

HOWARD COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICES 2021 - 2024 **STRATEGIC PLAN**



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HOWARD COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICES

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WILLIAM ANUSZEWSKI, FIRE CHIEF • CALVIN BALL, COUNTY EXECUTIVE

For any organization to be successful, they must have three key elements: Mission, Vision, and Values. Without a Mission, why are you here? Without Vision, where are you going? Without Values, how can our customers trust and believe in us?

This Strategic Plan was created utilizing stakeholder input from Career, Volunteer, Uniformed, and Civilian internal stakeholders with anywhere from two to thirty years on the job. The important topics discussed, while sometimes arduous, allowed participants to provide input on the future of the department. Those who submitted to participate in the internal stakeholder group and help determine this department's Strategic Plan were truly a cross-section of the department.

Meeting with the external stakeholders allowed for better interaction in the end. Those we serve were able to better understand what services we provide, and the participants' contributions allowed the department to understand what is most important to them.

I am proud of the work that was accomplished in this process. All those involved displayed commitment and dedication to introspection, understanding where we are, and working through the process to set a path for where we will be going. Several of the Goals in the Strategic Plan link directly to the ISRB report recommendations from Lieutenant Nathan Flynn's LODD and will directly guide the department in addressing recommendations that have not been met at the writing of this plan.

Thank you all for actively participating, and I look forward to the growing future of the Howard County Department of Fire and Rescue.

William G. Anuszewski

Fire/EMS Chief

Record of Changes

Summary of Change	Date
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Introduction

The Howard County Department of Fire and Rescue Services (HCDFRS) provides an all-hazards approach in the protection of the lives and property of the residents, businesses, and visitors of Howard County, Maryland. HCDFRS is consistently working to achieve and maintain the highest level of professionalism and efficiency on behalf of those it serves. Thus, HCDFRS has contracted with the Center for Public Safety Excellence (CPSE) to facilitate a method to document the Department's path into the future via a Community-Driven Strategic Plan. The following strategic plan was written based on the Commission on Fire Accreditation International (CFAI) fire and emergency service accreditation model and is intended to guide the organization within established parameters set forth by the jurisdictional authority.

The CPSE utilized the community-driven strategic planning process to go beyond the development of a static document. It challenged the Department's members to critically examine paradigms, values, philosophies, beliefs, and desires and encouraged individuals to work in the best interest of the team. It further provided the Department with an opportunity to participate in the development of the organization's long-term direction and focus. Members of the organization's community and agency stakeholder groups demonstrated commitment to this important project and remain dedicated to the document's completion and future execution.

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Organizational Background

The Howard County Department of Fire and Rescue Services has more than a century of service to its community. The Department was established as a volunteer organization in 1888 and used a horse-drawn ladder wagon for their responses. Over the years, the organization expanded from its original form through the addition of fire stations and motorized equipment. The Department's evolution has resulted in a combination volunteer and career organization focused on providing world-class fire and emergency services to the local community.

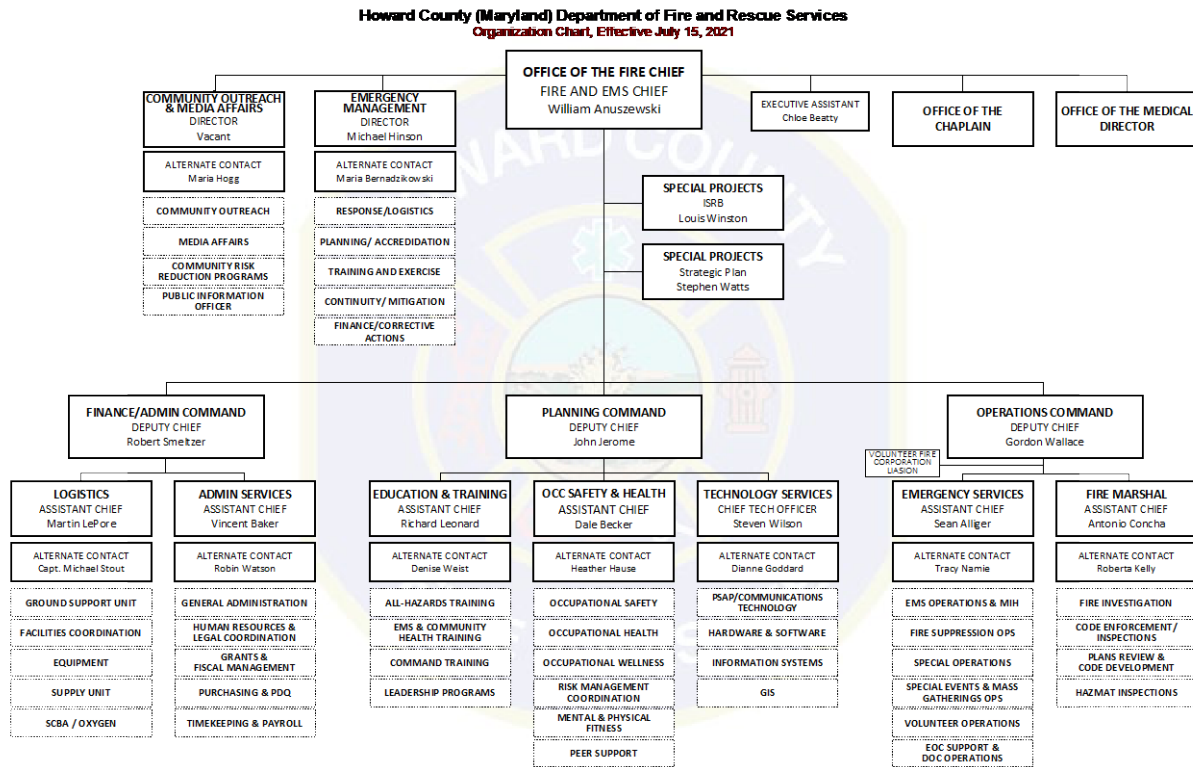
The Howard County Department of Fire and Rescue Services serves a population of approximately 321,000 residents and provides mutual aid to several surrounding counties and cities. Ongoing growth and an expected population increase leads to specific risks for which HCDFRS identifies, equips, and deploys its resources.

Today, HCDFRS reflects on its history and remains committed to providing all-hazards emergency services to the community through the three pillars of excellence: educate, protect, and serve. The Department continues to honor its community with the provision of high-quality services through its proactive focus on risks and deployment from 13 stations that are located strategically throughout the 251 square miles of coverage area. Staffed to support the community, HCDFRS embraces its future vision and excellence in service delivery.



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Organizational Structure



1. The "alternate contact" is the designated member of each Bureau who is available to provide information and/or assistance in the absence of the Bureau Chief or designee.
2. Other functions are secondary responsibilities of each Deputy Chief. This provides continuity of operations in the event any Deputy Chief is not readily available.

Community-Driven Strategic Planning

For many successful organizations, the community's voice drives their operations and charts the course for their future. A community-driven emergency service organization seeks to gather, understand, and utilize the needs and expectations of its community in the development and improvement of the services provided. To ensure that the community remains a focus of the 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 resource utilization. Effective strategic planning benefits from a consistent and cohesively structured process employed across all levels of the organization. Planning is a continuous process, one with no clear beginning and no defined end. While plans can be developed regularly, it is the process of planning that is important, not the publication of the plan itself. Most importantly, strategic planning can be an opportunity to unify the management, employees, and stakeholders through a common understanding of where the organization is going, how everyone involved can work to that common purpose, and how progression and success will be measured.



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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 the organization and 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 can logically be provided in the future.
5. Revisit the values of the organization's membership.
6. Identify the internal strengths and weaknesses of the organization.
7. Identify areas of opportunity or potential threats to the organization.
8. Identify the organization's critical issues and service gaps.
9. Determine strategic initiatives for organizational improvement.
10. Establish a realistic goal and objectives for each initiative.
11. Identify implementation tasks for the accomplishment of each objective.
12. Determine the strategic plan vision of the future.
13. Develop organizational and community commitment to accomplishing the plan.



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Process and Acknowledgements

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

Development of this strategic plan began in November 2020 with virtual meetings hosted by a representative from the CPSE for community members (as named in the following table). The Department identified community stakeholders to ensure a broad representation in the work group. The community stakeholders were comprised of some who reside or work within the Howard County Department of Fire and Rescue Services coverage area and some who were recipients of HCDFRS's service(s).

Howard County Department of Fire and Rescue Services' Community Stakeholders				
Katrina Altieri	James Bateman	Rebecca Beall	MJ Boguslaw	Steven Campbell
Susan Garber	Robert Grace	Ross Hannon	Stacie Hunt	Joel Hurewitz
Brent Jones	Roberta Kelly	Stuart Kohn	James LeMon	Pam Mauerhan
Jeff Richmond	Harshad Sardesai	Katherine Schnorrenberg	Debbie Slack Katz	Meghan Stepanek
Karen Tamalavicz	Clovis Thomas	Larry Walker	Stephanie Wall	Chris Zervas

Community Group Findings

A key element of the Howard County Department of Fire and Rescue Services organizational philosophy is maintaining a high level of commitment to the community and recognizing the importance of community satisfaction. Thus, the Department invited community representatives to provide feedback on the services provided by the Department. Respondents were asked to contribute a prioritized perspective of the programs and services administered by the Department. Additionally, input was gathered during the stakeholder meetings that revolved around community expectations and concerns (prioritized) as well as positive feedback and other comments about the organization. Specific findings of the community stakeholders are provided in the appendix of this document. The agency stakeholders considered the feedback from the community stakeholders in helping to understand the current challenges encountered within the organization. Additionally, the community stakeholders' feedback provided a methodology that ensures alignment with the work completed on the organizational mission, values, vision, and goals for improvement.



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Community Priorities

To best dedicate time, energy, and resources to services most desired by its community, the Howard County Department of Fire and Rescue Services needs to understand what the customers consider their priorities. With that, the community stakeholders were asked to prioritize the programs offered by the Department through a process of direct comparison. The results were as follows¹:

Programs	Ranking	Score
Emergency Medical Services	1	135
Fire Suppression	2	119
Technical Rescue	3	97
Emergency Management	4	85
Hazardous Materials Mitigation	5	79
Prevention	6	64
Fire Investigation	7	39
Community Outreach (Partnerships and Education)	8	37
Mobile Integrated Health	9	29

¹ 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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Agency Stakeholder Group Findings

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

Howard County Department of Fire and Rescue Services' Agency Stakeholders				
William Anuszewski	Chloe Beatty	Daniel Besseck	Jeffrey Carter	Eric Cohn
Christopher Cole	Tony Concha	Erik Deklau	Kelly Derthick	Samantha Durbin
Brian Eagan	Robert Ferguson	Todd Gajewski	Danielle Goodwin	Stephen Hardesty
Maria Hogg	Joshua Hummel	Marianne Hussle	John Jerome	Matt Johnson
Richard Leonard	Martin LePore	Mark Levy	Matt Levy	Daniel Merson
Chris Meyer	Tracy Namie	Adam Nolder	David Reines	Kurt Rubach
Dave Sabat	Robert Smeltzer	Cerisa Speight	Michael Stout	Terri Taylor
Keegan Tozaki	Jeffrey Vogts	Gordon Wallace	Bryant Waller	Stephen Watts
Renee Wilson		Ray Wines		Adam Young



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Agency Stakeholders

Mission

The mission provides an internal aspect of the existence of an organization and, to a degree, an empowering consideration for all Department members. The purpose of the mission is to answer the questions:

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

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

Howard County Department of Fire and Rescue Services is a professional organization dedicated to preserving life, property, and the environment by educating, protecting, and serving the community.



Agency 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.

HCDFRS Core Values:

- Integrity
- Respect
- Service
- Compassion
- Excellence

Vision

The existing vision was reviewed by the entire group and remains unchanged.

We will be a global model of a fully integrated combination volunteer and career fire, rescue, and emergency medical services organization, providing diversified services to promote life safety in our community.

The mission, values, and vision are the foundation of this organization. Thus, every effort will be made to keep these current and meaningful so that they guide the individuals who make up the Howard County Department of Fire and Rescue Services to accomplish the goals, objectives, and day-to-day tasks.



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Programs and Services

To ensure a deeper focus exists in determining issues and gaps within an organization, there must be a delineation between core programs and supporting services. Core programs are those essential deliverables provided by the Department. Supporting services are internal and external programs and services that help HCDFRS deliver its core programs.

The importance of understanding the difference is that issues and gaps may exist in core programs or supporting services, and the Department's strategic approach may bring forth different considerations for improvement. Additionally, supporting services may be internal or external to the organization and require an understanding of how the difference impacts their location within the analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Finally, the agency stakeholders must understand that many local, state, and national services support the delivery of identified core programs.

Through a facilitated brainstorming session, the agency stakeholders agreed upon the core programs provided to the community and many of the supporting services that bolster the programs. This session provided the sought understanding of the essential elements of the delineation between core and supporting programs.



Agency Stakeholders Work Session

SWOT Analysis

Through a SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats), an organization candidly identifies its positive and negative attributes. The SWOT analysis also provides an opportunity for an organization to evaluate its operating environment for areas in which it can capitalize and those that pose a danger. Agency stakeholders participated in this activity to record HCDFRS's strengths and weaknesses as well as the possible opportunities and potential threats. Information gathered through this analysis guides the analysis of larger issues and gaps that exist within the agency. The information gleaned will assist the agency in finding its broader critical issues and service gaps².

² Appendix 2 consists of the SWOT data and analysis collected by the agency stakeholders.



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Critical Issues and Service Gaps

Following the Department's SWOT analysis and review, two separate groups of agency stakeholders met to identify themes as primary critical issues and service gaps ([Appendix 3](#)). The critical issues and services gaps identified by the stakeholders provide further guidance toward the identification of strategic initiatives, which will ultimately lend direction for the development of goals, objectives, critical tasks, and timelines.



Agency Stakeholders Work Session

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 developing goals and objectives.

Howard County Department of Fire and Rescue Services' Strategic Initiatives (in no priority order)			
Human Capital	Training	Accreditation	Physical Resources
Information Technology	External Communications	Internal Communications	

Goals and Objectives

To continuously achieve the Howard County Department of Fire and Rescue Services mission, realistic goals and objectives with timelines for completion must be established. These will enhance strengths, address identified weaknesses, provide a clear direction, and address the community's concerns. These should become a focus of the Department's efforts as they will direct the organization to its desired future while reducing the obstacles and distractions along the way. Leadership-established workgroups 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 HCDFRS leadership³.

³ These objectives coincide with recommendations made in the Internal Safety Review Board (ISRB) report and are each also listed in [Appendix 4 – ISRB Summary Report](#).



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Goal 1 Create an atmosphere encouraging self-improvement, cultivating leadership, promoting organizational development, and imparting institutional knowledge.

Human Capital

Objective 1A⁴ Analyze the Department's human capital resources.

Timeframe	6 months	Assigned to: Administrative Services Bureau (ASB)
Critical Tasks	1.A.1 Assess existing human resources. 1.A.2 Create organizational charts including all uniformed, volunteer, and civilian staff with current vacancies. 1.A.3 Conduct needs assessment evaluating current and future staffing needs. 1.A.4 Perform gap analysis identifying if the authorized strength is adequate for future needs.	

Objective 1B Evaluate current job descriptions and qualifications for accuracy.

Timeframe	4 months	Assigned to: Administrative Services Bureau (ASB)
Critical Tasks	1.B.1 Gather existing department-wide job descriptions and qualifications. 1.B.2 Compare the current job descriptions with the work that employees in the various positions are doing to determine if there is a gap between what is practiced and the job descriptions. 1.B.3 Submit recommendations for additional personnel and position upgrades to senior staff for approval. 1.B.4 Re-evaluate during annual personnel evaluation or after major changes in job function.	

Objective 1C Identify weaknesses in recruitment and retention and implement strategies addressing those weaknesses.

Timeframe	9 months	Assigned to: Administrative Services Bureau (ASB)
Critical Tasks	1.C.1 Create stakeholder workgroups to identify existing and potential recruitment weaknesses within the Department. 1.C.2 Evaluate data to determine the current state of recruitment and retention. 1.C.3 Identify recruitment and retention best practices that ensure equity and inclusion. 1.C.4 Develop recommendations for improved recruitment and retention based on results. 1.C.5 Create recommendations for an implementation plan and obtain the necessary approval. 1.C.6 Implement the plan. 1.C.7 Ensure ongoing evaluation of the plan.	

Objective 1D Identify barriers negatively affecting departmental culture and create ongoing opportunities for improvement.

Timeframe	6 months	Assigned to: Administrative Services Bureau (ASB)
Critical Tasks	1.D.1 Create a stakeholder workgroup to identify perceived divisions within the Department and identify root causes of division. 1.D.2 Recommend potential solutions based on stakeholder feedback. 1.D.3 Create ongoing training which cultivates buy-in to the Department's mission and values.	

⁴ See ISRB Training, Health and Safety Recommendations



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Objective 1E⁵	Design a process that promotes organizational growth and leadership through a culture of mentorship.	
Timeframe	12 months	Assigned to: Administrative Services Bureau (ASB)
Critical Tasks	1.E.1 Evaluate industry best practices in promotion and leadership for our organization. 1.E.2 Identify the Department's strengths and weaknesses in leadership/mentorship training and practices. 1.E.3 Identify barriers to progression from labor to management. 1.E.4 Identify civilian staff promotion opportunities. 1.E.5 Submit actionable recommendations to Department leadership.	
Objective 1F	Develop a workforce qualified to meet the future leadership needs of the Department and develop a strategy for passing on leadership roles.	
Timeframe	12 months	Assigned to: Administrative Services Bureau (ASB)
Critical Tasks	1.F.1 Define succession planning and how it relates to our Department. 1.F.2 Identify shortcomings and areas of greatest need for filling Department leadership roles. 1.F.3 Identify industry best practices for succession planning and sharing leadership institutional knowledge. 1.F.4 Develop recommendations for succession plan improvement based on findings. 1.F.5 Submit a draft succession plan for approval. 1.F.6 Adopt the approved succession plan. 1.F.7 Evaluate annually.	
Objective 1G	Develop and implement uniformed and civilian employee onboarding training programs.	
Timeframe	9 months	Assigned to: Administrative Services Bureau (ASB)
Critical Tasks	1.G.1 Develop and conduct an awareness training program for new staff and include shadowing across HCDFRS. 1.G.2 Identify additional baseline training requirements for all non-uniformed members (i.e., Stop the Bleed, CPR, a day at the station, observe an academy class). 1.G.3 Develop a position process manual for each civilian staff position to aid in position continuity. 1.G.4 Evaluate the onboarding training programs annually.	
Objective 1H⁶	Improve and promote internal services providing physical and mental wellbeing.	
Timeframe	6 months	Assigned to: Bureau of Occupational Safety and Health (BOSH)
Critical Tasks	1.H.1 Create an internal stakeholder workgroup to identify and analyze our physical and mental health offerings. 1.H.2 Research community resources and industry best practices. 1.H.3 Perform an internal needs assessment to determine circumstances that affect employee wellbeing. 1.H.4 Create a proposal of solutions for enhanced staff wellbeing services. 1.H.5 Submit for approval. 1.H.6 Implement the wellbeing plan. 1.H.7 Evaluate annually.	

⁵ See ISRB Training Recommendations

⁶ See ISRB Health and Safety Recommendations



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Objective 1I	Create a process for continued evaluation of the goal's progress.	
Timeframe	6 months, then annually	Assigned to: Administrative Services Bureau (ASB)
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.I.1 Ensure each objective has a cyclical measurable evaluation. 1.I.2 Administer initial evaluation after completion of tasks. 1.I.3 Repeat evaluation and determine necessary changes. 1.I.4 Modify objectives based on the repeat evaluation. 1.I.5 Share results of the evaluation and modified objectives with the Department. 1.I.6 Review, update, and document the changes. 	



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Goal 2 Training Develop and implement innovative and comprehensive training programs fostering excellence among all members of the Department.

Objective 2A Identify job function training requirements by position.

Timeframe 3 months **Assigned to:** Administrative Services Bureau (ASB)

Critical Tasks

- 2.A.1 Inventory and list all existing positions in the Department.
- 2.A.2 Review all current, relative descriptions for each position and compile a listing of general and specific training requirements for each, including formal education, credentials, and licensure requirements.

Objective 2B⁷ Review the present training/qualifications levels of Department members.

Timeframe 6 months **Assigned to:** Bureau of Technology Services (BOTS) and Bureau of Education and Training (E&T)

Critical Tasks

- 2.B.1 Create a centralized database to track individual completed training/certifications for all personnel.
- 2.B.2 Once developed, create a process for collecting training data for all personnel; create report templates to aggregate the information.
- 2.B.3 Identify staff and resources required to maintain this data and, if necessary, provide programs to fill needs.

Objective 2C⁷ Identify gaps between required training and present level of training of Department members.

Timeframe 3 months **Assigned to:** Bureau of Education and Training (E&T)

Critical Tasks

- 2.C.1 Review data collected from Objectives 1 and 2 above and conduct a gap analysis that identifies general and specific training needs for positions across the Department.
- 2.C.2 Develop and prioritize recommendations to address identified gaps.

Objective 2D⁷ Provide flexible training opportunities addressing identified training gaps and enhance opportunities for professional growth.

Timeframe 6-18 months **Assigned to:** Bureau of Education and Training (E&T)

Critical Tasks

- 2.D.1 Consider current, available training from inside and outside sources.
- 2.D.2 Initiate measures regarding the provision of alternate delivery methods – online, virtual, hybrid, in-person, self-study.
- 2.D.3 Actively market/promote alternative training and development opportunities.
- 2.D.4 Gather feedback from participants regarding training content, delivery method, accessibility, and relevance.

⁷ See ISRB ICS, Strategy and Tactics, MAYDAY, Rapid Intervention Crew and Rescue Ops, Accountability, Crew Integrity, Training, and Health and Safety Recommendations



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Objective 2E⁸	Provide training facilities to meet the evolving training needs of the Department.	
Timeframe	1-2 years	Assigned to: Logistics Bureau (LOGS)
Critical Tasks	2.E.1 Conduct needs assessment of current and future training facility and capability needs. - Specifically evaluate the need for a Class A burn building 2.E.2 Conduct a feasibility study of the assessed needs. 2.E.3 Identify funding for assessed needs. 2.E.4 Pursue construction of identified needs. 2.E.5 Prioritize the needs-based upon benefit and feasibility.	
Objective 2F⁸	Ensure leadership training and development opportunities at all levels	
Timeframe	6-12 months	Assigned to: Bureau of Education and Training (E&T)
Critical Tasks	2.F.1 Catalog and evaluate current leadership training and development opportunities. 2.F.2 Evaluate available industry best practices related to leadership training. 2.F.3 Develop an applicable formal leadership development framework that includes a list of programs, i.e., mentoring, OCS programs, etc.	
Objective 2G⁹	Establish all-hazards training standards that ensure competency, currency, and progressive learning.	
Timeframe	6-12 months	Assigned to: Bureau of Education and Training (E&T)
Critical Tasks	2.G.1 Perform department-wide all-hazards training needs assessment. 2.G.2 Develop an all-hazards training program plan. 2.G.3 Identify funding associated with the all-hazards training program. 2.G.4 Train instructors and implement training schedule. 2.G.5 Re-evaluate the training model and adjust as necessary.	
Objective 2H	Establish a means for ongoing measurement of goal's progress.	
Timeframe	6 months, then annually	Assigned to: Bureau of Education and Training (E&T)
Critical Tasks	2.H.1 Create an evaluation process including, but not limited to, training data, instructor and student feedback, and compliance with job-related requirements. 2.H.2 Adjust programs as necessary based on the evaluation outcomes. 2.H.3 Review, update, and document the changes as needed.	

⁸ See ISRB ICS, Strategy and Tactics, MAYDAY, Rapid Intervention Crew and Rescue Ops, Accountability, Crew Integrity, Training, and Health and Safety Recommendations

⁹ See ISRB Strategy and Tactics, Rapid Intervention Crew and Rescue Ops, Accountability, Health and Safety Recommendations



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Goal 3
External Communications Enhance communication with our external stakeholders to bolster transparency, encourage feedback, and cultivate relationships.

Objective 3A Identify and evaluate current external communication practices to determine gaps and define mutual expectations.

Timeframe 3 months **Assigned to:** Community Outreach & Media Affairs (COMA)

- Critical Tasks**
- 3.A.1 Choose the team lead and a representative cross-section of Department members to achieve the goal.
 - 3.A.2 Identify and develop a list of external stakeholders based on feedback from all bureaus.
 - 3.A.3 Categorize external stakeholders based on relationship to the Department.
 - 3.A.4 Identify current external communication methods utilizing multiple data collection methods.
 - 3.A.5 Review, evaluate, and organize data to establish priorities and realistic expectations.

Objective 3B Develop an external communications plan based on identified best practices and stakeholder expectations.

Timeframe 4-6 months **Assigned to:** Community Outreach & Media Affairs (COMA)

- Critical Tasks**
- 3.B.1 Evaluate public safety, private sector, and academic institution models for external communications methods and processes.
 - 3.B.2 Compare our current model with the identified best practices.
 - 3.B.3 Compare mutual expectations of stakeholders for consideration in developing the plan.
 - 3.B.4 Determine feasibility to meet expectations and implement best practices.
 - 3.B.5 Develop the enhanced external communication plan based on identified recommendations.
 - 3.B.6 Submit a draft of the plan to senior staff for review and approval.

Objective 3C Implement the developed external communications plan.

Timeframe 4-6 months **Assigned to:** Community Outreach & Media Affairs (COMA)

- Critical Tasks**
- 3.C.1 Communicate the plan to external stakeholders.
 - 3.C.2 Provide internal training based on individual bureau needs.
 - 3.C.3 Solicit and evaluate feedback on the plan from internal and external stakeholders.
 - 3.C.4 Make appropriate changes based on the feedback.
 - 3.C.5 Adopt the revised enhanced external communications plan.

Objective 3D Ongoing evaluation of the plan to ensure effectiveness.

Timeframe 6 months, then annually **Assigned to:** Community Outreach & Media Affairs (COMA)

- Critical Tasks**
- 3.D.1 Establish a schedule for evaluation of enhanced external communications plan.
 - 3.D.2 Develop a data collection tool with identified benchmarks.
 - 3.D.3 Update the list of external stakeholders as needed.
 - 3.D.4 Review the plan semi-annually to determine relevancy, currency, and applicability.
 - 3.D.5 Review, update, and document the review/changes as needed.



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Goal 4 Internal Communications	Ensure effective communications with our internal stakeholders to provide consistent, comprehensive, and timely information to cultivate organizational trust, ownership, and efficiency.
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Objective 4A	Evaluate existing internal processes to determine gaps and opportunities to enhance internal communications efforts.
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Timeframe	3-6 months	Assigned to: Office of the Fire Chief (OFC)
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Critical Tasks	4.A.1	Form a diverse stakeholder team to conduct the evaluation.
	4.A.2	Identify the existing internal communications processes.
	4.A.3	Solicit feedback from all internal stakeholders to identify the gaps and opportunities for each internal communication process.
	4.A.4	Perform a needs analysis based on stakeholder feedback to prioritize ongoing efforts.
	4.A.5	Provide a progress report to the Department via informational bulletins and county email.

Objective 4B	Develop an internal communication plan that is consistent, comprehensive, and timely.
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Timeframe	9-12 months	Assigned to: Office of the Fire Chief (OFC)
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Critical Tasks	4.B.1	Identify and recruit team of internal subject matter experts to assist in fixing gaps and exploring opportunities.
	4.B.2	Establish a plan based on the needs analysis to address each gap and opportunity that emphasizes simplicity, consistency, ownership, and effectiveness.
	4.B.3	Design, build, and test individual processes for each gap and opportunity.
	4.B.4	Provide a progress report to the Department via informational bulletins and county email.

Objective 4C	Implement the improved internal communications plan.
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Timeframe	6-9 months	Assigned to: Office of the Fire Chief (OFC)
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Critical Tasks	4.C.1	Develop and deliver training to all personnel to ensure competency with the new communications plan and processes.
	4.C.2	Utilize feedback from training programs to modify future processes and provide additional training as needed.
	4.C.3	Implement and deploy the new communications processes.

Objective 4D	Ongoing evaluation of the plan to ensure effectiveness.
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Timeframe	6 months, then annually	Assigned to: Office of the Fire Chief (OFC)
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Critical Tasks	4.D.1	Create a plan for ongoing evaluation, measurement, and continuous improvement including surveys and data analysis as appropriate.
	4.D.2	Measure and evaluate data to determine the effectiveness of the plan.
	4.D.3	Review, update, and document the review/changes as needed.



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Goal 5
Physical Resources Provide and maintain adequate durable goods and assets to accomplish the Department's vision, mission, and goals.

Objective 5A	Conduct and establish an inventory of durable goods and assets. Evaluate inventory capabilities to meet the Department's mission.	
Timeframe	6 months	Assigned to: Bureau of Logistics (LOGS)
Critical Tasks	5.A.1 Identify stakeholders and a project manager. 5.A.2 Identify a planning team. 5.A.3 Identify an inventory team. 5.A.4 Identify inventory methodology and software. 5.A.5 Conduct and establish inventory of durable goods and assets. 5.A.6 Conduct a needs (gap) analysis based on current inventory, service requirements, response data, and proposed increases to service capabilities. 5.A.7 Identify immediate priorities to close gaps in inventory to support mission.	
Objective 5B¹⁰	Develop a plan to ensure a readily available supply of durable goods and assets for current and future needs, prioritized with consideration of budgetary constraints.	
Timeframe	6 months	Assigned to: Bureau of Logistics (LOGS)
Critical Tasks	5.B.1 Set planning goals and objectives based on inventory and needs analysis. 5.B.2 Identify critical failure points. 5.B.3 Determine standardized specifications for durable goods and assets. 5.B.4 Develop standardized equations to account for future growth of service capabilities. 5.B.5 Create a plan to fund and obtain resources to close service gap. 5.B.6 Submit funding plan for approval. 5.B.7 Explore alternative means of funding. 5.B.8 Identify strategic storage locations for durable goods and assets. 5.B.9 Evaluate plan with engaged end users and Office of the Fire Chief.	
Objective 5C	Implement the plan	
Timeframe	2 years-ongoing	Assigned to: Bureau of Logistics (LOGS)
Critical Tasks	5.C.1 Identify team to work with the Bureau of Logistics and County/Department administration on purchases. 5.C.2 Adopt inventory software program. 5.C.3 Ensure adequate training for program managers utilizing inventory management system. 5.C.4 Ensure inventory management system is audited and maintained. 5.C.5 Evaluate and utilize existing contracts to meet needs. 5.C.6 Establish contracts to expediate purchasing matrix. 5.C.7 Write justifications for purchases when requested. 5.C.8 Allocate funding and make purchases based on current funding priorities.	

¹⁰ See ISRB Personal Protective Equipment, Apparatus and Equipment Recommendations



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Objective 5D	Ongoing evaluation of the plan to ensure it adequately supports the Department's mission.		
Timeframe	3 months, then annually	Assigned to:	Bureau of Logistics (LOGS)
Critical Tasks	5.D.1 Determine measurement benchmarks. 5.D.2 Follow up with stakeholders to determine if the plan is meeting Department needs. 5.D.3 Evaluate expected vs. actual life of durable goods and assets. 5.D.4 Review, evaluate, and revise the plan, including funding, based on input from internal and external customers. 5.D.5 Document the review/changes as needed.		



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Goal 6 Ensure an efficient and effective technology infrastructure that supports Information Technology operational and management processes.

Objective 6A Conduct a comprehensive IT business analysis.

Timeframe 6-9 months **Assigned to:** Bureau of Technology Services (BOTS)

- Critical Tasks**
- 6.A.1 Identify subject areas and SMEs.
 - 6.A.2 Interview SMEs for information flows and requirements.
 - 6.A.3 Develop data catalog documentation tool.

Objective 6B Evaluate the bureau of technology services to ensure hardware, software, and personnel are appropriate for the size, function, and complexity of our Department.

Timeframe 1-3 months **Assigned to:** Bureau of Technology Services (BOTS)

- Critical Tasks**
- 6.B.1 Identify team members and leader.
 - 6.B.2 Identify existing hardware, software, and information technology personnel.
 - 6.B.3 Evaluate hardware, software, and personnel are appropriate for the size, function, and complexity of our Department.
 - 6.B.4 Document the findings and recommendations for inclusion in a plan.

Objective 6C Evaluate current policies and databases to ensure they are integrated to address data governance, data accuracy, and analysis.

Timeframe 1-3 months **Assigned to:** Bureau of Technology Services (BOTS)

- Critical Tasks**
- 6.C.1 Identify team members and a team leader.
 - 6.C.2 Identify existing policies and databases.
 - 6.C.3 Perform policy and database analysis.
 - 6.C.4 Document the findings and recommendations for inclusion in a plan.

Objective 6D Evaluate the current hardware replacement plan and procurement policies to ensure they adequately meet the Department's needs.

Timeframe 1-3 months **Assigned to:** Bureau of Technology Services (BOTS)

- Critical Tasks**
- 6.D.1 Identify the team members and team leader.
 - 6.D.2 Identify the current replacement plan and procurement policies as they relate to information technology needs of the Department.
 - 6.D.3 Solicit stakeholder feedback.
 - 6.D.4 Document the findings and recommendations for inclusion in a plan.

Objective 6E Develop or update the Department's technology policies to reflect the needs of the Department.

Timeframe 6-9 months **Assigned to:** Bureau of Technology Services (BOTS)

- Critical Tasks**
- 6.E.1 Identify the team members and team leader.
 - 6.E.2 Compile all evaluation data and create recommendations.
 - 6.E.3 Develop draft technology policies.
 - 6.E.4 Develop a new and emerging technologies evaluation process for future consideration or incorporation.
 - 6.E.5 Submit the policies for review and approval.



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Objective 6F	Implement updated technology policies.		
Timeframe	1-2 years	Assigned to:	Bureau of Technology Services (BOTS)
Critical Tasks	6.F.1	Communicate the policies to stakeholders.	
	6.F.2	Provide training.	
	6.F.3	Evaluate all feedback.	
	6.F.4	Implement appropriate policy changes.	
Objective 6G	Evaluation of the objectives to ensure adequate support of the Department’s mission.		
Timeframe	3 months, then annually	Assigned to:	Bureau of Technology Services (BOTS)
Critical Tasks	6.G.1	Establish a schedule for the evaluation of updated technology policies.	
	6.G.2	Develop a feedback tool with defined benchmarks.	
	6.G.3	Review, update, and document the review/changes as needed.	



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Goal 7 Engage in a self-assessment process in pursuit of international accreditation to better serve our community.

Objective 7A Form team or committee structures with management components as needed to pursue accreditation.

Timeframe 30 days **Assigned to:** Office of the Fire Chief (OFC) Accreditation Manager

- Critical Tasks**
- 7.A.1 Identify the needed team or committee structure(s) for the various components of the accreditation process.
 - 7.A.2 Create the management oversight positions to lead the teams or committees, as well as the process overall.
 - 7.A.3 Establish team or committee member criteria.
 - 7.A.4 Determine the composition of the teams or committees.
 - 7.A.5 Solicit participation to meet the composition of the teams or committees.
 - 7.A.6 Develop and complete the workgroup selection process.
 - 7.A.6 Provide the needed educational components available through the Commission on Fire Accreditation International to ensure the relevant members have the needed training.
 - 7.A.7 Provide guidance to the established team or committee to construct a work plan and associated procedures to manage the accreditation process.

Objective 7B Develop a community-driven strategic plan.

Timeframe 3 months and on-going **Assigned to:** Office of the Fire Chief (OFC) Accreditation Manager

- Critical Tasks**
- 7.B.1 Hold an external stakeholder meeting where community members provide feedback on program priorities, service expectations, concerns, and strengths perceived about the department or agency.
 - 7.B.2 Conduct agency stakeholder work sessions to evaluate (and update if necessary) the mission, vision, and values; determine internal strengths and weaknesses, external opportunities, and threats.
 - 7.B.3 Identify any critical issues and service gaps that exist. Determine specific strategic initiatives around the uncovered gaps.
 - 7.B.4 Develop goals, objectives, critical tasks, and appropriate timelines including levels of measurability, to achieve improvement over three years.
 - 7.B.5 Present the plan to community stakeholders for feedback
 - 7.B.6 Publish and distribute the formal strategic plan to stakeholders, including the authority having jurisdiction as determined by the organization.

Objective 7C Implement the community-driven strategic plan.

Timeframe 3 months, on-going **Assigned to:** Office of the Fire Chief (OFC)

- Critical Tasks**
- 7.C.1 Create a strategic planning subcommittee to review the strategic plan.
 - 7.C.2 Evaluate goals and objectives within the draft plan, and further define objectives and critical tasks as needed to ensure clarity with each goal.
 - 7.C.2 Determine and implement a work plan for the accomplishment of each goal.
 - 7.C.3 Continuously evaluate and revise the objectives and tasking as implementation occurs within the plan.
 - 7.C.4 Report annual plan progress to community and agency stakeholders.



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Objective 7D Conduct a comprehensive community hazards and risk assessment and document findings for the development of standards of cover.		
Timeframe	6 – 9 months	Assigned to: Office of the Fire Chief (OFC) Accreditation Manager
Critical Tasks	7.D.1	Gather and consider geophysical characteristics data of the jurisdictional responsibilities.
	7.D.2	Gather and evaluate population, population demographics, area economics, and socioeconomic data of the jurisdiction.
	7.D.3	Gather and consider physical asset development, service, and transportation infrastructure types in the jurisdiction.
	7.D.4	Describe the Department’s programs, services, core deliverables, human and physical resources to establish baseline information.
	7.D.5	Determine an appropriate methodology for dividing the area of responsibility into geographical planning zones.
	7.D.6	Build a methodology that identifies, assesses, classifies, and categorizes risk in the jurisdiction’s response areas.
	7.D.7	Document the information collected and the results of the applied methodologies in the risk assessment process.
Objective 7E Develop standards of coverage based on community hazards and risk assessment results and combine results to complete the community risk and standards of cover study document.		
Timeframe	6 - 9 months	Assigned to: Office of the Fire Chief (OFC) Accreditation Manager
Critical Tasks	7.E.1	Evaluate historical jurisdictional emergency response performance and coverage to produce baseline data.
	7.E.2	Establish benchmark and baseline emergency response service level and performance objectives.
	7.E.3	Develop methodologies and policies for qualifying and validating data sets.
	7.E.4	Conduct a gap analysis of performance across classes, categories of risk in each of the established planning zones to illuminate opportunities for improvement.
	7.E.5	Build a compliance methodology for monitoring, evaluating, and reporting performance of the delivery system.
	7.E.6	Utilize the overall system performance data to create short- and long-term plans for maintaining and improving the system’s response capabilities.
	7.E.7	Combine and publish the community risk assessment and standards of cover study information, performance data, established objectives, and gap analysis results.
	7.E.8	Maintain and annually update the community risk assessment-standards of cover document.
	7.E.9	Present the CRA/SOC study results as updated annually to the authority having jurisdiction to provide transparency, build consensus, and align expectations.



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Objective 7F	Pursue agency accreditation by the CFAI.		
Timeframe	4 months	Assigned to:	OFC - Accreditation Manager
Critical Tasks	7.F.1	Register to become a “Registered” for accreditation agency with the CPSE.	
	7.F.2	Register as an “Applicant” for accreditation agency with CPSE once the following are completed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Risk Assessment/Standard of Cover • Strategic Plan • 2-3 of the 11 categories of the CPSE accreditation self-assessment model 	
	7.F.3	Apply for “Candidate Agency” status with the CFAI once the three accreditation documents are completed.	
	7.F.4	Upload strategic plan, community risk assessment-standards of cover, and self-assessment documentation for review and comment by the CFAI peer assessment team.	
	7.F.5	Prepare for CFAI peer assessment team visit.	
	7.F.6	Host the CFAI peer assessment team site visit for accreditation review.	
	7.F.7	Receive the CFAI peer assessment team recommendation to CFAI for Accredited status.	
	7.F.8	Review the peer assessment team’s recommendations to determine applicability to agency processes or systems to determine the scope of the annual compliance report process.	
	7.F.9	Receive vote during the CFAI hearings in favor of accredited status.	



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Vision of the Strategic Plan

On the final day of the process, the CPSE presented a strategic plan vision of where the organization will be in the future if the strategic plan is accomplished. This is not to override the Department's global vision but to confirm the futurity of the work that the agency stakeholders designed. This plan vision is intended as a target of excellence to strive toward and provides a basis for its goals and objectives.

"Vision is knowing who you are, where you're going, and what will guide your journey."

— Ken Blanchard

The Howard County Department of Fire and Rescue Services 2021-2024 Strategic Plan Vision

To be known as a mission-focused department protecting the community through the collaborative pursuit of excellence. We commit to the compassionate support of our members and those we serve.

With an investment in our greatest resource of human capital that is innovatively trained and equipped, we will be positioned to answer any challenge we encounter. Our focus on timely internal and external communication will strengthen our effectiveness while achieving greater organizational consistency. Improving our overall response along with developing technological efficiencies will allow us to overcome challenges impacting our ability to preserve life, property, and the environment.

We will always engage in continuous improvement and remain dedicated to service with integrity and respect while holding each other accountable in delivering our mission, living our values, and making this vision a reality.

Performance Measurement

To assess and ensure that an organization delivers on the promises made in its 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 assessing 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.

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

Reinventing Government
David Osborn and Ted Gaebler



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To establish that the Department's strategic plan is achieving results, performance measurement data will be implemented and integrated into 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 analysis and evaluation of performance data; and
- The use of that data to drive continuous improvement in the organization.

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

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

The Success of the Strategic Plan

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

Provided the community-driven strategic planning process remains dynamic and supported by effective leadership and active participation, it represents a considerable opportunity to unify agency and community stakeholders. This can be accomplished through a jointly developed understanding of organizational direction, focusing on all vested parties working to achieve the Department's mission, goals, and vision. Further consideration must be made regarding how the organization will measure and be accountable for its progress and successes.



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Glossary of Terms, Acronyms, and Initialisms

AACo	Anne Arundel County
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.
All-Hazards	Represents every level of a hazard response whether it is trench rescue, hazardous materials, confined space, building collapse, rope rescue, fire extinguishment, EMS, dive rescue, swift water, and vehicle extraction.
APL	Applied Physics Laboratory
BOSH	Bureau of Occupational Safety and Health
BOTS	Bureau of Technological Services
CBRNE	Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, Explosive
CERT	Community Emergency Response Team
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.
DTCS	Department of Technology and Communication Services
DROP	Delayed Retirement Option Plan
Efficiency	A performance indication where inputs are measured per unit of output (or vice versa).
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.
HCC	Howard County College
HoCo	Howard County
HVO	Heavy Vehicle Operator
Input	A performance indication where the value of resources is used to produce an output.
ISRB	Internal Safety Review Board
LEAD	Leadership Education Assessment Development
LODD	Line of Duty Death
MDT	Mobile Data Terminal
MICH	Mobile Integrated Community Health



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MICRB	Maryland Instructors Certification Review Board
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.
NFPA	National Fire Protection Association
NSA	National Security Agency
OEC	Old Ellicott City
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.
PSAP	Public Safety Answering Point
Stakeholder	Any person, group, or organization that can place a claim on, or influences 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. An aim. The result of an action. Something to accomplish in assisting the agency in moving 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
UMGC	University of Maryland Global College
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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Appendix 1 – Community Findings

Community Expectations

Understanding the community's expectations 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's needs.

Respondents were asked to list, in priority order, up to five subjects relative to the expectations they have for the Howard County Department of Fire and Rescue Services. 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, it received five weighted points. Weighting gradually decreased so that if it was the respondent's fifth entry, 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 Howard County Department of Fire and Rescue Services (in priority order)

1. Prompt response to calls for assistance. Rapid response to fire and/or medical needs. Consistent, prompt response to an emergency. Quick response to 911 calls. Speed of response. Timely response to 911 calls. Timeliness. Rapid emergency medical care. Swiftly respond to fires and emergencies. Prompt responsiveness. Fire response times. (50)
2. Emergency outreach. Community outreach. Educating the public, i.e., their role in our community safety. Community outreach. Community engagement for prevention and planning. Citizen classes on CPR, Stop the Bleed, etc. Relationship with community. Community awareness. Fire safety information and training. Effective communication with community. Resources and support for community (resumption of training and public education functions, via virtual means. News regarding funding of the proposed North Columbia station. Updates on the impact of recent projects to safeguard. Old Ellicott City from floods. Explanation of why there have been no recent graduates of the ALS Academy Program.) Answer fire regulation questions, particularly because the National Fire Code is not generally available. (47)
3. Continuously well-trained personnel throughout the Department. Hiring, training, safety of personnel. Well trained. Proactive measures (education and training). Emergency training. Excellent training and support for staff. Training. Safety training opportunities. Training. Facilitate use of best practices to minimize risks to life and limb. (31)
4. Respond to emergency incidents, crises, and disasters and perform measures to save lives. Responsiveness. Save lives and protect property. Come when called for fire or medical. Preparedness and response. (24)
5. Fire and rescue calls. Fire protection response. Fire suppression. (14)
6. Prevention. Fire prevention and inspections. Monitoring/inspections to keep us in compliance. You will advise the county planners about safe design. Clear code enforcement. (13)



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7. ALS-level response to EMS incidents. Expand EMS/BCS to provide 24-hour coverage. Medical emergency response. Maintenance of adequate ambulance. (10)
8. Resource allocation based on service demands. Increasing the staffing ratios to exceed national standards. Coordinate available resources to protect property, business losses in response to disaster. (9)
9. Proper funding based on fictional needs. Wisely spend fire tax monies. Fiscal responsibility. Cost recovery through insurance billing, participation in CMS EMS reimbursement initiatives. Fiscal responsibility. (9)
10. Efficiency. Results-oriented. Work ethic. (8)
11. Empathetic. Care. You will exude a respectful and comforting persona. (7)
12. Safety for staff and county residents. Keeping employees/personnel safe. Safety concerns. (7)
13. Courteous. Courteous and polite service. (7)
14. Understanding. You will listen to my needs and concerns. (6)
15. You will have the equipment needed to assist. Upkeep equipment. (6)
16. Professionalism. (5)
17. Diversity of department. Multi-lingual. (5)
18. Compassion. (4)
19. Clear code of conduct (4)
20. Emergency management. Inter-agency engagement for response planning and coordination. (4)
21. Technical rescue. Rescue services. (4)
22. Passion. (4)
23. Effective use of volunteers who meet or exceed certification requirements. (3)
24. Comply with federal statutes, regulations in the performance of departmental duties. (3)
25. Citizen assist--non-emergency patient aid. (3)
26. Incorporate new fire technologies. (3)
27. A satisfied workforce. (2)
28. Hazardous materials mitigation. (2)
29. Providing "clean cab function" for all stations. (2)
30. Community recruiting programs. (2)
31. Incident investigation. (1)
32. Standards-based cybersecurity program. (1)



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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 be a weakness within the delivery system, while others 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, it received five weighted points. Weighting gradually decreased so that if it was the respondent's fifth entry, 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 Howard County Department of Fire and Rescue Services (verbatim, in priority order)

1. Keeping up with county growth and its demand on F&R services- parts of the county have seen significant incident demand increases. Do they have enough manpower? Redundant response ability when personnel are on a call. Dependence on volunteers with increasing call volumes. Adequate staffing levels for areas with increasing call volume. Concerned department cannot keep pace with development. Demand outpacing resources. Do they have sufficient infrastructure? Overwhelmed (too much building). Placement of new firehouses. (37)
2. Risk assessment identified natural hazards (floods, severe storms) as greatest threats, and vulnerabilities are measured in terms of property values and business losses. We should also consider man-made risks and vulnerabilities (CBRNE and cyberterrorism). Emergency management. HoCo has developed several comprehensive plans for emergency mgt, e.g., water systems. Do we have comprehensive emergency plans from all the ESF departments? For example, a countywide evacuation plan, especially for vulnerable populations, including health department, housing, transportation, etc. Interagency coordination for complex emergencies/disaster response. Do they have professional cybersecurity protections? (Effective evacuation, Emergency roles for schools). Does Fire & Rescue participate in the HoCo community organizations. Active in disaster (COAD)? (25)
3. Hiring Howard County residents. Communicating employment opportunities/pathways. Decent wage for new hires. Recruitment. Recruiting. Do they have a good pool of recruits? Do they have a program to encourage people to go into their field? Recruiting minorities and making them feel wanted and welcomed. (23)
4. Pay your firefighters and medics accordingly - they have been working their butts through this pandemic on the front lines. Comparable pay/benefits. Pension, wages, and employee happiness/retention. Ensure secure wages. Ensure secure pensions. (15)



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5. Adequate training of personnel. Fire suppression drills. Education program opportunities. Do they have enough training? (14)
6. Diversity of employees-HoCo is a diverse community. Diversity. Ethnic makeup. (13)
7. Financial sustainability of the volunteer depts with lack of fundraising during pandemic. Do they have sufficient funding? What portion of the County's \$500,000 for disaster relief and recovery (related to COVID-19) might go to F&R? (12)
8. PPE cost. Some of the goals listed in the previous plan (2018) were determined infeasible or cost-inefficient. Can we remove barriers to achievement, reassess costs and investigate less costly means to accomplish goals, e.g., through new or existing resources? Financial sustainability of the volunteer depts with lack of fund-raising during pandemic. Each new station more elaborate +expensive than the last. Funding to maintain equipment and facilities. (11)
9. Response time to calls. Response times - I do not see data about this specifically but an issue regarding where stations are located and what capacity they have. Adequate response resources for timely deployments. (10)
10. Concerned urbanization not allowing large roads and turnabouts. Inclusion of public safety response needs in development planning. Future plans based on community involvement. (9)
11. Lack of community outreach. Accessibility to inspectors. Outreach- hard to communicate with our whole community due to the many different languages. Community outreach. (9)
12. Cultural differences between career and volunteer. Cultural differences between fire and EMS. (7)
13. Having proper up-to-date equipment to do their job. Adequate equipment for the great work they do. (7)
14. Training opportunities. Making sure that training and implementation of cutting-edge technologies occur. (6)
15. Response times. The length of response times. (6)
16. Effective response to incident. Threat responsiveness. (6)
17. How truly transparent and accountable are the learners? (5)
18. Previous chief described us as a one-fire department. (5)
19. Staff mental health in 2020. (5)
20. Water supply for developing areas in the south of the county. (5)
21. Relationship with elected officials. (4)
22. Wear and tear of equipment, especially truck and ladders on minor and unverified emergencies. (4)
23. Pay. (4)
24. Turnover in staff. (4)
25. Effective means of communicating when there is an emergency. (4)



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- 26. Should there be a board or commission that oversees public safety (PD and F&R), as with other important county functions? (4)
- 27. Concerned for fire suppression along wooded paths and parks. (3)
- 28. Few “clean cabs.” (2)
- 29. Accountability. (2)
- 30. Ability to support our disabilities community safely. (2)
- 31. Is the 911 system stable? (2)
- 32. Application of reasonable regulations. (2)
- 33. What aid to the Department comes from MD (other than MD DNR)? What aid comes from private, foundation or corporate sectors? (2)
- 34. Errors made in Nathan Flynn incident. (1)



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Positive Community Feedback

The CPSE promotes the belief that the community's view on the organization's strengths must be established for a strategic plan to be valid. 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 identified weaknesses.

Positive Community Comments about Howard County Department of Fire and Rescue Services (verbatim, in no particular order)

- Pay them well - they have been working their asses off during this pandemic. They deserve to be paid accordingly.
- Good reputation.
- Well organized, well-coordinated.
- Exceptional customer service.
- Genuinely nice people.
- Great training.
- Rapid response.
- Ability to have community input.
- Doing this - getting community feedback.
- Responsive to emergencies.
- They are responsive.
- Professional organization.
- Good customer service.
- Strong community outreach.
- Give them the apparatus, staffing, and station initiatives they need. Give them the apparatus, staffing, and station initiatives they need.
- Attempts for data-driven decisions.
- Committed to ongoing stakeholder involvement.
- Skilled and informed rescue operatives.
- Generally, arrive quickly.
- Volunteers that care and assist.
- Highly trained.
- Kindness of firefighters.
- The partnering done with the other government organizations - for emergency incident planning and general day-to-day activities.
- Collaborative/professional staff.
- I have seen them to be quite efficient.



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- Ability to respond to wide number of incidents.
- CPR programs were easy to sign up for.
- Strong employee health and wellness program. Please support special operations. These are your make or break calls in the news media.
- Concerned about employee morale.
- Responders and staff are motivated, well-trained, and highly knowledgeable professionals.
- Volunteer departments in the community.
- Nice outreach and educational open houses.
- Dedication of fire department members.
- Nationally recognized.
- Maintain positive association.
- Outreach they are doing educating public, schools... re CPR, stop the bleed... and partnering with businesses and NPs to do the outreach.
- Seem to be well trained.
- They have done excellent outreach programs.
- Articulated truck.
- Individual stations invested in community.
- Strong participation in regional emergency response efforts. Please ensure you compensate your paramedics accordingly. They work their ass off and are worth the pay.
- Too little time to meaningfully complete.
- Community activities are present.
- Good relationship with our community.
- Volunteer and career working together.
- Accessibility, they respond promptly to any contact (this is outside of emergencies).
- Accepting of feedback.
- Strong experience responding to flooding disaster. The employees in HCDFRS deserve to be paid and make a raise during this pandemic. They have been on the frontlines, busting their butts in all of these COVID+ homes, serving the communities and nursing homes, and you need to take care of your employees.
- These surveys.
- Emergency medical services
- Great volunteer firefighters and auxiliary.
- Community perception.
- Efforts within the Department around employee mental health and carcinogen safety.
- Facilities/equipment seem well maintained.
- Strong training program.



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- Outreach by Tim Sinz
- Clear interest in our community.
- Willingness to communicate
- Transparency.
- Level of effort.
- Fast response rate.
- New facilities built to respond to expanding communities- Merriweather.
- Community outreach.
- Tremendous support when I needed them.
- Understanding/compassion in duress.
- Rich Ruehl/Ryan Hassan, great people.
- Very quick response time.
- In my experience, all staff have been so kind and skilled.
- I really love the community service.
- I really like seeing units and trucks in the community (like the grocery stores).
- Great work with schools!
- Professional appearing.
- Christmas engine with Mr. and Mrs. Claus is great, but it goes too fast for the kids to get there in time.
- Also, train garden is fantastic!
- I saw some training videos a while back and they looked intense. Was proud of you guys.
- Responsiveness.
- Visibility.
- Very effective when there is an emergency.
- Very professional.
- Always on-site in a timely manner.
- Always take charge of the situation.
- Effective feedback of solving problems.
- The appointment of Chief Anuszewski.
- Recent upgrades in comms technology.
- Avoidance of ambulance charges for HC residents.
- Emphasis on educating young residents on safety.
- Improvements in dispatch and 911 systems.



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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 Howard County Department of Fire and Rescue Services (verbatim, in no particular order)

- Give them a raise.
- Inadequate information provided timely.
- Prioritize protection of life by considering man-made risks and vulnerabilities, specifically CBRNE and hazardous materials.
- Increase community involvement.
- You need to advise DPZ not to allow developments to have.
- Maintain or expand community relations in neighborhoods (not just main community centers).
- Please review your building inspection policy, more clarity.
- Need to anticipate and communicate better flood situations, especially in Ellicott City.
- Would be great if there was a CERT program offered. They kick butt.
- A fact sheet in advance would have been more helpful.
- Cyberterrorism exacerbates the risks to critical infrastructures. Promote cybersecurity to protect reliability and integrity of electric grid, communications, and transportation vulnerabilities that could cause resource shortages from supply chain disruption.
- Engage the public on training opportunities.
- Such narrow roads and no turnaround spaces.
- Help establish safety and relations in underserved neighborhoods.
- I think that the fire department overall does a good job. Anytime that I needed them, they have been responsive.
- Based on comments on NextDoor, there are community misunderstandings of department. People questioned why North Columbia station was only for Columbia and not Ellicott City. Questioned why Colombia authority was paying for it.
- More scene role in OEC flood drills.
- Be thankful for your paramedics.
- Why were there no Q&A opportunities?
- You must be intentional when trying to diversify your staff.
- With incidents like the Procopio Circle fire with response from Banneker, Merriweather, Savage, EC, and AACo, who was covering Columbia and EC during this time? Is there enough equipment and personnel if there were multiple incidents?
- Could annual inspections be scheduled online. Give paramedics engine time. Please set a minimum amount of time they must ride on the fire truck to improve their skills for promotion.
- Disappointed with the selected method for community interactions.



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- We love the Department participation in our community events.
- Rename N. Columbia station to Elioak or Cedar Park. Give them a raise. Other employees have been safe at home. They are on the frontlines of this pandemic. Please give them a raise. They deserve it.
- Unsatisfactory use of time. Most regrettable!!! Please contact me for me to understand how taxpayers receive benefits.
- Note: this is difficult because I do not know what y'all do unless I cheat and refer to part 2 first.
- Please keep stakeholders (like the Columbia villages) involved, especially when there are plans for new stations
- I heard that you guys were starting to bill insurance for transports. I think that is terrible. It runs our insurance rates up.



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Appendix 2 - SWOT

Strengths

Any organization needs to identify its strengths to ensure that it can provide the services requested by the community and that those strengths are consistent with the issues facing the organization. Often, identifying 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 organization's primary function should be reviewed to evaluate the rate of return on staff time and allocated funds.

Through a consensus process, the agency stakeholders identified the Department's strengths as follows:

Strengths of Howard County Department of Fire and Rescue Services	
Identify risks in the community and creating courses to address them	Commitment to internal risk reduction, i.e., carcinogen reduction
ALS educational programs/training	Overall training and educational programs
Budget: dedicated fire tax and EMS billing	High quality of EMS care
Resource-rich: equipment, apparatus facilities, etc.	Innovative programs and use of technology
Minimum dedicated field staffing on units	Professional growth opportunities
Perceived public trust	In-house SCBA/oxygen shop
Large civilian support staff	All ambulances are ALS equipped
Benefits and salary, Length of Service Awards Period (LOSAP)	Health and wellness: annual physicals, peer support, family support
Relationship with our one hospital	Lots of new hires
Support for each other	Volunteer participation
Introspective-willing to self-assess	Empowering younger members to contribute
Flexible work accommodations, i.e., modified duty	Empathy internally
Flexible open lines of communication, formal and informal	Small enough for personalized internal customer service
Opportunity for upward mobility	Willingness to change or try new things
Incisive problem solving, asking for a broader opinion	Committing to each other
Opportunity for upward mobility	Commitment to organizational assessment
Effort to maintain inter-bureau communication	Increased availability of virtual training
Job security	Maintenance on our facilities and stations
Rural water tank project	Highlighting the changes in general orders
Effort to purchase quality equipment and apparatus	Our talented and diverse workforce
Collaboration with affinity groups	NFPA compliance staffing
Retirement/DROP	BOSH (dedicated bureau)
Shared celebrations, pinnings, retirements (pre-pandemic)	



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Weaknesses

For any organization to either begin or continue to move progressively forward, it must be able to identify its strengths and 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 agency stakeholders identified the following items as weaknesses:

Weaknesses of Howard County Department of Fire and Rescue Services	
Resource deployment, standards of cover, lack of ALS unit depth	Lack of transparency with processes and reasoning behind decisions made
Tendency to centralized decision-making	Lack of empowerment
Lack of ready reserve apparatus	Reliance on mutual aid
Ambulance storage during peak times	Too few firefighter-paramedics
Lack of mandatory leadership training	Mentorship, structured, comprehensive, \$\$
Lack of candidates for management positions	Partnership in training
Mobile data terminal to mapping	Poor documentation of institutional knowledge
Succession planning	Limited/inadequate coordination of technology
Limited/inadequate control over the PSAP	Discipline process is outdated
Lower numbers of volunteers at some stations	Lack of a standardized equipment list
Lack of follow-through on things that are systemic problems - EMS providers, PSAP, Orders, Driver's training, accident investigations	Need more experienced positions to support non-response functions
	Lack of congruency in orders, out of date
Many methods for reporting problems/issues	Lack of control over the hiring process
Lack of support services staffing	Lack of high-fidelity EMS simulation
Communication, up, down, over	Reluctance to delegate
Lack of standardized apparatus design	Lack of personal accountability (up and down)
Lack of personal connection to the community	Nine different fire departments-lack of standardization
Over-complicated hiring rules	
Obstructive roadblocks (stopping actions) caused at times by internal stakeholders	Consistent turnover at headquarters and uniformed members
Lack of depth in some critical positions	Lack of volunteer recruitment and retention
Young experience of workforce	Project turnaround time
Identification of shift commander	Lack of communication between care and volunteer
Lack of ownership in finding solutions-am I part of the problem?	Lack of awareness level orientation for civilian staff to operations and operations to the civilian side
Employee evaluation for the civilian staff	Lack of uniform fitness standards
Individualized feedback for EMS providers	Inconsistent use of Tenzinga



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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 inside and beyond the traditional service area. The agency stakeholders identified the following potential opportunities:

Opportunities for Howard County Department of Fire and Rescue Services	
Promoting mobile integrated health	Vendor shopping for fleet maintenance
Community involvement/relationship building and buy-in	Expansion of community involvement (more people available to train)
New and upgraded technology	Social media for education
Formal processes as stewards for cost savings	Grant opportunities
Bolster external training expansion	More ways to communicate with the community
External expertise on cybersecurity	On-going analysis and re-evaluating
Expand, and make more frequent county inter-agency training, relationship building	A community with the funding capability to support expectations
External management training	Support and grow volunteer functions
Expand partnership and outreach with the school system	Mentorship through officer candidate school across all ranks
Expand and refine recruitment process, school system, community, pathways	Improve the continuity of community care in regard to public health services
Improvement of mechanical training, apparatus, and tool maintenance	Embrace multi-cultural community/multi-lingual training
Gaining government and financial support to expand services	Partner with institutions in addition to HCC for higher education (Hopkins, UMCC)
Regional training resources	Create DFRS personnel feeder from the volunteer ranks
Local business involvement with training and operational staff	Partner with community organizations to provides information, not on social media
Joint police dispatch efforts, more involvement and education	Pursue funding opportunities as available due to regional location (UASI etc.)
Enhance relationship with regional fusion centers	Collaboration with surrounding jurisdictions
Information sharing across regional and other county departments	Skill/reputation/openness to try new things allows for atypical relationships/opportunities. i.e., APL, NSA
Data collection, more official process needed	Utilization of existing county/community resources
A community with the education to understand and support the funding of expectations	A community with the funding capability to support expectations
Large business sector/public-private partnerships	Leverage scope of the existing fundraising foundation
Align regional response plans	Reconnect with HCC for higher education



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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 agency stakeholders were as follows:

Potential Threats to Howard County Department of Fire and Rescue Services	
Housing market/property values	Public mistrust/confident
National political climate	Supply chain interruptions
Lack of vendor stock	Pandemic-state of emergency restrictions
Down trend of recruitment potential	Changes in rural regulations
Overdevelopment-building	Supply costs rising
Slow hospital throughput of patients	Misuse and misinformation of medical services
Cyberattack	Advancement of technology
Crowding the infrastructure	Civil unrest disrupting provision of service
Worsening weather	Unfriendly political policies
Funding changes	Public opposition to department priorities
Inability to fulfill mutual aid agreement	Increased demands due to aging population
Man-made and natural hazards	Privatization of emergency services
Increased call volume with limited resources	Lack of public support
Uniformed public, lack of public understanding	Lower quality of equipment and apparatus from vendors
Repair issues with proprietary systems (apparatus electrical systems)	Expectations of the public may be unrealistic in the future with current resources
Decreasing resiliency of the population	Rural water supply inadequacies
Increasing traffic and hazards (non-drivers)	Lack of authority in community/site planning
Low cost/quality building construction styles	Lack of cooperation from outside entities
Declining volunteer base	Zoning (age-restricted housing)
Limited hospital capability	Limited number of ALS candidate pool
Availability of info to public regarding hazardous devices	Law enforcement support during response in current political climate
Lack of community mental health resources	County HR involvement in the hiring process
Increased reliance on technology	



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Appendix 3 – Critical and Service Gap Issues

The following information is the raw data comprised from the deliberation of the three workgroups of agency stakeholders. The information in each table is linked to a strategic initiative that the overall group, by consensus, determined was something that the Department should pursue for change and continuous improvement.

Topic	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
Human Capital	Human Capital <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Acknowledging strengths and weaknesses o Identification of need o No clearly defined roles and needs o Employee development o Turn-over o Burn-out o ALS training and retention 	Organizational Development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Inadequate succession planning o No formal transition plans o Organizational barriers to promote to captain or labor to management (LEADS restrictive) o Lack of global exposure to department functions o Stakeholder obstructions o Lack of firefighter positions in different bureaus 	Workforce <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Silo/disjointed/ need for inclusion o Limited recruitment pool o Limited ALS o Professionalism o Health and wellness o Volunteer and career relations
	Succession Planning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Funding o Formal training o Laws o Potential members o Instructor knowledge o Promotional process o Depth in all ranks 	Recruitment/Retention <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Inadequate growth in the civilian staff to match department size o Lack of cross-training o ALS recruitment and retention o Volunteer recruitment and retention o Lack of qualified or interested people for promotion o Recruitment challenges o Lack of civilian promotional opportunity o Lack of control in the hiring process o Community-based hiring 	Succession Planning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Funding o Continuity documentation o Depth of knowledge and redundancy o Civilian planning o LEADS o Fear/silo o Mentors o Generation gaps
		Leadership <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Attrition development o Centralized decision making o Lack of succession planning o Lack of delegation o Hesitancy to make decisions o Lack of mentorship o Lack of experience o Nine departments o Promotional process o Lack of ownership o Span of control exceeds an unbalanced level o Lack of desire, motivation, passion o Conflict aversion 	



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Topic	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
Training	N/A	N/A	Training <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Flexible access to training (delivery method) o Facilities o MICRB shortage o Funding o Civilian staff 101 o No mandatory leadership training

Topic	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
Accreditation	N/A	Increased Demand on Service <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Development, land, and housing o Decrease in population resiliency o Mission creep-new services o Lack of community outreach o Over-utilization o Hospital capacity o Lack of connection to the community o Increased traffic o Limited control over the PSAP o High utilization o Mutual aid o Location of resources used o Hospital turnaround o Lack of ALS unit depth o De-centralized volunteers 	N/A

Topic	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
External Communications	N/A	External Communications <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Community needs and concerns o Lack of consistent community feedback o Lack of explanation of the Department's role in the community o Lack of a coordinated effort between department and other organizations 	External Communication <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Timeliness o Technology o Message o Audience o Quantity o Transparency



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Topic	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
Internal Communications	Communication <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Transparency, understanding, and trust ○ Generational spacing ○ No closed loop ○ Schedules ○ Methodology ○ Ambivalence ○ Technology ○ Communication of roles, positions, and job descriptions ○ Overload ○ Timeliness 	Internal Communication <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Lack of transparency for processes and decisions ○ Overly complex rules and orders ○ Lack of follow up ○ TRELLO ○ Contradictory orders ○ Not understanding the hierarchy of policies ○ Too many modes of communication ○ Ineffective mechanisms of communication ○ Different schedules ○ Expectation of efficiency 	Internal Communication <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Distrust ○ Inconsistency ○ Dissemination ○ Timeliness ○ Transparency ○ Messaging

Topic	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
Physical Resources	Resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ambulance shortage at peak times ○ Funding ○ Age of the fleet ○ Facility age and size ○ Internal vs. external maintenance providers ○ Increase in demand ○ Standardization 	Resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Lack of reserve apparatus ○ Lack of ready units during peak times ○ Lack of replacement planning for technology ○ Lack of understanding for long-term budgeting 	Resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Funding and allocation ○ Too many follow-throughs for problem reporting ○ Limited ready reserves ○ Lack of respect for the equipment ○ Aging inventory

Topic	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
Information Technology	Information Technology <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Reliability ○ Systems compatibility and integration ○ Accessibility ○ Training ○ Security ○ Involvement of DTCS ○ Research and development 	N/A	N/A



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Appendix 4 – ISRB Summary of Accomplishments **Incident Safety Review Board (LODD)**

Summary

On July 23, 2018, Howard County Fire and Rescue Service (HCDFRS) experienced the tragic line of duty death (LODD) of Lt. Nathan Flynn during a fire at 7005 Woodscape Drive. HCDFRS established an Internal Safety Review Board (ISRB) to review this incident and determine the underlying causes for the factors that contributed to Lieutenant Flynn's death. After an eleven-month investigation (June 2019), the ISRB delivered a comprehensive safety review that identified its findings and outlined recommendations for HCDFRS to implement. The Fire Chief committed to reviewing the ISRB recommendations and making comprehensive changes to help reduce risk, improve operations, promote a culture of safety, and prevent other tragic events from occurring in the Department.

The ISRB report examined fourteen broad topics related to HCDFRS's response to the 7005 Woodscape Drive Incident. An ISRB project manager was established to review the report and oversee HCDFRS's progress through the development and implementation of initiatives related to this important Departmental change process. It is important to note that all areas of the ISRB report and recommendations require the attention of Department leadership.

The crucial, high-priority issues identified for HCDFRS leadership to address were:

- **Effective Response Force**
- **Staffing (NFPA 1710)**
- **Training**
- **Operational Policies**
- **Communications**

Relationship to the Strategic Plan

HCDFRS began embarking on a Strategic Plan initiative simultaneously with the process of implementing ISRB recommendations. The purpose of this initiative was to provide a collaborative process using internal and external input to create organizational goals and objectives for HCDFRS's future, and a plan to achieve them. Guided by a commitment from management and engagement from Department members, a well-crafted strategic plan will result in effective, efficient, and high-quality public safety fire service delivery.

The strategic planning process included a three-day internal stakeholder workshop facilitated by the Center for Public Safety Excellence (CPSE). The workshop yielded seven strategic initiatives (Goals), with specific objectives related to each initiative and critical tasks necessary to complete each objective. An analysis of the strategic planning initiatives in comparison to identified ISRB critical issues revealed the following parallels:



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Strategic Plan Goal #1 – Human Capital

Acknowledging our people as our greatest resource, we seek to create an atmosphere that encourages self-improvement, cultivates leadership, promotes organizational development, and imparts institutional knowledge, uniting our Department in our mission.

Objective 1A Analyze the Department’s current human capital resources.

Objective 1E Design a process that promotes organizational growth and leadership through a culture of mentorship.

Objective 1H Improve and promote internal services providing physical and mental wellbeing.

Strategic Plan Goal #2 - Training

Develop and implement innovative and comprehensive training programs fostering excellence among all members of the Department.

Objective 2B Review the present training/qualifications levels of Department members.

Objective 2C Identify gaps between required training and present level of training of Department members.

Objective 2D Provide flexible training opportunities addressing identified training gaps and further enhance opportunities for professional growth.

Objective 2E Provide training facilities to meet the evolving training needs of the Department.

Objective 2F Ensure leadership training and development opportunities at all levels.

Objective 2G Establish all-hazards training standards that ensure competency, currency, and progressive learning.

Strategic Plan Goal# 5 – Physical Resources

Provide and maintain adequate durable goods and assets to accomplish the Department’s vision, mission, and goals.

Objective 5B Develop a plan to ensure a readily available supply of durable goods and assets for current and future needs, prioritized with consideration of budgetary constraints.



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The Office of the Fire Chief immediately began to implement initiatives related to the ISRB recommendations and the strategic plan initiatives. Many of these changes were in line with fire service standards (NFPA), safety and operational improvements, or industry best practices. While some implemented changes may be accelerated, other recommendations require a more formal process and extensive timeline. The implementation process will be dynamic, and the Department will be transparent with its progress throughout its continuous and ongoing development. Listed below are several initiatives and changes that have been implemented by HCDFRS that address both the ISRB Report and the Strategic Plan:

- All front-line suppression units staffed to a minimum of 4
- The expansion of EMSBC3 to 24/7/365
- Hiring of Recruit Classes 32, 33, and 34
- Funded and required NFPA 1582 physicals for all operational members (Career and Volunteer)
- Tactical High-Risk Operational Academy Rotation (THOAR), a tactical hands-on realistic in-service training program for operational personnel
- IAFF Fireground Survival Training
- American City Building High-Rise Training Live Burns
- Annual SCBA Refresher training
- Adjusted Officer Candidate School
- Emergency Tone Special Order stating the Department shall utilize one tone to indicate emergency messaging
- Local Box Alarm Change adding the Safety Officer, additional Engine, and special service adjustment
- Operational Alert added one staffed Tanker to all Rural Box Alarms
- Operational Update requiring Incident Commanders to conduct or delegate a 360-degree assessment
- Motorola Bluetooth Pairing with the MSA-G1 SCBA
- Radio Committee Reprogramming Changes

The ISRB response document and the Strategic Plan will be updated as HCDFRS develops, implements, and achieves the recommendations, objectives, goals, and critical tasks associated with both. The ISRB recommendations status report can be found [at this link](#).



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Appendix 5 – Current Priorities Update

(Current as of July 22, 2021)

Short Term 6-12 months

I. **West Friendship Staffing**

Status: Accomplished June 1, 2020

- Upgrade staffing at Station 3 to six career personnel 24/7
- Include Heavy Vehicle Operators in the staffing matrix
- Meet the recommended NFPA staffing
- Address staffing issues noted in the Internal Safety Review Board Report

II. **MICH Implementation**

Status: Complete, implemented March 2020

- Begin a soft launch of MICH plan with 20-25 patients
- Conduct periodic analysis with stakeholders
 - Primary focus has been COVID related since March 2020
 - Integral partner in the County Vaccination Efforts

III. **EMS Billing Launch**

Status: Complete, launched August 2020

- Revenue projections were added to the Fire Fund Sustainment Plan
- FY21 final revenue generated nearly \$5 million

IV. **Human Resources**

Status: Ongoing

- First Promotional Requirements committee meeting was held on April 28, 2021

In Progress:

- Class plan adjustments
- Human Resources feedback regarding updated Lieutenant, Captain, and Battalion Chief language (language for what?) pending
- Adjustments required to provide continuous promotions eligibility list for Department sustainment
- Bi-weekly Promotional Requirements committee meetings are ongoing

V. **Lisbon Station Construction**

Status: Ongoing

- Loan program initiated with Lisbon

In Progress:

- Construction is ongoing, utilities conduit and concrete are in place
- Projected opening August 2021
- Building dedication September 18, 2021



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Mid Term 1-3 years

I. DFRS Strategic Plan

Time Frame: 6-12 months for completion

Status: Anticipated project completion by August 1, 2021

- Contracted the Center for Public Safety Excellence (CPSE) to facilitate the strategic plan process
- External and Internal Stakeholder sessions completed

In Progress:

- Develop a three-year strategic plan for Department projected priorities and vision

II. Complete a Systematic Review of ISRB Reported Issues

Time Frame: Immediate

Status: Ongoing

- First Quarter Report was issued in November

In Progress:

- Second Quarter Report is drafted
- Develop plans and timelines to address issues.
- Items include:
 - Apparatus
 - Equipment: SCBA, TIC's, and Radio capabilities
 - Policy Cleanup: Currently in process for Operations orders
 - Staffing: Recommended minimum of 4 personnel on all staffed suppression units
 - Training: Significant funding required for THOAR
- Following release and review of the NIOSH report, identify unaddressed needs

III. Mandatory NFPA 1582 Physicals for All Operational Personnel

Time Frame: Immediate - April 30, 2022

Status: Ongoing

- Policy is developed and was issued April 30, 2021
- Budget for operational personnel physicals, including volunteers is approved

In Progress:

- All operational personnel are required to have NFPA 1582 departmental physicals by April 30, 2022

IV. Waterloo Fire Station (Station 12) Construction

Time Frame: Immediate - May 2022

Status: Ongoing

- Waterloo design is complete
- Site Development Plan (SDP) is complete
- Permitting process will take 4-6 months
- Expected construction bid released the week of December 16, 2020

In Progress:

- Construction has begun - Projected construction completion May 2022

V. North Columbia Fire Station (Station 15)

Status: Ongoing

- Collaborate with DPW and the Board of Education to work through site relocation efforts
- Gauge community concerns/needs
- Project has a direct impact on the Banneker station replacement



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Long Term 3-5 years

I. Department Accreditation

Status: Ongoing

- The Department has not been accredited since 2009
- Currently, only 32 of the 270 accredited departments are combination departments
- Along with the vision contained in the Strategic Plan, the Department will move forward with accreditation through CPSE
- Accreditation process can be lengthy as we address identified performance issues and allow for self and third-party evaluation of performance



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Appendix 6 – Recent Accomplishments

(Current as of July 22, 2021)

General

- Launched the Department’s Mobile Integrated Community Health (MICH) Program. (National Association of Counties 2021 Award Winner - Health)
 - MICH personnel trained to provide COVID-19 testing for DFRS personnel and program eligible citizens. The MICH team is currently engaged in the COVID-19 vaccination plan.
- Implemented additional carcinogen reduction plan strategies, including deploying four clean cab engines, increasing the number of gear cleaners and extractors, and deploying firefighter decontamination kits.
- Initiated an EMS Insurance Reimbursement Program that bills patient insurance companies for EMS services to augment Departmental funding.
 - In its first year, EMS transport billing increased annual revenue by nearly \$5 million. (Spending Affordability Committee Recommendation)
- Improved rural area water supply access by increasing the network to 34 in-service cisterns, with seven additional cisterns in development currently.
- Established a hospital liaison and a decontamination team with a UV decontamination unit to assist with rapid patient transfer and ready-to-go “clean” apparatus in response to COVID-19.
- Developed an online curriculum for initial and continued education in response to COVID-19.

ISRB Recommendations

- Hired new positions and increased staffing for all front-line suppression units to a minimum of four personnel, 24/7/365, to comply with national standards.
- Developed and launched Tactical High-Risk Operational Academy Rotation (THOAR) training as an in-service training program for operational personnel.
- Improved Officer Candidate School to better represent Lieutenant job requirements and duties.
- Initiated a collaborative review and revision of the Department’s promotional process and requirements.
- Increased EMS Battalion Chief 3 coverage to 24/7/365.
- Funded mandatory NFPA 1582 physicals for all operational members of the Department.

Planning

- Developed the Department’s stakeholder-driven 3-year strategic plan.
- Initiated a Community Risk Assessment project as part of the Commission on Fire Accreditation International (CFAI) accreditation process.



HOWARD COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICES

2021 - 2024 **STRATEGIC PLAN**

Fire Stations

- Opened the Merriweather Fire Station (Station 14), increasing firefighting and EMS resources in the Columbia area.
- Station 14 was a public-private partnership with the Howard Hughes Corporation.
- Secured the required FY2020 budget authorization for the future Waterloo Fire Station (Station 12). The Department downsized Station 12's design to conserve funding and continues to work with other County agencies on construction efforts.
- Secured FY2020 funding for the North Columbia Fire Station (Station 15) to address ongoing response issues and increased call volume in the area. Station 15 will become operational after serving as the temporary location for Banneker Fire Station (Station 7) while it is rebuilt.
- Partnered with the Lisbon Volunteer Fire Company to construct a new Lisbon Fire Station (Station 4). The new Station 4 grand opening will be on September 18, 2021.

Emergency Management

- Partnered in the development of Ellicott City Safe and Sound, High Ground Access Point program.
- The Office of Emergency Management developed Community Organizations Active in Disaster (National Association of Counties (NACO) 2021 Award Winner - Risk and Emergency Management)
- Transitioned the Old Ellicott City (OEC) Alerting System from the temporary mobile system to a permanent system.





2021 - 2024 **STRATEGIC PLAN**