



BLUFFTON TOWNSHIP FIRE DISTRICT

STRATEGIC PLAN

2018 - 2023



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Introduction

The Bluffton Township Fire District (BTFD) provides an all-hazards approach in the protection of the lives and property of the residents, businesses, and visitors of the Town of Bluffton and southern Beaufort County, South Carolina. BTFD 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 district'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 9th 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 district'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 district with an opportunity to participate in the development of their organization's long-term direction and focus. Members of the organization's community and district stakeholders' groups demonstrated commitment to this important project and remain committed to the document's completion and future plan execution.

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STRATEGIC PLAN
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Organizational Background

The area that makes up the Bluffton Township Fire District, South Carolina, dates back to the 16th and 17th centuries where the original inhabitants, the Yemassee Indians and other tribes lived. Eventually Europeans worked to settle the area. This in turn brought forth troubling times before the area stabilized and was further settled into several baronies. In 1852, the Town of Bluffton was officially established by the South Carolina General Assembly. Throughout its rich history, the town has survived through many tumultuous times including South Carolina's secession from the Union, the burning of the town in the civil war, hurricanes, and other challenges to become part of a major commercial traffic route, due to its location on the May River.



Eventually the town evolved more into a summer retreat area due to its proximity to the Atlantic Ocean. This brought prosperity to the area and moved Bluffton to where it is today. Presently, the area is residential and light commercial, with no significant heavy industrial attributes. Currently, the town and, therefore, the fire district is challenged with properly dealing with the rapid growth in the area as development and population increases.



The Bluffton Township Fire District was formally founded in 1978 as a special fire tax district by the Beaufort County Council to provide emergency services in the southern portion of the County and the Town of Bluffton. Initially, the district was made up of three independent volunteer fire departments – Chelsea, Pritchardville, and Bluffton. These local departments were created by concerned citizens seeing a need for fire and medical services in the area prior to the County combining them into a single department in 1978. Over the years the department

evolved from a volunteer service and started hiring paid firefighters. In 2007, the district became a fully career department that now serves a population of approximately 60,000 residents with 149 personnel within its 246 square miles.





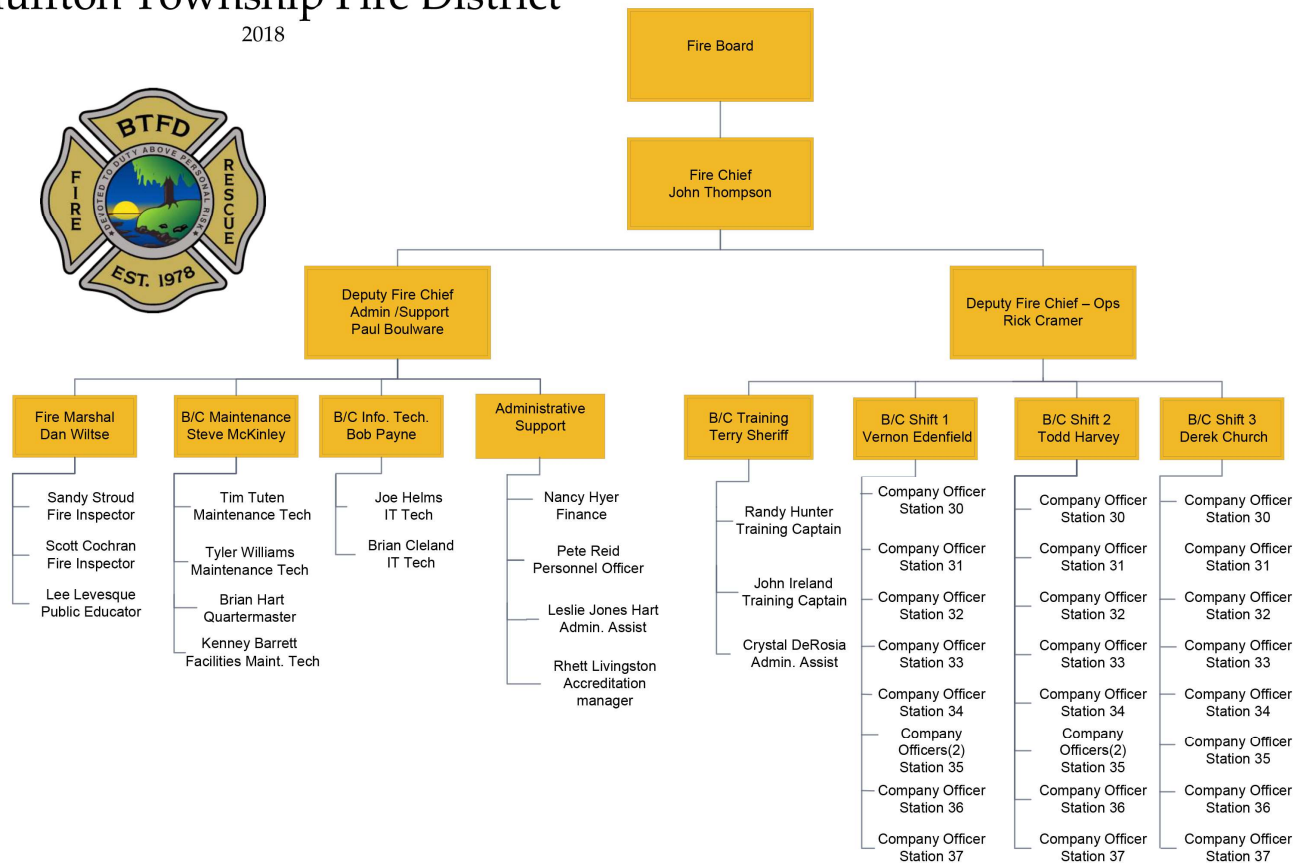
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Today, the Bluffton Township Fire District is committed to protecting the lives and property of its citizens, while providing proactive all-hazards public safety services to address all its community's risks from eight stations, located strategically throughout its jurisdiction. The district embraces quality service and excellence in all it does.

Organizational Structure

Bluffton Township Fire District

2018





BLUFFTON TOWNSHIP FIRE DISTRICT 2018-2023 STRATEGIC PLAN

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.”¹

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 clear 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 progress and levels will measure success.



Community Stakeholders Work Session

¹ See Definition, Purpose, and Benefits of Strategic Planning (Bryson 8)





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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 or for 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 a vision of the future.
13. Develop organizational and community commitment to accomplishing the plan.

Process and Acknowledgements

The Center for Public Safety Excellence (CPSE) acknowledges and thanks the community and district stakeholders for their participation and input into this Community-Driven Strategic Planning Process. The CPSE also recognizes Fire Chief John Thompson and his team for their leadership and commitment to this process.

Development of this strategic plan took place in September 2018, beginning with a meeting hosted by a representative from the CPSE for members of the community (as named in the following table). The community stakeholders were comprised of those within the Bluffton Township Fire District's coverage area, and of BTFD service recipients who may not reside within the district. The district identified the stakeholders to ensure a broad representation of the community could provide input.





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Bluffton Township Fire District Community Stakeholders

Joe Babkiewicz	Leonard Beers	Sharon Blount	Todd Bornscheuer
Suzann Bowman	Mary Boyle	Christopher Chapmond	Henrik de Gyor
Corri F. DiBagno	Ashley Doscher	Linda Faber	Tom Faber
Dr. Richard Gough	Kimberly Hall	Paul Hamilton	Rick Hoppe
Zena Hundertmark	Gene C. King	Bill Korr	Kate Lang
Carol Liff	Elaine Lust	Scott M. Marshall	Linda Michaelson
Dr. Roger Michaelson	Pat Murphy	Ted O'Brien	David O'Donoghue
Ed Olsen	Joseph Paolo	Elissa Passiment	Jim Pierce
Louis Poindexter	Roy Powers	Jane Pritz	Mike Raymond
Pamela Robinson	Gwyneth J. Saunders	Lisa Sulka	P.J. Tanner
Doug Volk	William Winn		



Community Stakeholders Work Session





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Community Group Findings

A key element of the Bluffton Township Fire District's organizational philosophy is having a high level of commitment to the community, as well as recognizing the importance of community satisfaction. Thus, the district invited community representatives to provide feedback on services provided. Respondents were asked to provide a prioritized perspective of the programs and services provided by the BTFD. Additionally, input was gathered during the meeting that focused on community expectations and concerns (prioritized), as well as positive and other comments about the organization, provided in the appendix of this document. The district stakeholders utilized all feedback from the community stakeholders in understanding the current challenges encountered within the organization, as well as to ensure alignment with the work completed on the organizational mission, values, vision, and goals for improvement.

Community Priorities

To best dedicate time, energy, and resources to services most desired by its community, the Bluffton Township Fire District 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 district through a process of direct comparison. The results of the prioritization were as follows:

Programs	Ranking	Score
Emergency Medical Services	1	231
Fire Suppression	2	215
Rescue – Basic and Technical	3	197
Emergency Management	4	155
Community Risk Reduction	5	98
Hazardous Materials Mitigation	6	93
Fire Investigation	7	85
Public Fire and Life Safety Education	8	74

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





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District Stakeholder Group Findings

The district 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. Focus was placed on the district’s mission, values, core programs and supporting services, as well as the BTFD’s perceived strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. The work sessions involved participation by the broad organization representation in attendance, as named and pictured below.

Bluffton Township Fire District Stakeholders			
Donald Bach <i>Captain</i>	Paul Boulware <i>Deputy Chief</i>	Derek Church <i>Battalion Chief</i>	Daniel Connelly <i>Senior Firefighter C</i>
Adam Corn <i>Captain</i>	Allen Cramer <i>Senior Firefighter C</i>	Richard Dollahan <i>Captain</i>	Vernon Edenfield <i>Battalion Chief</i>
Kevin Feltner <i>Firefighter</i>	Derek Franks <i>Captain</i>	Brian Hart <i>Captain</i>	Todd Harvey <i>Battalion Chief</i>
Matt Henne <i>Senior Firefighter C</i>	John Ireland <i>Captain</i>	Jeff Kuehn <i>Lieutenant</i>	Lee Levesque <i>Captain</i>
Rhett Livingston <i>Accreditation Manager</i>	Steve McKinley <i>Battalion Chief</i>	Duke Novak <i>Senior Firefighter A</i>	Bob Payne <i>Battalion Chief</i>
Jerry Piccioli <i>Captain</i>	Michael Rehill <i>Captain</i>	Pete Reid <i>Captain</i>	Terry Sheriff <i>Battalion Chief</i>
John Thompson <i>Fire Chief</i>	Michael Tuten <i>Senior Firefighter C</i>	Dan Wiltse <i>Fire Marshal</i>	



District Stakeholders





BLUFFTON TOWNSHIP FIRE DISTRICT 2018-2023 STRATEGIC PLAN

Mission

The purpose of the mission is to provide foundational understanding as to the existence of the organization. The focus of the mission must 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:

The Bluffton Township Fire District's mission is to efficiently protect the lives and property of our community in a kind and professional manner.



District Stakeholders Work Session





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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:

Respect:	<u>We respect all people</u> in our quest to honor diversity in our community and in our own agency, through dignity, choice, and compassion.
Progressive:	<u>Continuous improvement</u> through feedback from our community, through professional development, and community risk reduction.
Leadership:	<u>Guiding our community</u> through all aspects of risk and hazard reduction.
Dedication:	<u>To maintain an attitude and commitment</u> beyond the expectations of our community.
Trust:	<u>Establishing and maintaining integrity</u> through professionalism, transparency, and fiscal responsibility.

The mission and values are the foundation of this organization and should align with the community. Thus, every effort will be made to keep these current and meaningful so that the individuals who make up the Bluffton Township Fire District are guided by them in the accomplishment of the goals, objectives, and day-to-day tasks.

Programs and Services

The district 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 district's core programs are provided below, while supporting services are provided in Appendix 2.

Core Programs of the Bluffton Township Fire District		
Emergency Medical Services	Fire Suppression	Rescue – Basic and Technical
Emergency Management	Community Risk Reduction	Hazardous Materials Mitigation
Fire Investigation	Public Fire and Life Safety Education	





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SWOT Analysis

The strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analysis is designed to have an organization candidly identify its positive and less-than-desirable attributes. District stakeholders participated in this activity to record their strengths and weaknesses internally, as well as the possible opportunities and potential threats external to the organization. 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 district stakeholders.



District Stakeholders Work Session

Critical Issues and Service Gaps

Following the identification and review of the district's SWOT, two separate groups of district 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 ultimate lend direction for the development of goals, objectives, critical tasks, and timelines.



District Stakeholders Work Session



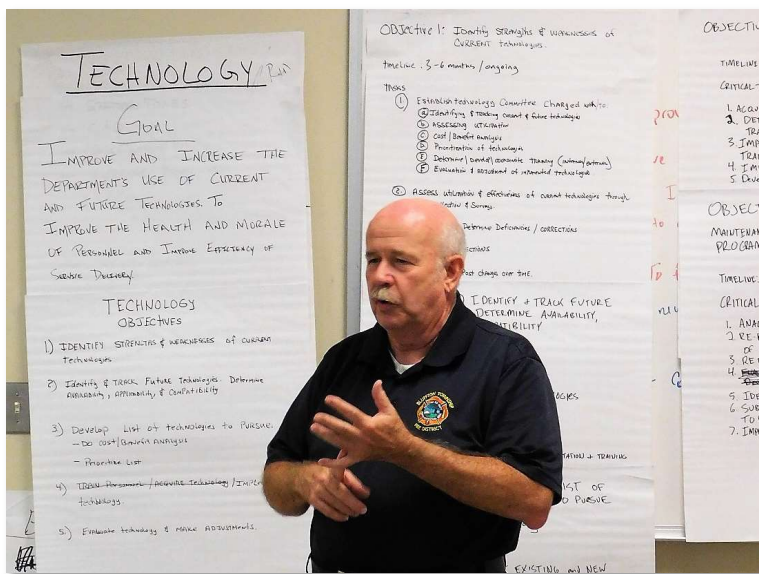


BLUFFTON TOWNSHIP FIRE DISTRICT 2018-2023 STRATEGIC PLAN

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. The district stakeholders reached consensus that the initiatives are truly strategic, reflect the issues and gaps identified, and will create positive change for the organization.

Bluffton Township Fire District's Strategic Initiatives		
EMS	Community Risk Reduction	Workforce Planning
Internal Communication	Infrastructure	Emergency Management
Technology	Special Operations Program Expansion	Accreditation



District Stakeholders Work Session

Goals and Objectives

To continuously achieve the mission of the Bluffton Township Fire District, realistic goals and objectives with timelines for completion must be established to enhance strengths, address identified weaknesses, provide a clear direction, and address the concerns of the community. These should become a focus of the district's efforts, as they will direct the organization to its desired future while having reduced 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 Bluffton Township Fire District's leadership.





BLUFFTON TOWNSHIP FIRE DISTRICT 2018-2023 STRATEGIC PLAN

Goal 1	Enhance the delivery of emergency medical services (EMS) to be more efficient and progressive for our community.	
Objective 1A	Identify and evaluate the current EMS delivery program within our response area.	
Timeframe	8 months	Assigned to:
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collect historical data. • Determine the applicable call types. • Determine all call locations. • Determine all response time elements. • Review the district’s response guidelines. • Review the current medical protocols to determine effectiveness. • Report all findings to the leadership team for future disposition and guidance. • Report all findings to other regional fire/EMS agencies for their knowledge and input. 	
Funding Estimate	Capital Costs: Personnel Costs:	Consumable Costs: Contract Services Costs:
Objective 1B	Conduct an EMS risk/deployment study to determine service level objectives.	
Timeframe	8 months	Assigned to:
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine call type response priority. • Determine adequacy of current resources. • Determine if the district meets the standards as prescribed within the international accreditation model. • Evaluate the effectiveness of the current dispatch system. • Report all findings to the leadership team for future disposition and guidance. • Report all findings to other regional fire/EMS agencies for their knowledge and input. 	
Funding Estimate	Capital Costs: Personnel Costs:	Consumable Costs: Contract Services Costs:
Objective 1C	Develop a comprehensive course of action to address the study findings in conjunction with evidence-based medical practices.	
Timeframe	8 months	Assigned to:
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine the medical protocols with evidence-based practices used by similar systems. • Create a roadmap to align the district’s current protocols with nationally-accepted medical-based practices. • Integrate the roadmap into the district’s current training program. • Determine any future disposition as directed by the leadership team. 	
Funding Estimate	Capital Costs: Personnel Costs:	Consumable Costs: Contract Services Costs:





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Objective 1D	Evaluate the district’s current training program to address and correct the study findings in conjunction with evidence-based medical practices.	
Timeframe	8 months	Assigned to:
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the knowledge, skills, and abilities of the district’s current personnel. • Review the current community outreach program. • Review the current training tools and equipment. • Report all findings to the leadership team for future disposition and guidance. 	
Funding Estimate	Capital Costs: Personnel Costs:	Consumable Costs: Contract Services Costs:
Objective 1E	Deliver a training program based on service needs and findings of the risk assessment study.	
Timeframe	8 months	Assigned to:
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop the curriculum to be used. • Determine who will deliver the training. • Acquire, update, and replace any equipment and tools needed to conduct the training. • Conduct the training to all personnel based on the current training schedule. • Increase the district’s current community outreach program if needed. 	
Funding Estimate	Capital Costs: Personnel Costs:	Consumable Costs: Contract Services Costs:
Objective 1F	Implement a policy and guideline review for the delivery of service needs.	
Timeframe	8 months	Assigned to:
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine policies and guidelines to be reviewed. • Create a team to conduct the review. • Determine what standard by which to conduct the review. • Conduct the review to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A six-month review of new protocols for personnel. ○ An evaluation of protocols based on comprehension and retention. • Report all findings to the leadership team for future disposition and guidance. 	
Funding Estimate	Capital Costs: Personnel Costs:	Consumable Costs: Contract Services Costs:
Objective 1G	Create and implement a plan for evaluation and continuous improvement of EMS within the district’s response area.	
Timeframe	8 months	Assigned to:
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine the national and regionally recognized evaluation processes. • Apply the determined evaluation processes to the district’s needs. • Identify process outcomes desired, along with data points for measurement. • Implement the evaluation process and set any course correction based on the outcome data. 	
Funding Estimate	Capital Costs: Personnel Costs:	Consumable Costs: Contract Services Costs:





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Goal 2	Improve the overall effectiveness of the community risk reduction program to enhance community safety.	
Objective 2A	Re-evaluate the current community risk reduction program to identify any gaps and needs.	
Timeframe	2 months, ongoing annually	Assigned to:
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collect any current data from local, state, and federal databases on injuries and deaths relative the district’s risks. • Create an internal baseline database using the new data. • Conduct an assessment of review, comparison, and update of the data. • Conduct a needs assessment based on the updated data and the assessment results. • Determine any and all recommendations for program revision as determined. • Report the findings to the leadership team for future disposition and guidance. 	
Funding Estimate	Capital Costs: Personnel Costs:	Consumable Costs: Contract Services Costs:
Objective 2B	Conduct training for all relevant personnel on the new community risk reduction programs.	
Timeframe	1 year	Assigned to:
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create curriculum that meets current program needs. • Determine who should receive the training. • Schedule training for the internal workforce. • Deliver the training to the identified workforce. • Solicit feedback on the training for evaluation purposes. • Evaluate the feedback and the training for effectiveness and adjust if the need is determined. 	
Funding Estimate	Capital Costs: Personnel Costs:	Consumable Costs: Contract Services Costs:
Objective 2C	Identify personnel needs to accomplish the goals of the community risk reduction program.	
Timeframe	1 year	Assigned to:
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate the program management needs (personnel). • Evaluate the funding needs and research sources. • Create a recruiting and retention program for community risk reduction personnel. • Establish long-term funding needs. • Report the findings to the leadership team for future disposition and guidance. 	
Funding Estimate	Capital Costs: Personnel Costs:	Consumable Costs: Contract Services Costs:





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Objective 2D Improve data collection to better evaluate program effectiveness.

Timeframe 1 year **Assigned to:**

- Evaluate current data collection processes to identify gaps and needs.
- Create a training program to improve data collection.

Critical Tasks

- Deliver the training program to improve data collection.
- Update, if needed, the training program to improve data collection.
- Create a data formatting process to accomplish the community risk reduction goals and objectives.

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

Objective 2E Create a feedback process to evaluate the effectiveness of the community risk reduction programs.

Timeframe 6 months **Assigned to:**

- Identify feedback methods and create a district-specific program.
- Employ the chosen program and collect feedback.
- Continuously review the program for desired effectiveness.

Critical Tasks

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



District Stakeholders Work Session





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Goal 3	Develop a comprehensive workforce plan to create, sustain, and retain a viable workforce that can support current and future initiatives.	
Objective 3A	Analyze all current workforce policies, procedures, and plans to identify strengths and weaknesses.	
Timeframe	3 months	Assigned to:
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the following policies and procedures using a SWOT approach: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Hiring policy ○ Employee benefits ○ Personnel evaluations ○ Promotional pay • Review position descriptions. • Identify any policy and procedure components to retain, modify, or delete. • Compile the results for a comparative analysis. • Conduct the comparative analysis. • Report the findings to the leadership team for future disposition and guidance. 	
Funding Estimate	Capital Costs: Personnel Costs:	Consumable Costs: Contract Services Costs:
Objective 3B	Determine the future workforce requirements and needs.	
Timeframe	1 – 3 years	Assigned to:
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct a demographic study of forecasted growth and population trends within the fire district. • Determine the business and residential growth plans/patterns. • Identify emergency threats with potential to affect staffing or service delivery. • Identify external partners for workforce pipeline development. • Conduct a workforce readiness study. • Update the comprehensive classification and compensation study. • Identify the response patterns. • Report the findings to the leadership team for future disposition and guidance. 	
Funding Estimate	Capital Costs: Personnel Costs:	Consumable Costs: Contract Services Costs:
Objective 3C	Identify all deficiencies noted from the comparative analysis of current and future workforce requirements/needs.	
Timeframe	3 months	Assigned to:
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compare and contrast the position descriptions and classifications. • Compare and contrast all applicable policies, procedures and SOGs. • Identify personnel staffing levels and requirements. • Prioritize the deficiencies list • Report the findings to the leadership team for future disposition and guidance. 	
Funding Estimate	Capital Costs: Personnel Costs:	Consumable Costs: Contract Services Costs:
Objective 3D	Develop processes necessary to address identified deficiencies.	
Timeframe	6 – 12 months	Assigned to:
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update the hiring process, recruiting plan, and things relevant to retention. • Update the training requirements for existing staff. • Analyze efficiencies and appropriateness of internal versus external training. • Update applicable policies, procedures, and SOGs. 	





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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construct a comprehensive workforce plan. • Report the findings to the leadership team for future disposition and guidance. 				
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Capital Costs:	Consumable Costs:				
Personnel Costs:	Contract Services Costs:				
Objective 3E	Implement the processes necessary to address the identified deficiencies.				
Timeframe	3 months Assigned to:				
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement the hiring process and recruiting plan. • Implement the training requirements for existing staff. • Implement the applicable policies, procedures, and SOGs. • Implement the comprehensive compensation plan. 				
Funding Estimate	<table> <tr> <td>Capital Costs:</td> <td>Consumable Costs:</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Personnel Costs:</td> <td>Contract Services Costs:</td> </tr> </table>	Capital Costs:	Consumable Costs:	Personnel Costs:	Contract Services Costs:
Capital Costs:	Consumable Costs:				
Personnel Costs:	Contract Services Costs:				
Objective 3F	Evaluate/measure the results, identify target deficiencies (if any), develop adjustments to processes, and re-implement the adjusted processes.				
Timeframe	18 months, ongoing Assigned to:				
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Calculate the retention rate and analyze existing data. • Calculate the injury and accident rates. • Calculate all health/dental/vision loss rates. • Calculate property/casualty loss rates. • Calculate worker's compensation loss rates. • Analyze customer service survey data. • Analyze post-incident review data. • Analyze employee satisfaction survey data. • Publish the results. • Identify policies, procedures, and SOGs requiring update. • Update the policies, procedures, and SOGs. • Implement the updated policies, procedures, and SOGs. 				
Funding Estimate	<table> <tr> <td>Capital Costs:</td> <td>Consumable Costs:</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Personnel Costs:</td> <td>Contract Services Costs:</td> </tr> </table>	Capital Costs:	Consumable Costs:	Personnel Costs:	Contract Services Costs:
Capital Costs:	Consumable Costs:				
Personnel Costs:	Contract Services Costs:				





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Goal 4	Maintain current infrastructure as well as prepare for future growth to provide efficient services.	
Objective 4A	Identify current infrastructure resources utilized by the BTFD.	
Timeframe	3 months	Assigned to:
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a comprehensive asset/planning document. • Evaluate current service life of each asset. • Compare service life of assets to national and regional standards already established. • Prioritize a repair or replacement schedule for assets. • Determine what needs to be added to inventory. • Report the findings to the leadership team for future disposition and guidance. 	
Funding Estimate	Capital Costs: Personnel Costs:	Consumable Costs: Contract Services Costs:
Objective 4B	Create a needs assessment for the Fire District based on current needs and growth trends.	
Timeframe	3 months	Assigned to:
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate data received from asset/planning document. • Create a list of needs from the received data based on growth trends. • Implement allocation of the assets and equipment determined by the list. • Create a continuous improvement working group to forecast future needs. • Evaluate the current resources against the newly created needs assessment. • Report the findings to the leadership team for future disposition and guidance. 	
Funding Estimate	Capital Costs: Personnel Costs:	Consumable Costs: Contract Services Costs:
Objective 4C	Implement created and/or updated programs to fill the identified needs.	
Timeframe	3 – 6 months	Assigned to:
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update programs from the needs assessment dealing with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Apparatus maintenance ○ Station maintenance ○ Equipment maintenance • Create new programs as identified from the needs assessment • Train on new programs identified from the needs assessment • Conduct implementation of the programs from the needs assessment dealing with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Apparatus maintenance ○ Station maintenance ○ Equipment maintenance 	
Funding Estimate	Capital Costs: Personnel Costs:	Consumable Costs: Contract Services Costs:
Objective 4D	Evaluate the created and/or updated programs for their effectiveness.	
Timeframe	3 months, ongoing	Assigned to:
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine measurement benchmarks. • Re-evaluate expected versus actual service life of assets. • Re-evaluate priority of replacement list. • Conduct ongoing re-evaluation of needs. 	
Funding Estimate	Capital Costs: Personnel Costs:	Consumable Costs: Contract Services Costs:
Goal 5	Improve the emergency management system based on interagency cooperation, teamwork, and shared information to improve community safety readiness.	





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Objective 5A	Identify agencies' components of the current emergency management system and their areas of responsibility.	
Timeframe	2 months	Assigned to:
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine the agencies involved. • Determine contact within the identified agencies. • Request operational readiness guidelines. 	
Funding Estimate	Capital Costs: Personnel Costs:	Consumable Costs: Contract Services Costs:
Objective 5B	Identify areas of improvement and share findings.	
Timeframe	1 year	Assigned to:
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct an internal evaluation of concerns specific to the district. • Conduct an external evaluation of concerns specific to other agencies. • Collate and disseminate the findings to all responsible agencies. 	
Funding Estimate	Capital Costs: Personnel Costs:	Consumable Costs: Contract Services Costs:
Objective 5C	Develop an emergency management system improvement committee.	
Timeframe	1 year	Assigned to:
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish who will be part of the committee. • Invite participation on the committee. • Establish the internal and external group. • Have the committee establish an incident action plan. • Distribute the plan to all agencies for approval. 	
Funding Estimate	Capital Costs: Personnel Costs:	Consumable Costs: Contract Services Costs:
Objective 5D	Implement programs to foster interagency cooperation to improve committee safety readiness.	
Timeframe	1 year	Assigned to:
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adjust any relevant SOPs and guidelines to the new incident action plan. • Conduct training on any new or revised SOPs and guidelines. • Evaluate and implement a continuous improvement program. 	
Funding Estimate	Capital Costs: Personnel Costs:	Consumable Costs: Contract Services Costs:





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Goal 6	Improve and increase the district's use of current and future technologies to improve the health and morale of personnel and improve efficiency of service delivery.	
Objective 6A	Identify the strengths and weaknesses of current technologies.	
Timeframe	3 – 6 months	Assigned to:
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a technology committee chart with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Identifying and tracking current and future technologies ○ Assessing utilization ○ Cost/benefit analysis ○ Prioritization of technologies ○ Determination, development, and coordination of training (internal and external) ○ Evaluation and adjustment of implemented technologies • Assess the utilization and effectiveness of current technologies through data collection and surveys. • Identify and determine any deficiencies and needed corrections. • Implement any identified corrections. • Re-evaluate and post changes over time. 	
Funding Estimate	Capital Costs: Personnel Costs:	Consumable Costs: Contract Services Costs:
Objective 6B	Identify and track future technologies, determining availability, applicability, and compatibility.	
Timeframe	3 months, ongoing	Assigned to:
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify emergency technologies. • Assess the availability. • Assess the applicability. • Assess the compatibility and overlap. • Determine the cost of acquisition, implementation and training. • Report the findings to the leadership team for future disposition and guidance. 	
Funding Estimate	Capital Costs: Personnel Costs:	Consumable Costs: Contract Services Costs:
Objective 6C	Develop a list of technologies to pursue.	
Timeframe	3 months, ongoing	Assigned to:
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consolidate a list of existing and new technologies to pursue. • Prioritize the list of determined technologies. • Submit recommendations to the fire chief for approval. • Begin acquisition process of the approved technologies. 	
Funding Estimate	Capital Costs: Personnel Costs:	Consumable Costs: Contract Services Costs:





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Objective 6D Implement the new technologies.

Timeframe 1 year, ongoing **Assigned to:**

- Acquire the new technologies.
- Determine any internal and external refresher training requirements.

Critical Tasks

- Implement the initial and refresher training as needed.
- Implement the technology.
- Develop a replacement schedule.

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

Objective 6E Establish a continuous maintenance and evaluation of ongoing programs.

Timeframe 3 - 12 months, ongoing **Assigned to:**

- Analyze and track trouble reports.
- Re-evaluate current utilization of technology.
- Re-evaluate the cost/benefit analysis.
- Identify adjustments and changes.
- Submit change recommendations to the fire chief if appropriate.
- Implement approved changes.

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



District Stakeholders Work Session





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Goal 7	Improve and expand response capabilities of the Bluffton Township Fire District (BTFD) Special Operations Service Program (SOSP) to mitigate identified risks effectively.	
Objective 7A	Identify and define specialized emergency response needs and the capabilities of the BTFD.	
Timeframe	6 months	Assigned to:
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate current response models based on historical response data. • Perform a risk analysis to identify potential hazards within the district. • Establish service-level objectives based on the risk analysis. • Conduct an inventory of current identified needs of the service program. 	
Funding Estimate	Capital Costs: Personnel Costs:	Consumable Costs: Contract Services Costs:
Objective 7B	Determine the proficiency of the district's specialty operations.	
Timeframe	18 - 24 months	Assigned to:
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine the personnel needs of the service program based on the service-level objectives. • Identify training levels and service needs to reflect the service-level objectives. • Create training guidelines to maintain designated service levels. 	
Funding Estimate	Capital Costs: Personnel Costs:	Consumable Costs: Contract Services Costs:
Objective 7C	Create a sustainable budget process to support the BTFD SOSP educational and operational expenditures.	
Timeframe	1 year	Assigned to:
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the educational needs based on training guidelines. • Research and apply for available grants or other alternative funding for education and equipment. • Create an equipment replacement plan. 	
Funding Estimate	Capital Costs: Personnel Costs:	Consumable Costs: Contract Services Costs:
Objective 7D	Bolster technical rescue capabilities to provide adequate response levels throughout the district.	
Timeframe	2 years, ongoing	Assigned to:
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement a dispatchable resource that would be capable of responding to identified service levels. • Evaluate specialized responses to ensure apparatus, training, and equipment are provided and available. • Re-evaluate the effectiveness of the capabilities and adjust as needed. 	
Funding Estimate	Capital Costs: Personnel Costs:	Consumable Costs: Contract Services Costs:





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Goal 8	Prepare for, pursue, achieve, and maintain international accreditation to better serve our community and to embrace excellence.	
Objective 8A	Form team or committee structures with management components as needed to pursue and maintain accreditation.	
Timeframe	30 days	Assigned to:
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the needed team or committee structure(s) for the various components of the accreditation process. • Create the management oversight positions to lead the teams or committees, as well as the process overall. • Establish team or committee member criteria. • Determine the composition of the teams or committees. • Solicit participation to meet the composition of the teams or committees. • Develop and complete the selection process. • Provide for the needed educational components provided through the Commission on Fire Accreditation International to ensure the relevant members have the needed training. 	
Funding Estimate	Capital Costs: Personnel Costs:	Consumable Costs: Contract Services Costs:
Objective 8B	Prepare a community-driven strategic plan.	
Timeframe	3 months and on-going	Assigned to:
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold an external stakeholder meeting where community members provide feedback on program priorities, service expectations, concerns and strengths perceived about AFD. • 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. • Determine a work plan for the accomplishment of each goal and implement the plan. • Annually evaluate objectives accomplished with the plan. • Report annual plan progress to internal and external stakeholders. 	
Funding Estimate	Capital Costs: Personnel Costs:	Consumable Costs: Contract Services Costs:
Objective 8C	Conduct a community hazards and risk assessment and publish a Community Risk Assessment - Standards of Cover document.	
Timeframe	6 - 12 months	Assigned to:
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obtain instruction on hazard and risk assessment, and standards of cover preparation. • Perform community hazards and risk assessment. • Evaluate historical community emergency response performance and coverage. • Establish benchmark and baseline emergency response performance objectives. • Establish and publish the Community Risk Assessment - Standards of Cover. • Maintain, and annually update the Standards of Cover document. 	
Funding Estimate	Capital Costs: Personnel Costs:	Consumable Costs: Contract Services Costs:





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Objective 8D	Conduct and document a self-assessment of the district utilizing the CPSE/CFAI Fire and Emergency Services Self-Assessment Manual criteria.	
Timeframe	6 months	Assigned to:
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obtain instruction on writing a CFAI self-assessment manual. • Assign self-assessment manual category and criterion writing to the district accreditation committee/team members as appropriate. • Review self-assessment and ensure all reference items are in order. 	
Funding Estimate	Capital Costs: Personnel Costs:	Consumable Costs: Contract Services Costs:
Objective 8E	Achieve agency accreditation by the CFAI.	
Timeframe	4 months	Assigned to:
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply for "Candidate Agency" status with the CFAI. • Prepare for CFAI Peer Assessor Team visit. • Upload Strategic Plan, Standards of Cover, and Self-Assessment Categories and Criterion for review and comment by CFAI Peer Team. • Host CFAI Peer Team site visit for accreditation review. • Receive CFAI Peer Team recommendation to CFAI for Accredited status. • Receive vote during the CFAI hearings in favor of Accredited status. 	
Funding Estimate	Capital Costs: Personnel Costs:	Consumable Costs: Contract Services Costs:
Objective 8F	Maintain accreditation with the CFAI.	
Timeframe	Ongoing	Assigned to:
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit required Annual Compliance Reports. • Attend CFAI "Dayroom Discussion" web-meetings for continued education. • Participate in the accreditation process by providing "peer assessors" for external district review and identification of possible best practices. • Participate in the annual CPSE Excellence Conference for continued education and networking with other accreditation teams and accredited agencies. • Submit Annual Compliance Reports as required by CFAI policies. • Establish succession development of internal accreditation team in preparation for next accreditation cycle. 	
Funding Estimate	Capital Costs: Personnel Costs:	Consumable Costs: Contract Services Costs:





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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 district's global vision but rather, to confirm the futurity of the work that was designed by the district stakeholders. This vision is intended as a target of excellence to strive toward and provides a basis for its goals and objectives.

Bluffton Township Fire District's 2023 Vision

is to be widely known as an internationally accredited fire district that protects the lives and property of our community in a kind and professional manner.

Because we care, we will prove our leadership through bolstered work in community risk reduction and emergency management, reducing hazards and building protections within the district. We will always strive to show we are progressive through our enhancements in EMS and special operations for the betterment of those we serve.

To personify respect and dedication, we will invest in our great assets, our members. By strengthening our workforce planning, we will be ever ready now and, in the future, to answer the call. We will communicate more effectively to ensure the continuity of our messages to unify us further. This will be rounded out by our research and investment into technology that will help us all perform more efficiently.

Furthering our desire to demonstrate that we value trust internally and externally, we will strive to maintain our current infrastructure, while developing strategies for growth that are performance-based and fiscally responsible.

Dedicated to continuous improvement and the pursuit of excellence organizationally and personally, we will always remember our past and embrace our futurity by holding each other accountable for fulfilling our mission, living our values, accomplishing our goals, and bringing this vision to fruition.





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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."² 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 district'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

² Collins Good to Great and the Social Sectors. Boulder, 2009





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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 district 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 district 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 district and community stakeholders through a jointly developed understanding of organizational direction; how all vested parties will work to achieve the mission, goals, and vision; and how the organization will measure and be accountable for its progress and successes.³

³ Matthews (2005). *Strategic Planning and Management for Library Managers*





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Glossary of Terms, Acronyms, and Initialisms

Accreditation	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.
AED	Automatic External Defibrillator
BCSO	Beaufort County Sheriff's Office
BPD	Bluffton Police Department
BTFD	Bluffton Township Fire District
CAD	Computer Aided Dispatch
CATE	Career and Technology Education
CERT	Community Emergency Response Team
CFAI	Commission on Fire Accreditation International
CPR	Cardio-Pulmonary Resuscitation
CPSE	Center for Public Safety Excellence
Customer(s)	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 district or agency.
Efficiency	A performance indication where inputs are measured per unit of output (or vice versa).
EMS	Emergency Medical Services
EMT	Emergency Medical Technician
Environment	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.
EPP	Employee Policies and Procedures
FAST	Firefighter's Assistance and Support Team
FDIC	Fire Department Instructor's Conference
HazMat	Hazardous Materials
ISO	Insurance Services Office
IT	Information Technology
Input	A performance indication where the value of resources is used to produce an output.
MCI	Mass Casualty Incident
Mission	An enduring statement of purpose; the organization's reason for existence.





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	Describes what the organization does, for whom it does it, and how it does it.
Outcome	A performance indication where qualitative consequences are associated with a program/service; i.e., the ultimate benefit to the customer.
Output	A performance indication where a quality or number of units produced is identified.
Performance Measure	A specific measurable result for each goal and/or program that indicates achievement.
RMS	Records Management System
SOG	Standard Operating Guideline
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
Stakeholder	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.
Strategic Goal	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.
Strategic Objective	A specific, measurable accomplishment required to realize the successful completion of a strategic goal.
Strategic Plan	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.
Strategic Planning	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.
Strategy	A description of how a strategic objective will be achieved. A possibility. A plan or methodology for achieving a goal.
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats.
USAR	Urban Search and Rescue
Vision	An idealized view of a desirable and potentially achievable future state - where or what an organization would like to be in the future.
WUI	Wildland Urban Interface





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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 Bluffton Township Fire District. 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 Bluffton Township Fire District (in priority order)

1. Arrive promptly. Quick response to calls received. Fast ETA to the site - knowledge of the fastest route. That they arrive in a timely fashion. Quick response to emergencies. Fastidious response. (143)
2. Maintain and up-to-date on training. Well-trained personnel. Highly trained, content people. Adequate training in all areas related to their specific job within the department. Expertise - personnel sent on calls should have level of training necessary to provide minimum basic care. (66)
3. Educating the community (CPR, fire safety techniques, etc.). More educational opportunities for the youth. Education on safety - CPR classes, fire safety. Public fire and safety education. Assist residents with smoke detector replacement in home. (55)
4. Excellent equipment (so personnel can perform their duties). Top-shelf fire equipment. All equipment and apparatus is working. Access to life-saving equipment and technology. (32)
5. Quarterly updates (events, policies). Building a stronger outreach program. Volunteer and interactions with the community. Community involvement/support in non-emergency events. Available to the community. Open house to meet staff, see equipment. Community involvement. Community accessibility for questions/concerns/help. (31)
6. Effective communication at times of emergencies, e.g. hurricanes, disasters. Emergency management, especially natural disasters including hurricane and flood. Instant





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- communications. Communication with all EMS of Beaufort County to disseminate accurate emergency information. (20)
7. Maintaining efficiency while being kind. Efficiency. (17)
 8. Knowledge to handle the situation. That they are knowledgeable - fires, medical conditions, directions. High level of competency/medical treatment/fire suppression. Hire people who are skilled enough to perform the duties at the fire department. (16)
 9. Managing/planning for the current explosive future growth of Bluffton. Grow with the community. To be proactive in finding fire department locations in highly-developed areas. (15)
 10. Protecting the community. Protection of our community. (10)
 11. Emergency management. Emergency preparedness during storms. (10)
 12. Well-compensated personnel - salary, retirement, etc. Salaries and benefits improved. (8)
 13. To be a regional partner with regard to coordinated emergency response. (7)
 14. GPS systems should be updated for new locations of resident areas. (6)
 15. Form partnerships within the community. Partnership. (6)
 16. Care. Care of an ill person. Looking after the clients. (6)
 17. Current technology to integrate with today, fire department's needs/regulations. (6)
 18. To be fiscally responsible. Fiscal responsibility. (5)
 19. Each shift is fully staffed. Staffing. (5)
 20. Any study of a countywide fire department cost? (5)
 21. Reasonable work schedule. (4)
 22. Professionalism in uniform, whether in Food Lion or on calls. Beside manner counts on calls. (4)
 23. Control of scene. (4)
 24. Availability. (4)
 25. Be smart on what types of fire departments are being constructed. (4)
 26. Arrive to the exact location that requested emergency. (4)
 27. Thoughts about merge of county EMS and fire department/district? (4)
 28. Good working environment. (3)
 29. Perform their job to the best of their ability. (2)
 30. Working together as a team. (2)
 31. Periodic evaluation of personnel and programs. (2)
 32. Leading with honesty, integrity, dignity, and kindness. (2)





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- 33. Non-judgmental. (1)
- 34. That they speak to customers directly and gently and kindly. (1)
- 35. Increased 911 response. (1)
- 36. Personal follow up. (1)
- 37. To maintain accountability for the department. (1)
- 38. Advanced explorer programs. (1)
- 39. Morale. (1)
- 40. Code enforcement. (1)
- 41. Train with other emergency services annually. (1)



Community Stakeholders Work Session





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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 Bluffton Township Fire District (verbatim, in priority order)

1. How to handle growth of the area. How do you handle the growing population of the Bluffton area? Growth of the greater Bluffton community out-stripping the size of the department. Adequate resources to meet the needs of a growing population. Meeting the needs of a growing, aging population? (80)
2. Enough personnel to handle growth. That they are spread too thin and will not arrive in a timely fashion. Staff enough to handle a growth-oriented community. (43)
3. Not enough taxes are going towards the fire department and salaries and retirement. Bluffton may have to pay more taxes for these services. Good working equipment - need more taxes for use. Money available for equipment. Compensation of employees. Funding? (28)
4. Total failure of the 911 system recently during/after electrical storm, resulting in total loss of a structure. Unable to reach 911 by mobile phones and/or landlines. 911 system. (20)
5. How often are training updates done? Training for terrorism or mass violence, e.g. school/public shootings. Training of staff - are folks interested in becoming firefighters? (19)
6. That there is a low turnover in personnel. The ability to fill open positions with a limited workforce. Finding new employees. Loss of highly-trained, quality staff for more dollars, better benefits, etc. Ability to recruit/retain. (18)
7. Providing Bluffton with the most "bang for the buck" for the tax money they receive, which relates directly to planning for future growth, etc. I think they are doing a good job now but





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- should always be aware of their custodian responsibilities (unlike a lot of other entities in this county). Over-spending in new departments. Cost to the community. (17)
8. Slow 1st call response. Delay of response inside large residential developments. Response time. (13)
 9. Coordination with other community efforts. Coordination with Beaufort, Jasper services, etc. Effective communication capabilities with other first responders. (12)
 10. Road closures during critical events. Traffic blockage? Routes to scenes due to traffic. (11)
 11. Has not happened here but concerns that someday a call will place first responders in a position as targets. I know scenes are always made secure, but it is a worry, particularly if it is an ambush. Concern for the safety of first responders in unstable situations. (10)
 12. Communication ability with all of Beaufort County EMS. Communication with other organizations during crisis situations. (10)
 13. Lack of fire hydrants in certain areas, as in my neighborhood. What are they doing to promote installing or protecting those areas? (9)
 14. Equipment modernization. Up-to-date/state-of-the-art equipment? (9)
 15. Large community should maybe have one fire department. Large communities such as Sun City - should they have their own fire department? (8)
 16. Planning for natural disasters. An emergency management plan that works. (7)
 17. Who backs up the department if more than one call at a time. (5)
 18. Building codes versus fire department responses. (5)
 19. The ability to maintain the level of excellence already established. (5)
 20. Fire alarm fee? (5)
 21. Too many assist calls. (5)
 22. Better knowledge of the fire alarm system. (5)
 23. Have enough equipment and training for personnel. (4)
 24. That they know how to deal with children in case the adult in charge is unresponsive. (4)
 25. Slow 911 response. (4)
 26. ISO compliance. (4)
 27. Enough education on safety to a largely aging community. (4)
 28. Building new stations - i.e. developer fees, bond issues, impact fees. (4)
 29. Political obstacles. Bureaucratic interference/conflict between agencies. (4)
 30. Too many agencies playing in the same space. (4)
 31. Lack of water rescue training. (4)
 32. Understanding the population specifics of those in their district. (3)





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- 33. Locations. (3)
- 34. Lack of support from BCSO. (3)
- 35. The base support. (2)
- 36. Enough volunteers? (2)
- 37. Retirement funding. (2)
- 38. Is proper amount of time made available for fire investigation? (1)
- 39. Having a vision for the future. (1)
- 40. Reporting structure/transparency. (1)
- 41. Having the support of the community and commission. (1)





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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 Bluffton Township Fire District (verbatim, in no particular order)

- All high level of professionalism.
- Amazingly patient in/with individual who are not polite/respectful.
- Welcoming and always available to answer questions.
- Outreach to the community.
- Friendly and helpful and upbeat.
- Willing to go the extra mile to assist.
- Reply to our inquires.
- I think we are very fortunate to have such a professional and progressive department. Their level of community involvement is beyond compare and should be a program all other departments should strive to achieve.
- On-site firehouse Sun City.
- Quick arrival to car accident.
- Dedication of responders.
- I fainted in a store, help within six minutes. Treated with concern and respect. Taken to the hospital and treatment explained enroute. Follow up called and asked how I was doing.
- Excellent, caring response in Sun City.
- Almost every report from my neighbors was positive in terms that they love knowing the fire department is nearby, even if they have never used their services. That they have always (with one exception) arrived in a timely manner. That they have talked to the victim rather than at them.
- They took two of my grandchildren on a tour of the trucks, it was great.
- Always pleasant and professional. The older firefighters are comfortable around everyone, the younger ones are kind of shy.
- All of my encounters, social or professional, have met with kindness.
- BTFD is involved in their community.
- They take enormous risks, especially during hurricanes.





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- General knowledge.
- Adequate response time on calls.
- Friendly while being very efficient.
- Proud of them for their service.
- Have not heard negative comments about department.
- My interaction with personnel - very professional.
- They do get involved with community great!
- Willingness to make improvements hearing what the community has to say.
- Interaction w/community events.
- Courageous acts of kindness (saving lives).
- My Beaufort County ambulance and EMTs were great in getting me to the hospital to treat my heart attack.
- Composure for situation.
- Respond in a timely manner.
- Community service.
- Composure of situation.
- Arrival in a timely manner.
- Their participation in community services.
- We have a fantastic chief, deputies, and support personnel.
- We have a very involved Board of Directors.
- We have a strong attachment to the community.
- We are always looking for new and better ways complete tasks.
- Good guys, good job.
- The department has been very proactive in working with the new schools.
- Customer service has always been positive.
- They have always maintained excellent visibility in the community.
- Have heard only good about our local fire department and their response to calls.
- Polite personnel.
- Excellent location to business and homes.
- Well trained and responsive.
- Current staff looks young and in good shape.





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- Equipment always well maintained.
- Ability to hire employees.
- CATE programs involving fire department.
- Training.
- Outreach to community.
- Relationship with municipalities.
- Very professional organization.
- Great leadership team.
- Responsible intergovernmental partner.
- Strong commitment to excellence in terms of training and equipping the department.
- Appreciate the support with smoke detectors and batteries.
- Personnel concerns for staff development.
- Familiarization with entire district.
- Treating the public as if they were them.
- Community involvement.
- Vision for the future.
- Excellent response time for a carbon monoxide alert.
- Department seems to have education and training priority to the public.
- “Narcan” on all emergency vehicles.
- Well-equipped emergency vehicles.
- Generally good response times.
- Well trained responders.
- I think it is very positive effort to keep the community involved in the working of the fire department.
- Fiscally responsible.
- Great response.
- Good team attitude when out on scenes.
- Always willing to help and assist other organizations.
- Great leadership amongst the ranks.
- Customer/taxpayer focus.
- Professionalism.





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- Great leadership.
- Equipment.
- Partnership with BPD.
- Community involvement.
- Strategic planning processes.
- Positive working relationship with area stakeholders.
- Number of stations within the city limits.
- Highly active in community.
- Positive visibility.
- Community outreach.
- Professionalism.
- Limited interaction, thus far-however, very professional and courteous and responsive.
- Accessible to the community via schools, tours, breakfasts, partnerships, etc.
- Leadership is strong - leading with high expectations.
- Good fire education program.
- Good response.
- Community support.
- Management.
- County council support.
- Morale.
- Employees.
- Very impressed with fire safety and emergency training provided by BTFD.

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 Bluffton Township Fire District (verbatim, in no particular order)

- This fire department does a wonderful job. The challenges in this fast-growing community are of concern.
- I have had several positive exposures with BTFD. Came to a community event and Captain Levesque spoke to our group – very informative session.
- Thank you for supporting Sun City!





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- The BTFD acted quickly to save a trapped neighbor in a car that had overheated – saved an elderly neighbor.
- Thank you so much for your kindness and concern.
- We in Sun City appreciate all the fire department does for us and I apologize for those who don't appreciate the men and women who make up this wonderful department.
- Recent medical incident was a very positive experience.
- Good session-wish our men and women the very best.
- We greatly appreciate your daily efforts on building a better Bluffton.
- Thank you for all you do!!
- Concern about 911 dispatcher systems is a new priority after recent failure.
- Thanks.
- Would like to see the fire department involved in CPR training for high school students (new state requirements in the curriculum).
- We have a wonderful department, thoughtful, considerate firefighters that love their job.
- The fire department should require all buildings in Bluffton to have street number visible from road.
- Would like to see consideration for evaluating the inclusion of EMS services within the department.
- Commitment to training excellence and propensity to employ medics by BTFD, I believe would improve services currently rendered by Beaufort County.
- Appreciate community interaction with EMS (fire) services.
- As a new member to the community (2.5 years). I am impressed with the overall strength of the Bluffton Township Fire District.
- Blinking yellow arrow lights at major intersections causing multiple automobile accidents.
- This is a very positive exercise.
- As a new comer, the department seems to be well equipped, mannered and situated to deal with a number of areas.
- Wonderful to ask for community input. Very well-regarded team already.
- Keep up the good work.
- County and state politics are a problem with various agendas.
- Captain Lee Levesque is an outstanding asset to Bluffton. He has come to many meetings at Sun City.
- Need more community awareness of importance of CPR in saving lives.





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- Our fire department has helped so many of our neighbors, all I can say is thank you.



District Stakeholders Work Session





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Appendix 2

Supporting Services of the Bluffton Township Fire District		
Training	Logistics	Emergency Communications
Transportation	Finance	Human Resources
Fleet Services	Emergency Management (town, county, state)	Red Cross
Media	Mutual/Automatic Aid	Regional Teams
FAST Team	Chaplain	Honor Guard
Explorer Program	Auxiliary Foundation	Utility Companies
South Carolina State Guard	Firefighter Mobilization	CERT Program
Vendors	Public Works	Law Enforcement
County Fire Chiefs' Association	State Firefighters' Association	Civic Organizations
Faith-Based Organizations	Educational Institutions	Federal Agencies
State Agencies	CPSE/CFAI	Beaufort County EMS



District Stakeholders Work Session





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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 district stakeholders identified the district's strengths as follows:

Strengths of the Bluffton Township Fire District	
Adequate staffing	Strong leadership
Emphasis on training	Standardized apparatus
Forward-thinking for future development	Access to quality training facilities
Competitive compensation package	Quality in-house maintenance
Community support	Adequate funding
Healthy economy	Growing economy – expanding taxes
Peer leader	New apparatus/function
New equipment	New stations
Fiscal responsibility	Strong reputation
Involved in or at state/regional levels/teams	Quality people
Flexibility	Preparedness
Execution of plans	Self-analysis
Continuous improvement	Kindness/compassion
In-house instructor corps – training	Wellness Program
Employee work ethics	Lack of “red tape”
Young fire department	Set example for other departments
Open door policy	Professional development
Job experience that each person brings to the organization	





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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 district stakeholders as weaknesses:

Weaknesses of the Bluffton Township Fire District	
Beaufort County dispatch communication	Experience – 3 – 5 years on job – 25% - young officers
Funding for growth – limited budget expansion without tax increase	Lack of following chain of command – both directions
	Lack of involvement at county emergency management
Continuity of patient care on medical calls	Communications during large-scale disasters
Dedication to service/apathy	Water supply (hydrants) – geographic areas
Lack of accountability	Three independent shifts
Station distribution based on geography	Minimal support for fire-based EMS system
Pace of growth	Lack of personal investment
Lack of project follow-through	Day-to-day internal communication
Communication between divisions	Lack of support for community risk reduction
Lack of buy-in	Cumbersome purchasing guidelines
Stirring the “pot”	Consistent messages
No life experience – young new hires	Lack of support for other divisions
Spillman/technology	Interpersonal communication
Lack of a second set of gear	Lack of individual station tones
Sleep deprivation	Retirement – loss of experience
Lack of common EMS protocols	Lack of QI/QA with report writing
Staffing – more staff – retention	Water response capability – boat rescue/response





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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 district stakeholders identified the following potential opportunities:

Opportunities for the Bluffton Township Fire District	
Emergency medical services (transport, community paramedicine)	Technical College of the Lowcountry Fire Associates Degree Program
Revenue (tax base)	Diversity (community perception)
Public education (enhance to reduce risk)	Grants (infrastructure, technology, equipment)
Recruitment	South of Broad dispatch
Outside training opportunities	Firefighter Foundation
Community outreach	Fire/EMS consolidation
CATE Program and Explorer Post	Create new/maintain current external partnerships
District growth	Utilize most current technology
Creation of community paramedicine program	Storz connection on all hydrants
Sun City quick response vehicle	Municipal absorption
Water/hydrant expansion	WUI – FireWise program development
Partnership with local government agencies – vehicle maintenance, water rescue	

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 district stakeholders were as follows:

Potential Threats to the Bluffton Township Fire District		
Budgetary	Consolidation/county fire department	Economy
Growth – Rapid growth	Environmental/weather, climate	Pension reform
Healthcare/insurance costs	Utilities – interruptions to supplies	Recruitment
Community sentiment	Technology – not keeping up with it	Social unrest/terrorism
Social media	Geography (access, distance, points of entry)	Annexation of fire district
Pandemics/epidemics	Lack of suitable workforce – limited qualifiers	Misinformation
Politics – elected officials	Other agencies – BCSO, EMS – limitations	Large public events





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Litigation

Reduction of hiring standards to achieve diversity (federal, state, or local)

Appendix 4

Critical and Service Gap Issues Identified by the District's Stakeholders	
Group 1	Group 2
EMS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ County government/administration ○ Different professional standards ○ Lack of leadership ○ Poor public education ○ Internal readiness ○ Political capital ○ Cooperation – interpersonal dynamics and relationships ○ Budget impact 	Fire-Based EMS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Community paramedicine ○ Quick response vehicle/ambulances ○ Political ○ Staffing ○ Training ○ Equipment
Community Risk Reduction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Lack of understanding – training, knowledge, technology ○ Lack of support – buy-in ○ Lack of resources – money, people ○ Ownership/responsibility – “occupy new spaces” ○ Old vs. new 	Community Risk Reduction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Outreach ○ School education programs ○ Adult programs ○ AED program ○ CPR program ○ Water safety
Personnel <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Varied motivation and values ○ Inexperience (personal) ○ Past and current promotional process ○ Ownership without earned value ○ Generational shift ○ Apathy ○ Lack of life experience ○ Education/culture 	Staffing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Budget ○ Funding ○ Training ○ Professional Development ○ Retention/recruitment ○ Employee quality ○ Morale
Internal Communications <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Three shifts and administration ○ Mixed/inconsistent messages or partial ○ Timing ○ Delivery method ○ Fear of reprisal ○ Information flow/chain of command ○ Clarity and inclusion ○ Lack of follow up ○ Perception 	Communications <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Internal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Division to division ▪ Chain of command ▪ SOP/SOG ▪ Dissemination ▪ Consistent message ▪ Lack of understanding ○ External <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Social media ▪ Community outreach ▪ BCSO/BPD ▪ redundancy
Critical and Service Gap Issues Identified by the District's Stakeholders (continued)	
Group 1	Group 2





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<p>Infrastructure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Geography – access ○ Growth – on many levels ○ Lack of property/land ○ Access/roads ○ Addressing ○ Water supply ○ Construction practices ○ Lack of planning 	<p>Infrastructure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Stations ○ Apparatus ○ Equipment ○ Maintenance ○ Routes/access
<p>Accountability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Lack of enforcement ○ Lack of knowledge ○ Apathy ○ Nobody wants to be the bad guy – professional courage ○ Relationships ○ Inconsistent standards ○ Communication ○ Workload 	<p>Technology</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Station tones ○ CAD ○ Dispatch ○ Internal software ○ RMS (dispatch, scheduling, fleet maintenance, Zoom, mapping, hydrants) all in one ○ Hardware
<p>Emergency Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Lack of cooperation ○ Lack of competence ○ Egos ○ Lack of flexibility ○ Lack of transparency ○ Lack of communication ○ Lack of accountability ○ Lack of planning 	<p>Technical/Special Operations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Water rescue ○ Equipment ○ Training/qualifications ○ EPP/SOG ○ Vendors ○ WUI ○ Deployment ○ USAR ○ HazMat ○ MCI ○ Shooter scenario

