norton (2004) observe "You can't manage what you can't measure…You can't measure what you can't describe" (p. xiii).

Effective organizational performance requires measurement to first establish a baseline and subsequently to evaluate progress towards established goals. However, performance management provides benefits beyond checking progress (Neely, 2002).

Performance measurement supports continuous learning. Achievements and adjusting agreed-upon strategies or initiatives is based on feedback. This process is critical to continued progression towards the attainment of the organization's mission and vision. It also can provide a balanced and systematic attempt to assess the effectiveness of operations from different points of view: financial, operational performance, community, and members.

Measuring Public Services

Effectiveness, efficiency, and equity provide a basis to evaluate public services (Chaiken & Ingall, 1979; Australian Government Productivity Commission, 2005).

- Measures of effectiveness relate to the fundamental reasons for providing service and examine service outputs, quality, and outcomes.

- Efficiency measures focus on the resources required to accomplish intended outcomes.

- Equity is concerned with the relationship between those who pay and those who benefit. These measures determine the fairness of service delivery and citizen expectations.

It is essential to keep in mind that "any practical system of performance measurement cannot be value-neutral" (Blaug, Horner, Lekhi, 2006b, p. 51) and as such the process of selecting what to measure and how to measure it must be internally and externally transparent.

In the end the district can only measure performance after the fact. For example, success in treating a patient that is in cardiac arrest can only be determined after the patient survives to leave the hospital and return to a normal life (or they do not). Similarly, the district can only measure fire safety

performance based on death, injury, and property loss. These are lagging (after the fact) or outcome measures.

Leading indicators or performance drivers measure factors that are critical to achievement of specified goals or successful performance as measured by lagging indicators (outcome measures). For example, in both cardiac arrest and structure fire response, response time is a key factor and may serve as a useful leading indicator or performance driver when assessing emergency response effectiveness.

"By definition, catastrophic and major process incidents are rare events, and performance measures need to be preferably focused on leading indicators, or at least lagging indicators of relevant, more frequent incidents" (Mogford, 2005, p. 144).

Assessment of Performance Measures

The strategic plan working group assessed the intention and feasibility of the potential metrics to measure progress towards achievement of the district's strategic goals.

- *Outcomes Focused:* Are the metrics measuring the outcome rather than simply inputs and outputs?

- *Customer-Focused:* Do the metrics track and measure what our stakeholders value?

- *Drives Intended Behavior:* Do the metrics drive the intended behavior?

- *Actionable:* Does the metric give ECFR meaningful information to make decisions (to improve outcomes)?

- *Measurable:* Are the metrics quantifiable, reliable, and well defined?

- *Practical/Affordable:* Does the data currently exist? Is the cost of measurement (time and expense) justified by the benefit of the measurement?

While the district assessed performance measures and metrics as part of the planning process, assessment will be ongoing to ensure that they function as intended and guide the district toward accomplishment of the strategic goals identified in this plan.

Leading Indicators and Outcome Measures

Table 2 lists performance drivers (lead indicators) and outcome measures (lag indicators) for each of the district's strategic goals. ECFR will evaluate progress in the achievement of these goals using a mix of quantitative and qualitative measures. Qualitative data is extremely varied in nature. It includes any information that is not numerical and related to quantity. The word [QUALITATIVE] in brackets identifies measures that are qualitative in nature (narrative or descriptive data rather than numeric data).

Table 2. Strategic Goals, Initiatives, and Performance Measures

◆ Primary Responsibility

■ Supportive Responsibility

Goals & Initiatives	Performance Measures	Administrative	Operations	Prevention & Pub Ed	Training	Facilities	R&M[1]
Strategic Goal 1: Strengthen the district's prevention, education, and response programs.		◆	◆	◆	■	■	■
a. *Develop and maintain a comprehensive community risk assessment*	• Develop the community risk assessment by the end of the 2nd quarter of 2024. • Review and update the community risk assessment by the end of the 2nd quarter on a five-year cycle (beginning in 2029).	◆	■	■			
b. *Improve community awareness and ability to respond appropriately to emergencies.*	• The number of posts on the district's social media channels focused on community awareness and appropriate response to emergencies annually. • Number of home safety/Firewise surveys completed annually. • Number of smoke alarms installed annually. • The percentage of fire incidents where smoke alarms warned building occupants and they escaped prior to arrival of fire and rescue resources. • Percentage of cardiac arrest responses where citizens were performing cardiopulmonary resuscitation prior to the arrival of emergency medical services (EMS).		■	◆	■		

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[1] R&M is an abbreviation for repair and maintenance of apparatus and equipment. This convention is used throughout this table.

Table 2. Strategic Goals, Initiatives, and Performance Measures (continued)

◆ Primary Responsibility

■ Supportive Responsibility

Goals & Initiatives	Performance Measures	Administrative	Operations	Prevention & Pub Ed	Training	Facilities	R&M
Strategic Goal 1: Strengthen the district's prevention, education, and response programs.		◆	◆	◆	■	■	■
c. *Develop and maintain a comprehensive standard of coverage and community risk reduction plan.*	• Develop the standard of coverage and community risk reduction plan by the end of the 4th quarter of 2024. • Review and update the community risk assessment by the end of the 4th quarter on a three-year cycle (beginning in 2027).	◆	■	■			

Table 2. Strategic Goals, Initiatives, and Performance Measures (continued)

◆ Primary Responsibility

■ Supportive Responsibility

Goals & Initiatives	Performance Measures	Administrative	Operations	Prevention & Pub Ed	Training	Facilities	R&M
d. *Improve the effectiveness and efficiency of emergency response operations.*	• 90th percentile first unit response time for emergency (priority one, two, and three) fire suppression, emergency medical, technical rescue, and hazmat incidents. • 90th percentile response time for the effective response force for (priority one, two, and three) fire suppression, emergency medical, technical rescue, and hazmat incidents. • Area of the district in which firefighting resources can develop a fire flow of 500 gpm or greater. • The percentage of structure fire incidents with fire spread confined to room, floor, or building of origin. • Utstein criteria cardiac arrest survival rate based.	■	◆	■	■	■	■
e. *Improve the effectiveness and efficiency of pre-incident planning.*	• Develop preplans for commercial occupancies and critical infrastructure by the end of the 4th quarter of 2025. • Develop preplans for high-risk wildland interface areas by the end of the 4th quarter of 2026. • Review and update preplans annually.	■	■	◆	■	■	■

Table 2. Strategic Goals, Initiatives, and Performance Measures (continued)

◆ Primary Responsibility

■ Supportive Responsibility

Goals & Initiatives	Performance Measures	Administrative	Operations	Prevention & Pub Ed	Training	Facilities	R&M
Strategic Goal 2: Be fiscally responsible and operate with transparency.		◆	■	■	■	■	■
a. *Develop, maintain, and operate under sound fiscal policy and procedure.*	• Clean bi-annual financial and accountability audits from the Washington State Auditor's Office. • Maintain or improve the district's bond rating (AA-). • Receive the Government Finance Officers Distinguished Budget Presentation Award annually. • General fund beginning balance of greater than or equal to 38% of budgeted general fund expenses on an annual basis. • The percentage of full funding within the capital projects fund (based on projected future expenses and liabilities). • The percentage of full funding within the leave accrual fund (based on projected future expenses and liabilities).	◆	■	■	■	■	■
b. *Maintain a long-term financial plan to provide context and a framework for fiscal decision-making.*	Review and update the long-term financial plan by the end of the 4th quarter on a two-year cycle (beginning in 2025).	◆	■	■	■	■	■

Table 2. Strategic Goals, Initiatives, and Performance Measures (continued)

◆ Primary Responsibility

■ Supportive Responsibility

Goals & Initiatives	Performance Measures	Administrative	Operations	Prevention & Pub Ed	Training	Facilities	R&M
c. Develop and maintain a capital projects plan and capital project funding strategy to meet the district's capital infrastructure needs.	• Develop the district's capital projects plan by the end of the 2nd quarter of 2024. • Review and update the long-term financial plan by the end of the 4th quarter on an annual basis (beginning in 2025).	◆	■	■	■	■	■
d. Engage the community in building awareness and understanding of the district's fiscal and policy making processes.	• Percentage of board of fire commissioner's meetings providing remote access (e.g., Zoom). • Percentage of board of fire commissioner's meeting video recordings accessible on the district's website. • Annual number of social media posts addressing fiscal and policy issues. • Integrated comprehensive plan components accessible on the district's website. • Annual number of newsletter articles addressing fiscal or policy making issues.	◆		■			

Table 2. Strategic Goals, Initiatives, and Performance Measures (continued)

◆ Primary Responsibility

■ Supportive Responsibility

Goals & Initiatives	Performance Measures	Administrative	Operations	Prevention & Pub Ed	Training	Facilities	R&M
Strategic Goal 3: Build and maintain a healthy, safe, and productive work environment.		◆	■	■	■	■	■
a. Implement a comprehensive health and wellness program focusing on physical fitness, mental health, and nutritional guidance.	• Percentage of members completing an annual physical examination. • Percentage of members participating in physical training while on shift. • Annual number of labor and industries workers' compensation claims and Board for Volunteer Firefighters injury compensation claims. • Annual number of workdays lost due to on-the-job injury.	◆	■		■		
b. Establish open channels of communication where staff can report concerns, suggest improvements, and provide feedback on workplace conditions without fear of reprisal.	• Case examples of the Impact of feedback on organizational improvements. • Member satisfaction and trust in the communication process.	◆	■	■	■	■	■

Table 2. Strategic Goals, Initiatives, and Performance Measures (continued)

◆ Primary Responsibility

■ Supportive Responsibility

Goals & Initiatives	Performance Measures	Administrative	Operations	Prevention & Pub Ed	Training	Facilities	R&M
c. Develop a recognition and reward system to acknowledge and celebrate the achievements and contributions of staff members.	• Participation rate (members recognized by peers or supervisors) in the recognition program. • Member satisfaction with the recognition program. • Diversity of achievements recognized [QUALITATIVE].	◆	■	■	■	■	■
d. Explore staffing and scheduling options to help staff maintain a better work-life balance, which could, in turn, contribute to a healthier and more productive work environment.	• Member satisfaction with work-life balance. • Overtime hours required to maintain minimum staffing. • Percentage of vacant shifts due to lack of staffing. • Full-time, part-time, and volunteer turnover rates.	◆	■				

Table 2. Strategic Goals, Initiatives, and Performance Measures (continued)

◆ Primary Responsibility

■ Supportive Responsibility

Goals & Initiatives	Performance Measures	Administrative	Operations	Prevention & Pub Ed	Training	Facilities	R&M
Strategic Goal 4: *Identify and apply best practice to achieve continuous improvement of effectiveness, efficiency, and value.*		◆	■	■	■	■	■
a. *Maintain a strategic plan to provide clear direction and establish goals and objectives for the district.*	• Develop the strategic plan by the end of the 1st quarter of 2024. • Review and update the strategic plan by the end of the 2nd quarter on a five-year cycle (beginning in 2028).	◆	■	■	■	■	■
b. *Implement a robust benchmarking process to compare ECFR's performance with other similar organizations and best practices.*	• Develop the fire and emergency services self-assessment model (FESSAM) by the end of the 4th quarter of 2025. • Review and update the FESSAM by the end of the 4th quarter on an annual basis (beginning in 2026).	◆	■	■	■	■	■
c. *Define and regularly measure key results that align with the district's strategic goals, initiatives, and objectives.*	• Biannual report on strategic performance measures provided to the board of fire commissioners in July and January. • Report of accomplishments and projects tied to the district's strategic goals and initiatives in the district's annual comprehensive budget.	◆	■	■	■	■	■

Table 2. Strategic Goals, Initiatives, and Performance Measures (continued)

◆ Primary Responsibility

■ Supportive Responsibility

Goals & Initiatives	Performance Measures	Administrative	Operations	Prevention & Pub Ed	Training	Facilities	R&M
d. Collaborate with neighboring fire and rescue services and other municipal entities to maximize the effectiveness, efficiency, and value provided to the district.	• Automatic and mutual aid agreements with neighboring agencies [QUALITATIVE]. • Case examples of collaborative efforts to maximize effectiveness, efficiency, and value [QUALITATIVE].	◆	■	■	■	■	■
e. Foster a culture that the district's members at all levels suggest and implement improvements.	• Case examples of implemented suggestions on operational efficiency and effectiveness [QUALITATIVE]. • Member satisfaction and engagement levels.	◆	■	■	■	■	■

Table 4. Strategic Goals, Initiatives, and Performance Measures (continued)

◆ Primary Responsibility

■ Supportive Responsibility

Goals & Initiatives	Performance Measures	Administrative	Operations	Prevention & Pub Ed	Training	Facilities	R&M
Strategic Goal 5: Develop adequate staffing and infrastructure to meet community needs.		◆	■	■	◆	◆	◆
a. *Establish a robust, ongoing professional development program.*	• Percentage of members with a full-time, part-time, and volunteer members with a current professional development plan. • Percentage of full-time staff that have advanced to the step consistent with their longevity. • Percentage of volunteer, part-time, and full-time members qualified for promotion to the next level or rank. • Percentage of fire officers holding professional designation as a Fire Officer, Chief Fire Officer, etc. • Member satisfaction and feedback on professional development opportunities.	■	■	■	◆		
b. *Develop and implement an effective recruitment and retention program for full-time, part-time, and volunteer members.*	• Percentage of fully authorized staffing level maintained for full-time, part-time, and volunteer members. • Percentage of volunteer members achieving minimum certification at the Firefighter I level within 18 months of hire. • Median longevity of full-time, part-time, and volunteer members. • Diversity profile of the district's members and applicants for volunteer, part-time, and full-time positions [QUALITATIVE].	■	■		◆		

Table 4. Strategic Goals, Initiatives, and Performance Measures (continued)

◆ Primary Responsibility

■ Supportive Responsibility

Goals & Initiatives	Performance Measures	Administrative	Operations	Prevention & Pub Ed	Training	Facilities	R&M
c. *Develop and implement a comprehensive apparatus and equipment maintenance program to maximize in-service time, minimize maintenance, and minimize repair expenses.*	• Percentage of in-service time for engines, water tenders, and squads. • Total cost of apparatus repair. • Total cost of apparatus maintenance. • Apparatus repair to maintenance expense ratio. • Case examples of equipment service life extension and/or apparatus maintenance improvement programs [QUALITATIVE]. • Case examples of equipment failures inclusive of impact on operational effectiveness and expense [QUALITIATIVE]	■	■				◆
d. *Develop and implement a comprehensive facilities program to minimize the expense of maintaining the district's existing facilities.*	• Total cost of facilities repair. • Total cost of facilities maintenance. • Facilities repair to maintenance expense ratio. • Case examples of equipment service life extension and/or apparatus maintenance improvement programs [QUALITATIVE]. • Case examples of equipment failures inclusive of impact on operational effectiveness and expense [QUALITIATIVE].	■	■			◆	

Table 2. Strategic Goals, Initiatives, and Performance Measures (continued)

◆ Primary Responsibility

■ Supportive Responsibility

Goals & Initiatives	Performance Measures	Administrative	Operations	Prevention & Pub Ed	Training	Facilities	R&M
Strategic Goal 6: Ensure adequate and sustainable funding.		◆	■	■	■	■	■
a. *Develop alternative (non-property tax) revenue sources consistent with the district's mission.*	• Cost-benefit analysis of new revenue initiatives [QUALITATIVE]. • Percentage of total revenue from non-tax revenue streams.	◆					
b. *Develop and present property tax funding alternatives (e.g., lid lift, voter approved bond measure) to the board of fire commissioners as necessary to meet and continue established service delivery levels.*	• Feasibility and impact analysis of proposed measures [QUALITATIVE]. • Commissioner approval percentage on property tax measures presented to the board. • Voter approval percentage for each property tax measure presented on the ballot.	◆					
c. *Pursue grants and other one-time funding consistent with the district's mission and strategic goals.*	• Number and value of grants secured. • Success rate of grant applications. • Alignment of grant funding with strategic goals [QUALITATIVE]. • Impact on district operations and projects [QUALITATIVE]. • Diversity of grant funding sources [QUALITATIVE]	◆	■	■	■	■	■

Implementing the Strategic Plan

Key Considerations

Implementing the East County Fire and Rescue strategic plan will require considerable and sustained effort. Strategic planning is not about producing a plan; it is about leadership engaging others to achieve the organization's vision. Planning falls short when direction is set, and nothing more happens. Strategic planning is a process that includes charting a direction, determining the course, *and reaching a destination* [emphasis added]. It is essential to plan for implementing goals and strategies in addition to identifying them.

Accountability for Initiatives

Table 2 identifies linkage between strategic goals, initiatives, and strategic performance measures. The lead person or champion for each initiative will be responsible for developing an operational plan that details implementation of initiatives. These operational plans will provide clarity as to exactly what resources will be necessary and intermediate milestones leading to accomplishment of the goals specified in the strategic plan.

The Budget

A cornerstone of budget policy is that the district "ensure that the budgeting process has a direct and strong connection with the strategic plan adopted by the board of fire commissioners" (ECFR, 2023b, p. 32). ECFR'S budget process integrates the district's strategic goals and supporting initiatives with financial decision-making, budgeting, and planning.

The strategic plan provides high level direction for district operations. Other elements of the district's integrated comprehensive plan such as the community risk assessment (CRA), standard of coverage and community risk reduction plan (SOC/CRRP), long-term financial plan, and fire and emergency services self-assessment model (FESSAM) provide specific and measurable objectives for continuous improvement.

Assessing and Reporting on Performance

The district's (lead and lag) performance measures provide a means of assessing and reporting on progress towards achievement of identified strategic goals. At the most fundamental level, the district will assess performance annually. The district will monitor critical performance measures more frequently (e.g., monthly, or quarterly) to allow course corrections as work continues.

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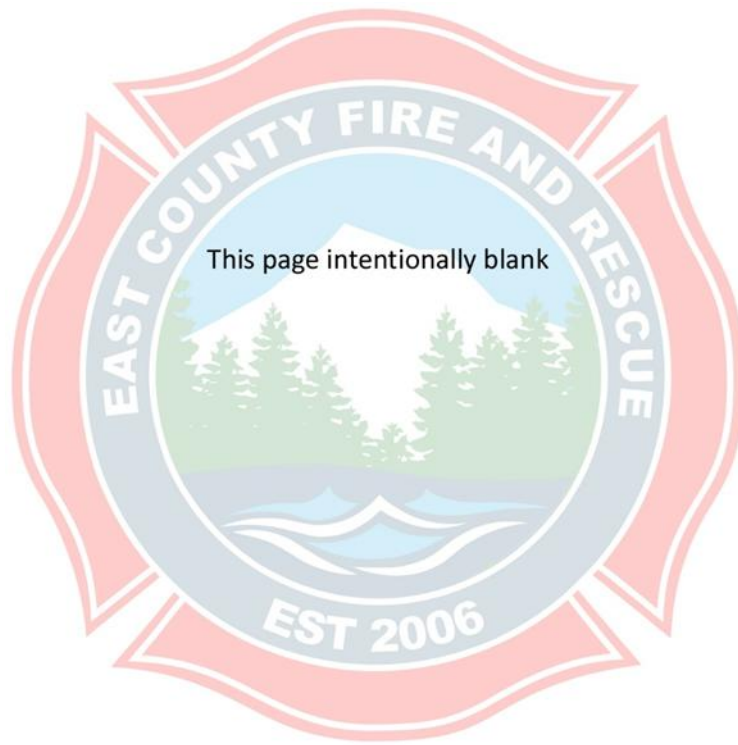
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