

TVF&R STRATEGIC PLAN SUMMARY



The value of a good plan is well recognized in the fire service. The Plans Chief function within the Incident Command System (ICS) structure reflects the importance of looking forward and preparing for a variety of possible scenarios. Whether a fire, earthquake, flood, or mass casualty situation—a good plan is essential.

What about a plan that charts a course for your organization? Can it result in real action, or is it more likely to collect dust? TVF&R has certainly produced organizational plans that found their way to a bookshelf and not much further. Recently, however, that changed. In 2006-2007, the challenges of keeping pace with evolving community demographics, financial realities, and technological advances demanded a different response. It became clear that a Plans Chief mentality needed to be applied to the organization as a whole.

As a first step, TVF&R worked with faculty at Portland State University to better understand current demographic trends. Next, staff reviewed individual plans that were already in place for specific elements of the organization (e.g., facilities, finance, apparatus, etc.). The plans had been developed and carried out in separate “silos,” and TVF&R decided to take a more collaborative approach and implement a comprehensive Strategic Plan.

Elements of the Strategic Plan include:

Leadership Foundation

This section of the Strategic Plan includes important direction from the TVF&R Board of Directors. Whether probationary firefighters or interested citizens, readers clearly see and understand the board’s vision for the community TVF&R serves and the principles that guide daily decision making. The section also emphasizes TVF&R’s intentional culture with a list of personal values that the Fire Chief’s Office expects of all personnel. The vision, principles, and values articulated by TVF&R leadership are then defined as strategic goals and outcomes. These are measurable, organization-wide in scope, built on consensus, and few in number.

Status Report

The Strategic Plan is used regularly; TVF&R measures annual progress against it. Performance reviews are linked to it, and each year managers must assess and report back on progress toward specific outcomes. As part of the Organizational Report Card process, trends are reviewed, progress is documented, and new recommendations are made. Following review in both large- and small-group forums, TVF&R establishes report card “grades” for each goal area and makes them available for both internal and public review.

Management Tools

A strategic plan has little impact unless the individuals who implement it are knowledgeable and support its content. For this reason, the Fire Chief’s Office stopped at the “outcome” level of the plan design and asked the rest of the organization to develop and commit to strategies that help accomplish the designated goals. Because the plan’s goals are written broadly, cross-divisional cooperation is essential when developing strategies. The process encourages TVF&R personnel to participate and get creative—ideas flow from all levels of the organization. To be included in the plan, a strategy must be a statement of a new or revised approach, and it must accelerate TVF&R’s ability to achieve a desired outcome. Strategy approval is a crucial step in gaining eventual budget approval.



Benefits

TVF&R derives multiple benefits from the ongoing process and products of its Strategic Plan. By focusing on outcomes that require cooperation among divisions, collaboration has been increased throughout the organization. While it is always a challenge to “stay on the same page” in terms of priorities, the plan has helped concentrate the awareness of TVF&R personnel. On a financial level, the plan is an integrated part of the annual budget development and helps ensure that funding decisions are driven as much by a focus on what needs to be achieved as by available financial resources. Finally, sharing the Strategic Plan with TVF&R’s many public, private, and non-profit partners helps keep them apprised of the organization’s short- and long-term priorities, as well as the progress being made.