

ABINGTON TOWNSHIP FIRE DEPARTMENT



STRATEGIC PLAN 2018-2022

Facilitated by



Center for
Public Safety
Excellence

ABINGTON TOWNSHIP



FIRE DEPARTMENT

STATION 100

Abington Fire Company
1920 Horace Avenue
Abington, PA 19001

STATION 200

McKinley Fire Company
893 Jenkintown Road
Elkins Park, PA 19027

STATION 300

Weldon Fire Company
412 N. Easton Road
Glenside, PA 19038

STATION 400

Edge Hill Fire Company
2843 Limekiln Pike
North Hills, PA 19038

STATION 500

Roslyn Fire Company
1128 Bradfield Road
Roslyn, PA 19001

Introduction

The Abington Township Fire Department (ATFD) provides fire, rescue, haz-mat, and community risk reduction services to the residents, businesses, and visitors of Abington Township, Pennsylvania. ATFD 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 organization'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 agency'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 agency with an opportunity to participate in the development of their organization's long-term direction and focus. Members of the organization's external and internal stakeholders' groups demonstrated commitment to this important project and remain committed to the document's completion.

ABINGTON TOWNSHIP FIRE DEPARTMENT

STRATEGIC PLAN

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Organizational Background

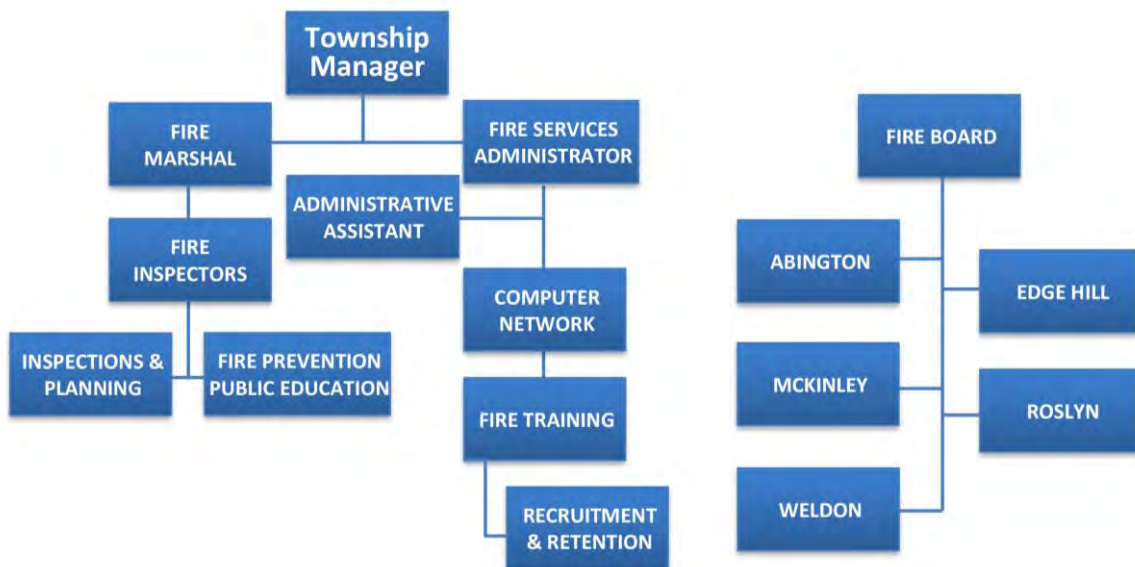
Abington Township has a long, rich history dating as far back as 1709. It is located in Montgomery County, approximately 15 miles north of center city Philadelphia in Pennsylvania. The township's communities include residential (2010 population: 55,310), commercial, light industrial, park land, and suburban properties. Numerous businesses, industries, and institutions include Willow Grove Park Regional Mall, SPS Technologies, Abington Memorial Hospital, Holy Redeemer Hospital, the Abington School District, Manor College, and the 40-acre campus of Penn State University – Abington.

The Abington Township Fire Department (ATFD) provides the approximate 15 square miles of Abington Township with the services of fire suppression, emergency rescue, fire prevention, public education, and other special operations. Comprised of the Abington Fire Company, the McKinley Fire Company, the Weldon Fire Company, the Edge Hill Fire Company, and the Roslyn Fire Company, the ATFD operates five fire stations with an all-volunteer force of approximately 225 volunteer firefighters and officers. Administrative offices at the Abington Township Municipal Building are staffed by a Fire Services Administrator, Fire Marshal, Community Service Specialist, and Administrative Secretary. The ATFD is governed by an elected Township Board of Commissioners and Township Manager.

Organizational Structure

ABINGTON TOWNSHIP FIRE DEPARTMENT

Organizational Structure
January 2018





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.

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





Process and Acknowledgements

The Center for Public Safety Excellence (CPSE) acknowledges and thanks the community's and the agency's external and internal stakeholders for their participation and input into this Community-Driven Strategic Planning Process. The CPSE also recognizes Fire Administrator Dave Schramm and his team for their leadership and commitment to this process.

The Community-Driven Strategic Planning Process Outline

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





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Development of this strategic plan took place in October 2017, beginning with a meeting hosted by a representative from the CPSE for members of the community (external stakeholders, as names in the table below). Input received from the meeting revolved around community expectations and concerns, as well as positive and other comments about the organization.

Abington Township Fire Department External Stakeholders

Richard Barbieri	Kevin Barron	Raymond Bell	Angelo Berrios
Vince Blue	Cakky Braun-Evans	Fran Earley	Shelly Erwine
Richard Garrett	Thomas Garrity	Theresa Goddett	Bruce Goodman
Ron Griffith	Nancy Hammeke Marshal	Tony Heiser	Kathleen Joyce
Stephen Kalinoski	Richard J. Manfredi	Chuck Marsh	Harry May
Peggy Meyers	Daisy Minyard	Minnie Minyard	Pamela Minyard
Diane Misko	Delmar Nugent	Jim O'Neill	Dr. Susan Packer-Rubin
Mark Penecale	Dave Peterson	Steve Pierce	Juanita Price
Leza Raffel Rake	Adam Reiff	Terry Roman	Lori Schreiber
Pete Schwartz	Jennifer Sherwood	Ashley Spearman	John Spiegleman
Karen Strawhacker	Gary Wiley	Ralf Wilhelm	



External Stakeholders Work Session





Community Group Findings

A key element of the Abington Township Fire Department organizational philosophy is having a high level of commitment to the community, as well as recognizing the importance of community satisfaction. Thus, the agency invited community representatives to provide feedback on services provided.

Community Priorities

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

Programs	Ranking	Score
Fire Suppression	1	177
Rescue – Basic & Technical	2	145
Domestic Preparedness Planning and Response	3	105
Community Risk Reduction	4	102
Hazardous Materials Mitigation	5	85
Public Education	6	66
Fire Investigation	7	55



External Stakeholders Work Session





Community Expectations

Understanding what the community expects of its fire and emergency services 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. In certain areas, education on the level of service that is already available may be all that is needed. To follow are the expectations of the community's external stakeholders:

Community Expectations of the Abington Township Fire Department (in priority order)

1. Quick but safe, timely, and efficient response to emergency incidents. Quick fire extinguishment and rescue of individuals. Quick control of the scene. (102)
2. Volunteers given ample training. Be properly trained in latest techniques to handle emergencies in the best way. (72)
3. Enough volunteers for each call. That sufficient help will arrive with the proper equipment and training. Effective recruitment and retention of interested individuals. Insure that administration staffing is adequate. (53)
4. Insure quality, state-of-the-art equipment. Best equipment to do the job. Maintain equipment for maximum use. (36)
5. Fire Codes will be enforced for the protection of the community. Code enforcement consultation. Community fire prevention advice. Utilize smart codes to have in place. (19)
6. Insure safety of all fire personnel. Adequate safety equipment. Health screenings for the firefighters. (19)
7. Decrease damage to property as best as possible. Take care with property. (16)
8. That school children are properly educated in fire safety. Fire safety education for families with elderly occupants. Willingness to train with facilities for evacuations/sheltering in place. (15)
9. Participate in community activities and events. Utilize community outreach for improved communications. Make sure that the community knows that ATFD is a volunteer organization. Survey the community on the quality of fire department services. Strong neighborhood involvement. (14)
10. Support during national weather disasters. Be prepared to respond to all disasters. (12)
11. Be dependable. (7)
12. To be professional in any situation. (6)
13. Be prepared for terrorist activity and disasters. (6)





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14. Save lives and pets. (5)
15. Evaluate performance and continually improve. Evaluate services to maintain a safe community. (5)
16. To be straight forward and honest. (4)
17. Systems in place for effective chain of command. (4)
18. Have knowledge of neighborhood structures (preplans). (4)
19. Provide services equally to all communities in the township. (4)
20. Effective coordination of services with other allied resources (police, EMS, hospital). (3)
21. Ensure that township supervisors are advised if dangerous or unlawful activity occurs. (3)
22. Support by Township officials and administration. Appropriate funding to deliver services. (3)
23. Represent the community with pride and integrity. (3)
24. Utilize objectives to accomplish desired outcomes. (2)
25. Serve with courtesy and compassion. (2)
26. Be helpful. (1)
27. Operational transparency. (1)





Areas of Community Concern

The planning process would be incomplete without an expression from the community 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.

Areas of Community Concern about the Abington Township Fire Department (verbatim, in priority order)

1. Does the ATFD have the resources fully to recruit the necessary volunteers needed? Find new ways to recruit. Is the volunteer system sustainable in the 21st century? Concern that the new generations of young people will not be interested in volunteering. Concern of sustainability and future viability in a changing culture away from volunteerism. Are there daytime vs night time availability issues? (44)
2. Financial status. Fundraising plans. Must remain fiscally strong. Is there a lack of support from Township officials and administration? Is there adequate funding? (30)
3. Safety of the volunteer personnel must be #1. Are the firefighters putting themselves at risk? Are they healthy? Do they have proper safety equipment? Is the medical surveillance during their years of service? Are firefighter injuries on the increase or decrease? (29)
4. Do you have the state-of-the art equipment that you need? Do they meet the highest safety standard? Given the age of facilities and equipment - there are concerns. Are facilities updated and properly maintained? (22)
5. Are there enough volunteers for the demand? Are the required number of volunteers maintained? What is the turnover trend in our volunteers over the past few years? (18)
6. That funding continues to be made available for training updates, training facilities/equipment, and training leaders. (16)
7. Is proper training provided? Is there adequate on-going firefighter training? Is there adequate support for the necessary training? Is the required training out pacing the human resources? (14)
8. The ATFD not being able to meet the extremely high demands of the public. Are there enough volunteers to provide the services 24/7? (14)
9. Is the department embracing the changes in our diverse communities? Is it reflective of the communities' diversity? Are all groups of people being reached for recruitment? (10)
10. Does building code enforcement get "political" at times? Would like to see the fire marshal office having more input on codes and ordinances. (9)





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11. Do the firefighters have adequate life insurance for the work they are doing as a volunteer? (8)
12. Are tax dollars spent on use of some equipment for personal firefighter benefit? (5)
13. ATFD leadership becoming involved in, or taking sides in political conflicts. (5)
14. Find ways to improve community support. (4)
15. Concern of response time quality with a volunteer system. (4)
16. The department's leadership is aging. Need younger leaders on board to ensure continuity. (4)
17. Capabilities of the fire marshal office as the communities continue to grow. (3)
18. Need better building code enforcement. (3)
19. Innovation - should be embracing continuous improvement with innovative ways. (3)
20. Is the ATFD properly funded? (3)
21. Is there support from local businesses to allow employees to volunteer for the department?(3)
22. Balance of public outreach - we are playing to our youth, but what about the homeowner? (2)
23. Will there be a need to have paid firefighters? (1)
24. Disrespect motorist have for emergency vehicles. (1)
25. Maybe should have a paid or part-time person at each fire company for its administrative work? (1)



External Stakeholders Work Session





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 Abington Township Fire Department (verbatim, in no particular order)

- Positive outlook by the people involved with this program.
- Education and training.
- Recruitment and retention.
- Leadership in all aspects of the department.
- Letting the community get involved in something like this program.
- We needed them at our home twice and they were very responsive and polite.
- Very visible at community events.
- The social media site gives great public safety tips.
- The fire safety club at the high school and other high school programs they support really show commitment to the community.
- They are very helpful.
- Very good equipment and resources.
- All volunteer.
- Professional and prompt responders.
- Well trained.
- Geographically spread throughout the township.
- Quick responses to any emergency.
- Community involvement – important to the citizens.
- Always available to answer questions.
- Very professional in providing services.
- One of the few volunteer programs to be accredited.





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- Takes the community served as a serious priority and works to keep them happy.
- Our entire fire department is the most prepared and trained department.
- Have complete confidence in our entire department.
- Always professional.
- Open houses are educational and community centered.
- Responses to emergencies have been exceptional.
- Quick response times.
- Community involvement. Well trained.
- Community oriented.
- Progressive.
- Functional.
- Accredited.
- Good effectiveness.
- Good people.
- Professional and compassionate.
- Fire Marshal = integrity
- Constantly striving for excellence.
- Dedicated professionals and volunteers.
- Forward thinking.
- Caring people.
- Dynamic leadership.
- Strategically placed in the township.
- Support of the township.
- Plan for the present and the future.
- On-going training.
- Fully committed to serving the public.
- Visible in the community.
- Volunteers are cohesive in nature.





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- Great leadership.
- State of the art facilities.
- Facilities conveniently located.
- Response time is fantastic.
- Improved cooperation between the five departments (companies).
- Respect that firefighters maintain with each other.
- Training appears much improved.
- Much improved public relations.
- Dedication.
- Grit, tenacity, and persistence.
- Decency.
- Integrity.
- Continued training.
- Members seem enthusiastic, which is necessary for a volunteer group.
- Response to incidents seems appropriate.
- Department leaders are excellent.
- They have a great record, and we have a history of very few fatalities.
- Great rapport with communities they serve.
- They are a major bonus to living in Abington. Amazing how many hours they volunteer.
- Their commitment to training and continual self-improvement.
- The public safety training site and the dedicated staff.
- The member selflessness and dedication to their community.
- The commitment to improvement and to certification.
- Their professionalism – second to none.
- Great response times.
- Great attitude.
- Amazing dedication to a very important part of our society.
- Risk takers – brave.





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- Great interaction with the community.
- Strong work ethic.
- Compassionate.
- Follow-up to make sure that all is done properly.
- Great involvement at community events.
- Positive feedback from community after there has been a fire call at homes or businesses – so good customer service.
- Training always seems to be thorough and consistent.
- Follows safety 1st as a priority.
- Dedication.
- Loyalty.
- Generosity.
- Technical abilities.
- Junior firefighter program – an excellent entry way.
- This department saved my family and my pet, and I am forever grateful.
- Quick response for any emergency situation.
- Always professional.
- Participation in local and community events – visiting schools, 24 hour relay, parades, etc.
- Stay up to date with training in firefighting, accidents, rescue, emergency situations, etc.
- Great that we have a fire training facility for use in our community.
- They are the best at what they do.
- Their visibility, involvement, and presence in the community are inspiring.
- Personally, they are a pleasure to work with.
- A great organization.
- Well prepared.
- Excellent personnel and volunteers.
- Great at handling incidents.
- Good building codes.





ABINGTON TOWNSHIP FIRE DEPARTMENT Strategic Planning Process

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- Great training programs exist for their members.
- Fire company is inclusive when planning with community organizations.
- Leaders are readily available.
- I have received the assistance of this fire marshal's office in assisting me with code questions, planning of new services, inspections of concern, and investigation.
- Relationship with the responding fire company, knowing who is responding, and having the understanding of their role and responsibilities.
- Enthusiastic volunteers.
- Selfless with their own time.
- True community advocates.
- Developing great leadership.
- The fire department is always welcoming.
- Proud of the men and women who serve.
- Openness for opportunities for improvement.
- Great public – township – school district partnerships.



External Stakeholders Work Session





Other Thoughts and Comments

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

Other Community Comments about the Abington Township Fire Department (verbatim, in no particular order)

- As a business owner located close to a fire station, it's quite apparent that there are so many volunteers who are always available and willing to put their lives on the line. A HUGE Thank You!
- I have nothing but positive praise for this fire department. I have had numerous encounters with the fire department first arriving crew over the 20 plus years at my position as a safety officer for a business in the community. All encounters have been professional, and even when disagreements occurred, they were addressed and resolved.
- Can the department sustain itself as a volunteer organization?
- Great job overall.
- Love the ATFD.
- Thank you to all of the people involved in our five fire companies. Their dedication to serving the community is wonderful.
- This department has shown immeasurable support to my family during this most challenging time. We are so grateful.
- Thank you for this process, and for the opportunity to provide input.
- Would like to have a conversation about how the fire service overlays with environmental considerations and synergies as opposed to compliance.
- Try not to schedule events on religious holidays in the future.
- I have always found the volunteers to be great ambassadors for our township.
- We have trained the firefighters on high voltage in the new hybrid and electric vehicles. They are always polite and eager to learn.
- Great team in Abington.
- In my career in the fire service I have not seen another fire department that is more committed to training and improvement. This process of accreditation reinforces my positive opinion of the ATFD and the training facility.
- Thank you for your good work!
- I'm proud to be an Abingtonian, and appreciate being invited to participate.





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- Thank you ATFD. Keep up the good work!
- A special thank you to all in the fire department these past 38 years.
- The five companies buried one of their own several month ago. The respect and love that they displayed made me increase my respect and love for my view of the community.
- The fire department needs to make the residents aware of its needs. Most people believe that the fire department is a well-oiled machine and needs no help. They see the fire trucks at parades and think all is well.
- ATFD is one of the best in Montgomery County.
- Excellence.
- Thank you!
- Thank you for your service.
- More incentives to retain volunteers.
- We need to require that all new renovated commercial businesses fire sprinklers. Level 1, 2, 3 – all.
- ATFD is a very proactive and forward looking organization that works to manage the challenges of protecting a very diverse community.
- Great Leadership.
- I recently witnessed the Abington Fire Department respond to a house fire in my neighborhood. I was impressed with their professionalism and knowledge.
- Keep recruiting great volunteers! ATFD needs to maintain its base of firefighters.





Internal Stakeholder Group Findings

The internal 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, with focus on the agency's Mission, Values, Core Programs and Support Services, as well as the organization's perceived Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. The work sessions involved participation by the broad organization representation in attendance, as named and pictured below.

Abington Township Fire Department Internal Stakeholders				
Sean Blake	John Bothwell	Ken Clark	Paul Conroy	Jimmy Dougherty
Jeff Glynn	Steve Hahn	Catherine Henninger	Reed Hills	Jimmy Hotchkiss
Dale Jonas	Mike Jones	Rich Jones	Zach Liss	Danielle Loeffel
Robert Loeffel	Tom McAneney	Frank McCann	Chris McLoone	Steve Nedzwecky
Matt Orzechowski	Shawn Philipsen	Chris Platz	Steve Plum	Jacque Price
Joe Raymond	Mike Ratka	Josh Rice	John Rohrer	Richard Rowley
Mike Rubin	Mike Sabia	Lisa Scholly	Dave Schramm	Frank Schuck
Larry Siefken	Nick Turco	CJ Warner	Bob Woodard	

Mission

The purpose of the mission is to answer the questions:

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

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

The Abington Township Fire Department is a dedicated team of volunteer firefighters comprised of five fire companies unified as one department with a mission to provide excellent fire, rescue, fire prevention, and public education services to ensure the health, safety, and welfare of the community.





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:

TEAMWORK – We value *teamwork* and will provide professional services by five individual fire companies working together as a unified fire department.

COMPETENCE – We value *competence* and will demonstrate to our community that adequate resources are available and utilized effectively.

RESPECT – We value *respect* to our fellow firefighters and the community by compassionately caring for their needs.

EXCELLENCE – We value commitment to *excellence* that demonstrates itself through consistent professionalism, pride, and a positive attitude.

SAFETY & HEALTH – We value the *safety & health* of our firefighters and will provide policies, programs, and protective equipment to ensure their welfare.

The Mission and Values are the foundation of this organization. Thus, every effort will be made to keep these current and meaningful so that the individuals who make up the Abington Township Fire Department are guided by them in the accomplishment of the goals, objectives, and day-to-day tasks.





ABINGTON TOWNSHIP FIRE DEPARTMENT Strategic Planning Process

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Programs and Services

The agency's internal stakeholders identified the following core programs provided to the community, as well as many of the services that enable the organization to deliver those programs:

Core Programs of the Abington Township Fire Department

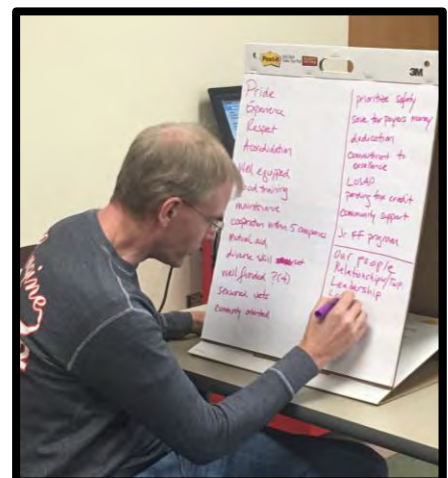
- Fire Suppression
- Domestic Preparedness Planning and Response
- Hazardous Materials Mitigation
- Rescue – Basic and Technical
- Community Risk Reduction
- Public Education
- Fire Investigation

Supporting Services of the Abington Township Fire Department

- Training
- Dispatch Center
- Township Public Works
- Special Services (Foam/HazMat/SpOps)
- Responder Release – Local Businesses
- IT Services / Data Management Services
- Radio Communications
- Township Funding
- PHS for Annual Physicals
- Township Code Department
- School District
- Water Supply
- Preventative Maintenance
- Relief Associations
- Community Events
- Utilities – Gas & Electric
- Equipment Management
- Law Enforcement
- Emergency Management
- National Fire Academy
- Hospital
- Supporting Services
- Member Recruitment
- Second Alarmers (EMS)
- Fire Marshal Office
- Mutual Aid
- Community Outreach
- Township Facilities
- Red Cross
- SEPTA
- State and Federal Grants

S.W.O.T. Analysis

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



Internal Stakeholders Work Session





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-up with 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 internal stakeholders identified the agency's strengths as follows:

Strengths of the Abington Township Fire Department

- Pride
- Respect
- Well equipped
- Maintenance
- Mutual Aid
- Financial support
- Community oriented
- Save taxpayers money
- Commitment to excellence
- Pending firefighter tax credit
- Junior firefighter program
- Positive relationship with the township
- Loyalty of members
- Training facilities
- Public education
- Hazards pre-plans
- Water supply
- Apparatus variety in the department
- All five fire companies are self sufficient
- Fire Marshal office
- Where township employees are allowed to respond to emergencies
- Experience
- Accredited
- Good training
- Cooperation within the five companies
- Diverse skill set
- Seasoned veterans
- Prioritize safety
- Dedication
- LOSAP
- Community support
- Our people
- Leadership
- Apparatus and equipment
- Recruitment program
- Firefighter physicals
- Special operations equipment
- Municipality cooperation
- Radio communications – numerous frequencies
- Township Emergency Management office
- Cooperation between police and fire companies



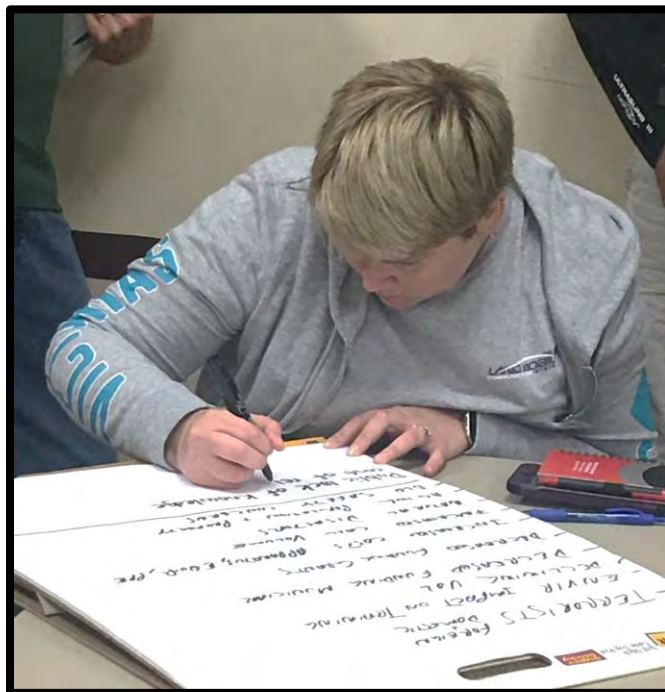


Weaknesses

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 internal stakeholders as weaknesses:

Weaknesses of the Abington Township Fire Department

- Aging facilities
- Inadequate revenue – unfunded mandates
- Shortage of volunteers – less than optimal
- Public education/information – about who we are
- Amount of service demands – on the rise
- Annual active member review/expectations
- 100% involvement in work (20/80 Rule)
- Traffic abatement technology equipment
- Training center improvement funds
- Need to update Operating Guidelines
- Adequate organization marketing
- Aging membership
- Volunteer incentives
- Volunteer recruitment and retention
- Daytime response
- Capital improvement funding
- Availability of drivers
- Time commitment
- Limited wellness program
- Limited safety program
- Technology funds
- Outside training funds



Internal Stakeholders Work Session





ABINGTON TOWNSHIP FIRE DEPARTMENT Strategic Planning Process

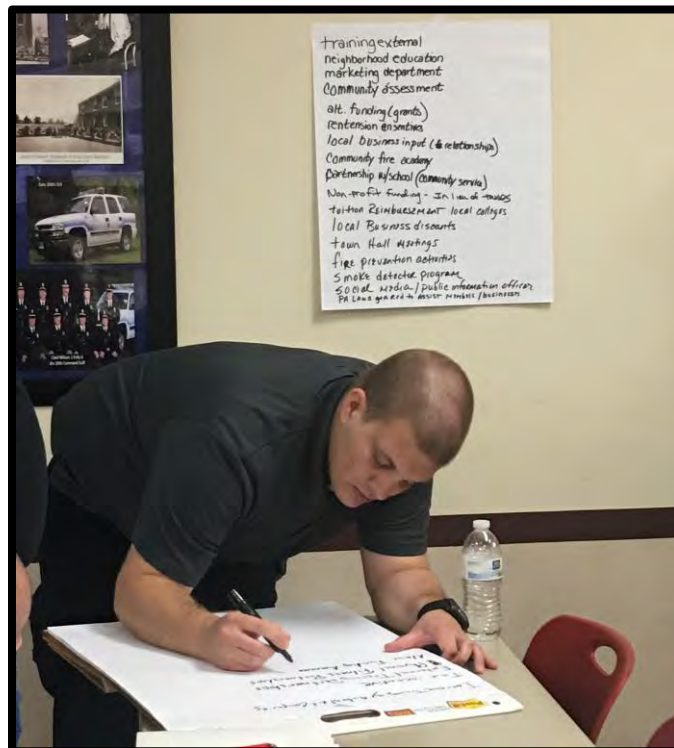
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Opportunities

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 internal stakeholders identified the following potential opportunities:

Opportunities for the Abington Township Fire Department

- Outside training opportunities
- Grants
- Local business input/support
- Non-profit support
- Fire Prevention activities
- Supportive state laws and statutes
- Mutual Aid training
- Tax incentives
- External funding sources
- Neighborhood education
- Community retention incentives
- Improved understanding - community fire academy
- Partnership(s) with schools/university
- Local school tuition reimbursement/discounts
- Town Hall meetings for community understanding
- Community outreach through social media
- External partnerships (training/physical fitness/wellness)
- Community visibility



Internal Stakeholders Work Session





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 internal stakeholders were as follows:

Potential Threats to the Abington Township Fire Department

- Terrorist action – foreign and domestic
- Declining volunteerism spirit and action
- Unknown multiple occupancies – Single family dwellings converted to apartments
- County program costs for radios
- Aging population
- Unsafe buildings
- Cost of real estate and property
- Unfriendly or unsupportive political climate
- External driven training hours
- Light weight building construction
- Construction density – lack of green space
- Lack of NFIRS data from county dispatch
- New building sprinklers
- Interagency radio inoperability
- Obstruction to volunteers having township employment opportunities
- Environmental impact of training/operations
- Decrease in municipal funding
- Increased external costs (apparatus/equipment/fuel/maintenance)
- Increase in demands
- Natural disasters
- Aging property
- Lack of public knowledge and understanding
- Hoarding in households
- Negative impacts through social media
- Firefighter exposure to sickness and disease
- Threatening law changes
- Social media misinterpretation of field actions
- Language barriers
- External training mandates
- Unfunded mandates
- Community misunderstandings and misconceptions

Strategic Initiatives

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

Abington Township Fire Department Strategic Initiatives

- Community Outreach
- Occupational Health & Safety
- Membership & Recruitment
- Physical Resources
- Training
- Operating Guidelines





Goals and Objectives

To continuously achieve the mission of the Abington Township Fire Department, realistic goals and objectives with timelines for completion must be established to enhance strengths, address identified weaknesses, provide a clear

“Goals allow you to control the direction of change in your favor.”

Brian Tracy,
Author

direction, and address the concerns of the community. These should become a focus of ATFD’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 ATFD fire company leadership, with the department’s governing body, and with the community served.

Goal 1	Develop an enhanced community outreach platform.
Time Frame:	60 Months
	Funding Estimate: \$75,000
Objective 1A	Create community awareness of the fire department’s needs.
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Produce outline of who we are.• Retain services of public relations firm to better socialize who we are and what we do.• Establish social media engagement through website, Facebook, and other township channels.
Objective 1B	Assess the unique communication style needs of the community.
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Classify how best to communicate with various generations (baby boomers, generation X, millennials, etc.).• Use public relations person to define how best to communicate effectively with the various generations of our community.• Ascertain the costs associated with effective communications with all generations.
Objective 1C	Evaluate data and assess what the fire department currently provides.
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Establish funding sources.• Benchmark the activity requirements of our education specialist.• Provide a regular periodic review of baseline performance relative to benchmark requirements.
Objective 1D	Develop a uniform message regarding fire department operations and operational needs.
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Build a more than “Volunteers Needed” message.• Describe position descriptions of the department.• Describe operational responsibilities of the department.• Describe the mission and purpose of the department.• Describe the positive community outcomes because of the department.





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Objective 1E Report findings for benchmarking.

- Critical Tasks**
- Establish benchmarking of fire prevention work.
 - Establish benchmarking of fire department operations work.
 - Establish benchmarking of fire department support work.

Objective 1F Review fire prevention and safety education assets.

- Critical Tasks**
- Evaluate the condition of the fire prevention/education trailer.
 - Obtain estimates for necessary enhancements to the trailer.
 - Inventory all fire prevention/education assets for valuation.

Objective 1G Review fire prevention and safety education opportunities beyond current practices.

- Critical Tasks**
- Identify target risks.
 - Develop and affirm contacts.
 - Establish plan of execution.





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Goal 2	Develop an improved occupational health, safety, and risk management program to protect the organization and personnel from injury.
Time Frame:	60 Months
	Funding Estimate: \$375,000
Objective 2A	Designate a departmental health and safety officer with safety committee members/officers.
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Designate a department health and safety officer to chair safety committee.• Solicit officers and members for the department health and safety committee.• Evaluate credentials for volunteers.• Appoint committee members/officers.• Schedule regular meeting requirements and timeframes.
Objective 2B	Analyze existing programs/policies to ensure compliance with established standards and needs.
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Analyze the health and safety program, management responsibilities and existing risks.• Determine quality of root cause analysis in accident assessment.• Evaluate hazard identification, prevention, and health and safety training of department members.• Analyze requirements needed in infection control for all members.• Evaluate if applicable Operational Guidelines exist where necessary regarding health and safety of members.• Evaluate if hazard control and near miss reporting is in place.• Evaluate quality of vendor support with health and safety program.
Objective 2C	Perform risk and gap analysis, and update/revise existing health and safety program.
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Determine results of analysis from Objective 2B.• Perform health and safety facility inspections.• Perform job task analysis for all roles and functions.• Summarize all findings.• Update health and safety program by closing gaps identified, and apply the updated health and safety program.





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Objective 2D Train members on health and safety program.

Critical Tasks

- Designate qualified health and safety instructors.
- Develop health and safety training materials, programs, and plan.
- Schedule health and safety training for all five companies.
- Document and file all health and safety training activity and attendance.

Objective 2E Annual evaluation of health and safety program outcomes.

Critical Tasks

- Evaluate number of safety inspections, deficiencies and abatements.
- Evaluate number and type of accidents and injuries, and if the accidents/injuries were preventable.
- Evaluate training sessions, records, and attendees.
- Evaluate the number of programs and policies reviewed, changed, and documented.
- Establish a formal documented annual evaluation of the department's health and safety program.





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Goal 3	Maintain and expand the current membership to ensure optimum personnel to accomplish our mission.	
Time Frame:	60 Months	Funding Estimate: \$150,000
Objective 3A	Assess new membership trends.	
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Evaluate incoming and outgoing membership metrics for the past 3 years.• Implement survey process for new members (why joined, prior fire experience, military veteran status).• Implement survey process for outgoing members (why leaving, how long with ATFD, suggested improvements for ATFD).	
Objective 3B	Broaden the department's scope of recruitment and retention.	
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Analyze existing programs.• Expand "visible" recruitment and retention signs and marketing.• Expand presence in neighborhoods to market ATFD.• Analyze effectiveness of recruitment and retention programs.	
Objective 3C	Maintain and improve motivation of current personnel.	
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Determine current members' motivation and demotivation factors.• Maintain current motivating factors.• Reduce demotivating factors.• Explore new incentive programs.	
Objective 3D	Issue annual report on ATFD membership and participation demographics.	
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assess member activity trends.• Conduct a trend analysis for a three-year period.• Publish report for community access.	





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Goal 4	Maintain, improve, or acquire physical resources to meet the goals and expectations of the fire department and the community.	
Time Frame:	60 Months	Funding Estimate: \$1,500,000
Objective 4A	Determine the need and priority for facility improvement.	
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Perform a fire department facility assessment study.• Determine all proposed fire department facility improvements.• Establish priorities.	
Objective 4B	Identify facility improvement costs.	
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop preliminary plans for renovation of facilities.• Create cost estimates for all proposed plans.• Explore cost savings and sharing options with other stations.• Identify sites and preliminary plans for potential new facilities.	
Objective 4C	Identify funding sources.	
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify available internal resources.• Explore state and federal grants.• Explore other creative funding options.• Request additional funding resources.	
Objective 4D	Develop a roll out plan.	
Time Frame	12 Months	
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Prioritize facility improvements based on identified cost and funding availability.• Incorporate project funding into annual budget.• Select vendors.• Schedule project(s).	





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Goal 5 Continue to embrace our successful culture of training by insuring that our members have access to appropriate programs and facilities to support our mission, risk assessment and standard of cover.

Time Frame: 60 Months

Objective 5A Secure funding for the renovations of the training facility Burn Building.

Funding Estimate: \$250,000

- Critical Tasks**
- Replace the steel flooring with concrete floors and drains.
 - Install steel hat channels on a 2 ft. x 4 ft. grid to accommodate new linings.
 - Install new Super Padgenite burn lining.
 - Satisfy budget planning process and cost approvals to proceed with the necessary work.
 - Have work completed with as little impact as possible on the training operations of the department.

Objective 5B Obtain additional training props in support of the training facility to provide for realistic hands on learning environments.

Funding Estimate: \$16,000

- Critical Tasks**
- Purchase the Fire Frame Window Simulator for use in the drill tower for fire ground ventilation skills training.
 - Purchase the King Ceiling Simulator for use in fire ground overhauling operations training.
 - Purchase the ceiling breach and pull machine for competency and skill set training relative to ventilation and overhaul operations training.
 - Satisfy budget planning process and cost approvals to proceed with the necessary work.
 - Have work completed with as little impact as possible on the training operation of the department.

Objective 5C Review all aspects of Special Operations as to equipment needs and appropriate training opportunities, and identify all aspects of what is considered a component of special operations.

Funding Estimate: \$75,000

- Critical Tasks**
- Perform study on the possible replacement of the Special Operations Equipment Trailer, as well as all assets of the Department which are consistent with Special Operations. Much of the current equipment associated with Special Operations on hand is the result of donations made to the department and are aging, in some cases outdated.
 - Obtain a consistent and reliable means of transporting the trailer(s).
 - Conduct the necessary training for ongoing competency in utilizing the equipment associated with special operation in a proficient manner.





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Objective 5D

Install a permanent heating source for the Training Facility Accessory and Storage Building.

Funding Estimate: \$20,000

Critical Tasks

- The Accessory and Storage Building of the facility is currently unheated. Our training programs are very robust and require effective learning environments throughout the entire year. Portable heaters used to accomplish heat for the building currently are not effective. They do not support an effective learning environment for our training activities.
- Satisfy budget planning process and cost approvals to proceed with the necessary work.
- Have work completed with as little impact as possible on the training operations of the department.

Objective 5E

Establish a dedicated area within the fire training facility for use in Trench Rescue training operations.

Funding Estimate: \$60,000

Critical Tasks

- Review an area of adequate size and space to support simple and compound trench operations training.
- Excavate the area fully to determine soil conditions and remove all foreign objects and debris to support ongoing trench training operations.
- Identify the area as dedicated for trench rescue operations training with appropriate signage and borders.
- Satisfy budget planning process and cost approvals to proceed with the necessary work.
- Have work completed with as little impact as possible on the training operations of the department.

Objective 5F

Establish and facilitate training programs which are consistent with the operating guidelines of the department as well as the safety and health initiatives of the department.

Funding Estimate: \$12,000

Critical Tasks

- Collaboration with the Chief's for the ongoing support, review and updating of the operating guidelines.
- Collaboration with the Chief's for routinely addressing the safety, health and wellness initiatives within the training programs of the department.
- Produce a system of training objectives which are arranged as computer based training (CBT) modules for access to all members who have access to modern technology.
- Satisfy budget planning process and cost approvals to proceed with the necessary work.
- Have work completed with as little impact as possible on the training operations of the department.





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Goal 6	Review and update all organizational documents, operating guidelines and policies on at least a three-year cycle.	
Time Frame:	36 Months	Funding Estimate: \$10,000
Objective 6A	Review all organizational documents, operating guidelines and policies.	
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Establish a schedule for review of all policies, organizational documents and operating guidelines.• Review of all policies, organizational documents and operating guidelines.• Identify shortfalls in any policy, organizational document or operating guideline.	
Objective 6B	Update all organizational documents, operating guidelines and policies.	
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review industry trends and standards.• Update organizational documents, standard operating guidelines and policies as Identified/required.	
Objective 6C	Circulate and provide all members updated organizational documents, standard operating guidelines and policies.	
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Research and establish a computer software program to manage and distribute organizational documents, standard operating guidelines and policies.• Institute a computerized policy management program.• Encourage members to participate in professional development seminars/training.• Document all reviews/updates and training.	





Vision

On the final day of the process, the CPSE presented the agency with a vision of where the organization will be in the future, if the strategic plan is accomplished. This vision is intended as a target of excellence to strive toward, and provides a basis for its goals and objectives.

The Abington Township Fire Department will continue to be recognized by our residents, local businesses, schools, and regional fire agencies as five professional, well trained, community-centered volunteer companies, unified as one fire department which places a high premium on excellent service and firefighter safety.

Our organizational culture will reflect a compassionate, respectful team atmosphere that is nurtured by open communication processes which guide the decisions of our people. Our mission will be accomplished by a physically fit volunteer work force that is proficient in a multitude of specialized skills and empowered with a high level of involvement in our success. We will strive to maintain a consistent and fresh recruitment program for the replenishment of our ranks by providing quality marketing, educational, and informational programs about our department and our members.

We will honor our community's trust by providing the most effective, consistent, efficient, and fiscally-responsible service possible to all communities and population groups in our township. By improving as necessary our fleet of modern apparatus, equipment and facilities, fire prevention programs and services, our township community will receive quality service with our intent to meet or exceed our customers' expectations. We believe in actively interacting with our community and will expand our community information and education initiatives so that our priorities, philosophy, and operations are clearly understood.

By continually improving our internal and external relationships, we will explore all opportunities for quality fire and rescue service delivery while expanding time and energy toward developing the best strategies for continued improvement. We will be driven to meet best practices ensuring that Abington Township is served by a fire department that is a responsible, dedicated, quality volunteer organization.





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. Performance measures are specific measurable results that indicate achievement. As output measurement can be challenging, the organization must focus on the assessment of progress toward achieving improved output. 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 agency's strategic plan is achieving results, the process of managing for results should be utilized, to include:

- 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.

Types of measures to consider that may be utilized to indicate and measure performance include:

- **Input** - Value of resource used to produce an output.
- **Output** - Quantifiable units produced which are activity-oriented and measurable.
- **Outcome** - Qualitative consequences associated with a program/service; i.e., the ultimate benefit to the customer. Focused on the "why" of providing a service.
- **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.
- **Workload** - Work demanded or performed.

The Success of the Strategic Plan

The agency 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 agency 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





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.
CFAI	Commission on Fire Accreditation International
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 department or agency.
EMS	Emergency Medical Services
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.
LOSAP	Length of Service Award Program
Mission	An enduring statement of purpose; the organization's reason for existence. Describes what the organization does, for whom it does it, and how it does it.
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.
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.
Vision	An idealized view of a desirable and potentially achievable future state - where or what an organization would like to be in the future.





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