ALEXANDRIA FIRE DEPARTMENT
2022-2027 **STRATEGIC PLAN**

Message from the Fire Chief

I'm excited to present the Alexandria Fire Department's 2022-2027 Strategic Plan. The plan is a document that provides us with direction on how we plan to operate as an organization and improve in the next five years. The plan is intentional and provides guidance that will build upon our reputation of providing quality emergency response services to the Alexandria community and our recent practice of evaluating everything we do to improve.

This strategic plan is the culmination of a process that began in July 2021. After candid dialogue with the community, thought-provoking work sessions with AFD employees, and an assessment of the current state of the department, we completed the strategic plan in Fall 2022 with new mission, vision, and values statements. These statements will help us continue to prioritize efficient and equitable service delivery to the Alexandria community and improve professional opportunities for our workforce.

I sincerely appreciate everyone who provided thoughtful feedback during our strategic planning process, facilitated by the Technical Advisor Program (TAP) members of the Center for Public Safety Excellence (CPSE). The participation from community members and our workforce provided insightful information and feedback that helped us develop focused and realistic goals that align with the needs of the community and our employees.
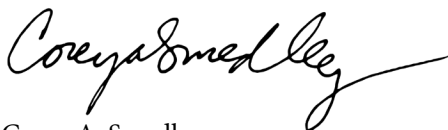
In the past few years, we have accomplished several initiatives together, including completing an analysis of the current staffing and the required staffing relief for the department; completing an organizational assessment report; developing an EMS career ladder; restructuring the department to improve safety and provide more equitable service delivery; and reducing maximum work hours for the safety of our employees.

Comprehensive and action-oriented, the Plan highlights the following initiatives: communication, recruitment and retention, training, succession planning, staffing, and equipment and infrastructure. By focusing our efforts in these areas, our hope is to continue to bring in a robust and intelligent workforce and ensure that we have the resources, information, and ability to meet the needs of the community now and in the future.

AFD's 2022-2027 Strategic Plan provides a framework that will help keep our organization on track to succeed in facing challenges and finding opportunities to continue to improve every aspect of our organization.

Our success requires a strong organizational commitment, the continued health and wellness of our employees, and an engaged and involved community. Together, we have developed this plan to help us move forward with vision and purpose. We look forward to sharing our progress.

Thank you,

Corey A. Smedley
Fire/EMS Chief

Introduction

The Alexandria Fire Department (AFD) provides an all-hazards approach in protecting the lives and property of the residents, businesses, and visitors of Alexandria, Virginia. The AFD is consistently working to achieve and maintain the highest level of professionalism and efficiency on behalf of those it serves, and thus, contracted with the Center for Public Safety Excellence® (CPSE) to facilitate a method to document the department's path into the future via a "Community-Driven Strategic Plan." The following strategic plan was written with a basis in the Commission on Fire Accreditation International's® (CFAI) fire and emergency service accreditation model and is intended to guide the organization within established parameters set forth by the City of Alexandria.

The CPSE utilized the community-driven strategic planning process to go beyond just developing a document. It challenged the department's personnel to critically examine paradigms, values, philosophies, beliefs, and desires, and challenged individuals to work in the best interest of the "team." It further provided the department with an opportunity to participate in the development of its organization's long-term direction and focus. Members of the organization's community and agency stakeholders' groups demonstrated commitment to this important project and remain committed to the document's completion and plan execution.

ALEXANDRIA FIRE DEPARTMENT STRATEGIC PLAN
Table of Contents

ALEXANDRIA FIRE DEPARTMENT **2022-2027 STRATEGIC PLAN**

Organizational Background

The first fire company in Alexandria was the Friendship Fire Company which was formed in 1774 as a volunteer department in response to several disastrous fires in the local community. Over the years, the organization evolved from its all-volunteer form to a paid department in 1855. In 1866, many volunteer companies in the area were understaffed, so the City Council passed an act combining the remaining fire companies into the Alexandria Fire Department.
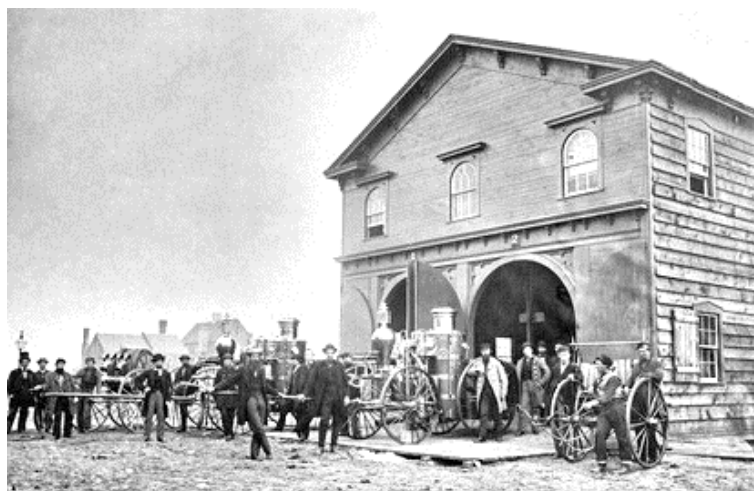
Today, the department serves approximately 160,000 residents and boasts an ISO rating of 2. The area has an estimated 3.5 million visitors and many others employed within the community. Economic growth and an increase in population have and will continue to provide specific risks for which the AFD considers, prepares, and deploys its resources and personnel.

The Alexandria Fire Department remains committed to providing all-hazards emergency services and risk-reduction to its community with courage, leadership, and duty. The department continues to honor its community by providing quality services through its proactive focus on risks and deployment from 10 stations located strategically throughout the 15.35 square miles of coverage area. Staffed to support the community, the AFD embraces its future vision and excellence in service delivery.

ALEXANDRIA FIRE DEPARTMENT **2022-2027 STRATEGIC PLAN**

Organizational Structure

Residents & Visitors

City Council

City Manager
James Parajon

Fire Chief
Corey Smedley

Admin Assistant
Cameron Hall

Chief of Staff
Chris Thompson

Accreditation Manager
Joe Beavan

Public Information Office - Senior PIO
Raytevia Evans

Human Resources
Acting HR Manager
Tiffany Pierce

Finance
Vacant

Office of Emergency Management
Acting EM Ray Whatley

Health Safety & Risk Management
DC Tony Washington

Operations
AC Andrew Duke

Operations Aide
Captain Randolph Woodson

Medical Services
DC Brian Hricik

Operations
Medical Director
Dr. J. Benjamin Marfori

Operations
DC Paul Ruwe

Special Operations
BC David Plunkett

A/B/C Platoon Battalion Management
Teams 211 & 212

Professional Development
DC Dan McMaster

Professional Development
BC Chad Lallier

Administration
AC Michael Cross

Support Services
DC Frank Doyle

IT
Jim Burke

Logistics
BC Sam Reyes

Community Risk Reduction
BC Michael Sharpe

Chief Deputy Fire Marshal
Russell Furr

Fire Protection Systems
Acting Supervisor
Raymond Overcott

Administration Aide
Acting Captain Kaandra Wilson

Page 2

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 and utilize the needs and expectations of its community in the development and/or improvement of the services provided. To ensure that the community remains a focus of an organization's direction, a community-driven strategic planning process was used to develop this strategic plan.

A strategic plan is a living management tool that provides short-term direction, builds a shared vision, documents goals and objectives, and optimizes the use of resources. Effective strategic planning benefits from a consistent and cohesively structured process employed across all levels of the organization. Planning is a continuous process 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 management, employees, and stakeholders through a shared understanding of where the organization is going, how everyone involved can work toward that common purpose, and how progression and success will be measured.

Community Interaction

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 those which logically can be provided in the future.
5. Revisit the values of the organization's personnel.
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 vision of the future.
13. Develop organizational and community commitment to accomplishing the plan.

Process and Acknowledgements

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

Development of this strategic plan began in July 2021 with a meeting hosted by a representative from the CPSE for community members identified by the department. The community stakeholders were comprised of some who reside or work within the Alexandria Fire Department's coverage area and some who were recipients of service(s).

Community Group Findings

A key element of the Alexandria Fire Department's organizational philosophy is having 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 services provided by the department. Respondents were asked to provide a prioritized perspective of the programs and services provided by the department. Additionally, community input and comments were collected regarding community expectations, prioritized concerns, and general community reflections regarding the organization. Specific findings of the community stakeholders are provided in the appendix of this document. The agency stakeholders utilized the full feedback from the community stakeholders in understanding the current challenges encountered within the organization. Additionally, the community stakeholders' feedback provided a process to ensure alignment with the work completed on the organizational mission, values, vision, and goals for improvement.

Community Outreach

Community Priorities

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

Programs	Ranking	Score
Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Program	1	225
Fire Suppression Program	2	198
Technical Rescue Program	3	165
Hazardous Materials (Hazmat) Program	4	123
Prevention Program	5	116
Domestic Preparedness Program	6	115
Public Education Program	7	84
Fire Investigation, Origin and Cause Program	8	82
Marine and Shipboard Rescue and Firefighting Program	9	44

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

Agency Stakeholder Group Findings

The agency stakeholder work sessions were conducted over three days in June 2022. 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. Additionally, 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.

Alexandria Fire Department's Agency Stakeholders

Samantha Baskin	Frank Doyle	Anthony Kelly	Mike Sharpe
Joe Beavan	Andrew Duke	Mike Kohrt	Corey Smedley
Kelsea Bonkoski	Raytevia Evans	Chad Lallier	Chris Thompson
Matt Bosse	Russell Furr	Tiffany Matthews	Tony Washington
Justin Bullis	Ray Ginman	Dave Plunkett	Ray Whatley
James Burke	Haithem Hammad	Sam Reyes	Kaandra Wilson
Mike Cross	Brian Hricik	Paul Ruwe	Randolph Woodson

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 personnel. 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:

> **The Alexandria Fire Department's mission is to serve the community by protecting lives, property, and the environment.**

Agency Stakeholders Work Session

Values

Values embraced by all personnel 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:

Community We commit to understanding the needs of our entire community and will demonstrate meeting those needs through our actions every day.

Dedication We will embrace the community we serve, the profession we chose and the colleagues we work with by:

- Doing the right thing
- Treating each other with respect
- Supporting each other and contributing to the greater good
- Maintaining positive interactions always

Unity We will create an environment that strengthens working relationships and fosters a sense of pride for all to accomplish.

Equity We will demonstrate fair and just actions through our policies, our communications, our hiring, our promoting, and our commitment to including our diverse community and workforce to be responsive, efficient, and contemporary with accomplishing our mission.

Preparedness We will maintain the confidence of our community by always ensuring a state of readiness to achieve our mission.

Professionalism We will strive for excellence through continuous improvement through training, professional development, and mentorship to accomplish our mission.

Department Vision

Strategic vision is an aspirational and ambitious picture of the future that serves as direction and purpose of organizational strategy.

> **The Alexandria Fire Department strives for excellence in community risk reduction, emergency preparedness and response, to create a safe, resilient, and healthy community for all.**

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 the individuals who make up the Alexandria Fire Department are guided by them in accomplishing the goals, objectives, and day-to-day tasks.

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 fundamental services provided by the department. Supporting services are all internal and external programs and services that help the AFD deliver its core programs.

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

Agency Stakeholders Work Session

SWOT Analysis

Agency stakeholders participated in an analysis process to candidly identify and record the AFD's strengths, weaknesses, as well as the possible opportunities and potential threats (SWOT – *found in Appendix 2*). 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. Information gathered through this analysis clarifies the larger issues and gaps within the agency. The information gleaned will assist the agency in addressing its broader critical issues and service gaps.

Agency Stakeholders Work Session

Critical Issues and Service Gaps

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

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.

Communication	Recruitment and Retention	Training
Succession Planning	Staffing	Equipment and Infrastructure

Goals and Objectives

To continuously achieve the mission of the Alexandria Fire Department, realistic goals and objectives with timelines for completion must be established. These 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. Leadership-established work groups should meet and manage progress toward accomplishing these goals and objectives. Timelines should be adjusted as needs and the environment change. Regular reports of progress and changes should be shared with the AFD's leadership.

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Goal 1 - Establish and implement an internal and external communication strategy that enlightens, educates, informs, and provides opportunities for community and employee engagement.

Objective 1A	Identify current communications processes and evaluate for clarity and effectiveness.		
Timeframe	6-8 months	**Assigned to:**	Public Information Officer
Critical Tasks	☐ Establish a communications committee with representation from all areas of the AFD. ☐ Develop and define evaluation criteria to assess the effectiveness of processes. ☐ Evaluate and rate all current communication processes using identified criteria. ☐ Compile the results of the evaluation.		

Objective 1B	Explore alternative methods of communication available to the organization.		
Timeframe	4 months	**Assigned to:**	Public Information Officer
Critical Tasks	☐ Develop a list of what is available and permitted by the city through research methods. ☐ Analyze the effectiveness of available products and processes. ☐ Rate the available products using the selected criteria. ☐ Compile the results of the evaluation.		

Objective 1C	Conduct a gap analysis based on previously collected information to recommend the preferred methods of communication.		
Timeframe	3 months	**Assigned to:**	Public Information Officer
Critical Tasks	☐ Compare results of products and processes previously identified based upon the established rating criteria. ☐ Conduct a feasibility study, including a cost-benefit analysis, interoperability, etc. ☐ Prepare a presentation/brief to include recommendations for preferred communications products and processes. ☐ Executive team will determine the final approved communications products and processes.		

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Objective 1D	Build and employ processes that codify appropriate and contemporary communications policies and procedures.
Timeframe	6-8 months **Assigned to:** Public Information Officer
Critical Tasks	☐ Develop a workflow method for each process. ☐ Create communication templates for each process. ☐ Update policy to reflect new communication processes. ☐ Complete procurement processes for needed products and services.

Objective 1E	Implement preferred methods of communication for community and employee engagement.
Timeframe	3 months **Assigned to:** Public Information Officer
Critical Tasks	☐ Provide education to all stakeholders regarding the new communication strategies. ☐ Provide training to the workforce on all relevant products and processes related to the newly adopted communication strategy. ☐ Develop a transition plan to include a repository to maintain legacy information. ☐ Develop and implement the marketing strategy. ☐ Roll out the communications strategy, policies, and processes. ☐ Make any needed adjustments to the rollout process.

Objective 1F	Use the established evaluation process to determine the level of success towards meeting the goals.
Timeframe	4-6 months **Assigned to:** Public Information Officer
Critical Tasks	☐ Determine the frequency to evaluate the implemented communications strategy. ☐ Assess the results of the evaluation using the established criteria. ☐ Take needed corrective actions and re-evaluate the changes. ☐ Determine data points needed for collection as metrics. ☐ Create benchmarks against which to measure data.

Goal 2 - Develop an effective recruitment and retention strategy that addresses the needs of the Alexandria Fire Department, meets the collective bargaining requirements, and adheres to legal and budgetary constraints.

Objective 2A	Assess the state of the current and projected workforce and identify problems.		
Timeframe	3 months	**Assigned to:**	Fire Recruitment Manager

Critical Tasks	☐ Establish a diverse recruitment and retention committee. ☐ Conduct a historical statistical analysis of the current workforce to include attrition, DROP, anticipated positions, etc. ☐ Compile the results of the analysis and disseminate the results appropriately.

Objective 2B	Identify the collective bargaining requirements, legal, and budgetary constraints.		
Timeframe	2 months	**Assigned to:**	Fire HR Manager

Critical Tasks	☐ In consultation with the Chief Labor Relations Office, identify collective bargaining requirements and constraints. ☐ Consult with the city attorney's office to identify legal constraints. ☐ Consult with the fiscal and city manager's office to identify budgetary constraints.

Objective 2C	Identify challenges in the current city and department recruitment process that hinder access.		
Timeframe	1 month	**Assigned to:**	Fire Recruitment Manager

Critical Tasks	☐ Review historical challenges that exist within the AFD recruitment process. ☐ Review internal and external recruitment methods and challenges. ☐ Compare challenges with local and national labor markets.

Objective 2D	Identify challenges in the current city and department retention process.		
Timeframe	3 months	**Assigned to:**	Fire HR Manager

Critical Tasks	☐ Identify current conditions driving turnover in the department. ☐ Review the challenges to retention at the local, state, and national levels. ☐ Compile a report of findings from the review.

Objective 2E	Explore potential solutions to the identified challenges in each process area.		
Timeframe	5 months	**Assigned to:**	Fire HR and Recruitment Managers

Critical Tasks	☐ Survey stakeholders to include past and present employees and applicants to better understand challenges and possible solutions. ☐ Develop a prioritized list that identifies solutions within AFD's control and those that require external support.

Objective 2F	Develop a plan that encapsulates the potential solutions.		
Timeframe	1 month	**Assigned to:**	Fire HR and Recruitment Managers

Critical Tasks	☐ Draft a plan that includes solutions within the AFD's control and those that require external support.
	☐ Conduct a cost analysis of the draft plan.
	☐ Present the draft to the executive team for approval and adoption.
	☐ Prepare an external brief for the fire chief and leadership team to present to external stakeholders (Office of Management and Budget, City Manager's Office, City Human Resources) for approval.

Objective 2G	Implement the recruitment and retention plan.		
Timeframe	3 months	**Assigned to:**	Fire HR and Recruitment Managers

Critical Tasks	☐ Provide educational information to external and internal stakeholders regarding the new recruitment and retention strategy.
	☐ Develop and implement a marketing strategy for internal and external stakeholders.
	☐ Update all policies governing recruitment.

Objective 2H	Evaluate the effectiveness of the solutions embedded in the plan.		
Timeframe	8 months-ongoing	**Assigned to:**	Fire HR and Recruitment Managers

Critical Tasks	☐ Review historical recruitment data and compare with recruitment outcomes and trends following each process.
	☐ Establish benchmarks and performance metrics to gauge the effectiveness of solutions.
	☐ Conduct ongoing evaluation of retention solutions.
	☐ Conduct an ongoing evaluation of local, national, and industry recruitment and retention performance compared to AFD.

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Goal 3 - A comprehensive continuum of education that provides guidance, training, and professional development to all staff in a manner that meets the department's needs.

Objective 3A	Conduct a needs assessment of the department to establish required areas of competence from pre-employment to retirement.	
Timeframe	1 month	**Assigned to:** Deputy Chief of Training

Critical Tasks	☐ Establish a project lead. ☐ Determine stakeholders. ☐ Research and document mandated or required training, e.g., OSHA, VDFP, OEMS, etc. ☐ Identify JPRs for each position and detail education and training requirements. ☐ Establish a list of guiding questions for stakeholders, including information on mandates and legal requirements covering three training categories. ☐ Data points are frequency, duration, authorization, and curriculum, including: - o Training required (CEUs, legal obligations, etc.) - o Training deemed necessary but not required by law or other authority. - o Training or professional development desired but not required or necessary. ☐ Send questions to stakeholders. ☐ Establish a date ahead of the meeting for responses to be returned to the project lead. ☐ Establish a date for an in-person meeting. ☐ Adjust meeting date based on availability responses. ☐ Send invitations and hold a meeting. ☐ Compile requirements list. ☐ Send draft of requirements list to stakeholders for feedback. ☐ Finalize the list.

Objective 3B	Identify components of the current program and compare them to requirements previously established.	
Timeframe	2 weeks	**Assigned to:** Deputy Chief of Training

Critical Tasks	☐ Compare JPRs to information received and identify updates needed to correct deficiencies and inaccuracies. ☐ Compare current offerings to list and identify gaps: - o Training or classes omitted. - o Training or classes offered but inadequate based on requirements (curriculum, duration, frequency, etc., are lacking or out of date). - o Training or classes offered that meet requirements and or desired training levels. ☐ Catalog gaps to address in subsequent plan.

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Objective 3C	Develop a plan based on gaps identified through an analysis of collected information.
Timeframe	4 months **Assigned to:** Deputy Chief of Training

Critical Tasks	☐ Update JPRs based on compiled analysis.
	☐ List classes, drills, online materials, self-study materials, secondary course work, specialty training, etc., needed based on feedback from stakeholders and analysis.
	☐ Develop an analytic rubric that includes each item's cost, availability, feasibility, staffing requirements, logistics requirements, etc.
	☐ Document programs that will be maintained, including items that third-party trainers and educators can address and items that can be addressed in-house.
	☐ Document programs that need to be updated, including items that third-party trainers and educators can address and items that can be addressed in-house.
	☐ Document programs that must be added, including items that third-party trainers and educators can address and items that can be addressed in-house.
	☐ Identify vendors for third-party delivered training.
	☐ Request proposals from vendors, including deliverables, cost, and metrics.
	☐ Select preferred vendor for each event based on proposal comparison.
	☐ Create and document curriculums for in-house training.
	☐ Quantify and qualify staffing for each in-house training event.
	☐ Develop a list of current in-house instructors for each training event.
	☐ Identify train-the-trainer needs and recruit new instructors as needed.
	☐ Establish a schedule to complete needed train-the-trainer classes
	☐ Develop a two-year training calendar/training cycle to include:
	    o Periodicity
	    o Time of year
	    o Duration in days and hours per day
	    o Participant groups
	    o Location
	    o Vertical integration thematically between groups
	    o Alignment with promotional process schedule (to be determined)
	☐ Determine logistical requirements for each training event, including facility, equipment, materials, miscellaneous expendables, props, and books.
	☐ Execute a cost analysis and create a prioritized budget request for the plan elements by the date budgets are due.

Objective 3D	Build an implementation process for the comprehensive program.		
Timeframe	6-12 months	**Assigned to:**	Deputy Chief of Training

Critical Tasks	☐ Publish the two-year schedule and assign ownership of each event and assign staff.
	☐ Assigned staff handles specifics of logistics and any required paperwork.
	☐ Training division coordinates facilities demand.
	☐ Issue training announcements at least 90 days before an event, and register participants as needed.
	☐ Training division oversees and evaluates the training for compliance with curriculum, safety requirements, department policies, etc.

Objective 3E	Evaluate and adjust the program based on impact on education levels, certification rates, career ladder, professional development, performance assessment, and mandated training hours.		
Timeframe	6 months-ongoing	**Assigned to:**	Deputy Chief of Training

Critical Tasks	☐ Document results of baseline metrics that include but are not limited to:
	☐ Certification rates, education levels, personnel prepared for promotion, core competency pass rates, and training hours.
	☐ Set targets or benchmarks for each metric.
	☐ Adjust plan based on analysis of results evaluation and update the 24-month cycle based on findings.

Goal 4 - Develop a succession planning model that cultivates internal candidates, develops employees based on strengths, encourages advancement within the organization, and fosters the retention of institutional knowledge.

Objective 4A	Research best practice succession planning models.	
Timeframe	1 month	**Assigned to:** Office of the Fire Chief

Critical Tasks	☐ Establish project leads and team to conduct the following:
	o Determine which ranks, positions, and roles require a succession plan.
	o Determine what specific education or training is required for each rank or position.
	o Determine the extent or period of preparation needed (day, week, month) for a member coming into the position.
	o Determine the mode of preparation, e.g., side by side, and documentation needed during the preparation period.
	☐ Conduct research into existing models used by other similar organizations.
	☐ Document critical criteria relative to the needs documented.
	☐ Document results realized by other organizations if available.
	☐ Consult with professional organizations such as IAFC, IAFF, ICMA, etc.
	☐ Document feedback relative to the critical criteria and needs.
	☐ Identify internal challenges that deter succession within the department.

Objective 4B	Analyze the research conducted by the established teams.	
Timeframe	1 month	**Assigned to:** Office of the Fire Chief

Critical Tasks	☐ Establish an evaluation rubric using the product of the previous research.
	☐ Compare and contrast existing models using the rubric to determine appropriateness for the department.
	☐ Determine costs and apply them to the models to complete a cost comparison.
	☐ Rank and prioritize models in comparison to organizational needs.
	☐ Utilize the information provided by professional organizations to augment understanding of needs.

Objective 4C	Develop a succession model from the completed research and analysis that fits department needs.	
Timeframe	2 months	**Assigned to:** Office of the Fire Chief

Critical Tasks	☐ Select an existing model that best fits the identified needs.
	☐ Modify the model if applicable, or develop a unique model based on needs and analysis.
	☐ Submit a proposal and present a draft model to the executive team.
	☐ Submit the costs and associate budget requests for the proposed model.

Objective 4D	Create an implementation process for the program and evaluate the effectiveness of the rollout and overall goal parameters.	
Timeframe	6 months	**Assigned to:** Office of the Fire Chief

Critical Tasks	☐ Train personnel on the program elements where needed to institutionalize the processes.
	☐ Identify potential mentors.
	☐ Review mentor knowledge, skills, and abilities.
	☐ Determine the capacity to mentor effectively.
	☐ Build a needed training curriculum to prepare the mentors.
	☐ Evaluate the conducted training and adjust as needed.
	☐ Execute the program where applicable.
	☐ Determine the metrics to be collected, including tracking successions, institutionalized knowledge loss, etc.
	☐ Adjust accordingly to the model based on evaluation results.

Goal 5 - Build a staffing model that supports safe and effective service to the community.

Objective 5A	Identify all sections of the department and identify each position within those sections.	
Timeframe	6 months	**Assigned to:** Fire HR Manager

Critical Tasks	☐ Review all positions in the current organizational chart. ☐ Determine the roles and responsibilities for each position. ☐ Determine the workload for the current staffing level. ☐ Review industry standards and best practices. ☐ Prepare a report of findings from the collected data.

Objective 5B	Analyze and review the current staffing levels and identify any potential for additional staffing needs in addition to a cost analysis for said additions.	
Timeframe	9-12 months	**Assigned to:** Office of the Fire Chief

Critical Tasks	☐ Perform an analysis that compares current and projected staffing with industry best practices and standards. ☐ Review the staffing gaps and shortcomings reported in the analysis. ☐ Review expected roles and responsibilities in the agency and compare findings. ☐ Identify and prioritize staffing levels to meet the needs of workloads identified ☐ Develop a cost analysis for funding of recommended staffing levels to include non-personnel related costs.

Objective 5C	Develop and submit staffing model proposals for identified organizational needs.	
Timeframe	9 months	**Assigned to:** Fire Fiscal Officer

Critical Tasks	☐ Create a budget submission from data and information on the report of findings. ☐ Submit the information during the budget submission period. ☐ Advocate for funding during the budget process.

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Objective 5D	Execute the staffing plan based on approved positions.		
Timeframe	6 months	**Assigned to:**	Deputy Chief of Training

Critical Tasks	☐ Review the staffing model to determine if there are any new positions, roles, or responsibilities that require new and additional training. ☐ Create curricula or find external training opportunities to deliver appropriate training for the identified positions or position changes. ☐ Follow the existing human resources guidelines for recruiting, hiring, and onboarding personnel. ☐ Update the organizational chart when positions are added and/or filled.

Objective 5E	Review and update the staffing plan for effectiveness and efficiency.		
Timeframe	3 months-ongoing	**Assigned to:**	Office of the Fire Chief

Critical Tasks	☐ Determine a timeline to complete the review of roles and responsibilities against current duties to analyze against originally collected baseline information. ☐ Review any agency program appraisals currently in place to collect information on staffing elements. ☐ Create a prioritized list of any model changes that may be needed. ☐ Adjust the model's implementation process relative to any approved staffing changes. ☐ Determine the frequency of the staffing model reviews.

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Goal 6 - Identify, procure, and maintain the most optimal equipment and infrastructure to carry out the mission of the Alexandria Fire Department.

Objective 6A	Identify all items needed and used by each department unit/division/section and replacement schedules.		
Timeframe	12-18 months	**Assigned to:**	Deputy Chief of Support Services

Critical Tasks	☐ Identify each unit/division/section of the department.
	☐ Create an inventory of non-disposable items used in each area of the department.
	☐ Identify existing replacement schedules and plans.
	☐ Identify the age of all identified current items.
	☐ Develop a comprehensive list of all data collected and enter into the RMS.
	☐ Identify the current maintenance schedule as well as the manufacturer's recommended schedule.

Objective 6B	Analyze and research life cycles and replacement costs of all identified items.		
Timeframe	6 months	**Assigned to:**	Deputy Chief of Support Services

Critical Tasks	☐ Identify today's replacement cost of items.
	☐ Identify the life span of items based on our use of the item.
	☐ Add the collected data into the RMS with data from previously identified items.

Objective 6C	Analyze current maintenance programs utilized for equipment and facilities.		
Timeframe	4-6 months	**Assigned to:**	Deputy Chief of Support Services

Critical Tasks	☐ Determine if current maintenance plans meet the manufacturer's recommendations and industry standards.
	☐ Determine if the current life cycle is realistic and cost-effective based on maintenance and repair costs.
	☐ Compile data and conduct a comprehensive review.
	☐ Make recommendations for inclusion in procurement and maintenance programs based on review results.

Objective 6D	Develop a replacement and maintenance program based on previously conducted analysis.	
Timeframe	6 months	**Assigned to:** Deputy Chief of Support Services
Critical Tasks	☐ Initial the procurement process from the finalized recommendations. ☐ Determine the life cycle and maintenance process for fixed assets and additional resources. ☐ Draft a policy to formalize processes within the replacement and maintenance programs.	

Objective 6E	Develop and submit funding proposals for plans without identified funding.	
Timeframe	9 months	**Assigned to:** Fire Fiscal Officer
Critical Tasks	☐ Create a budget submission using justification and financial data of the developed plan. ☐ Submit the request during the budget submittal period. ☐ Advocate for needed funding during the budget process.	

Objective 6F	Execute awarded funding for approved programs and items.	
Timeframe	6-9 months	**Assigned to:** Deputy Chief of Support Services
Critical Tasks	☐ Identify and create necessary committees to develop specifications. ☐ Solicit and select vendors. ☐ Obtain quotes from vendors and award contracts.	

Objective 6G	Review and update plans to ensure that revisions and updates meet the department's needs.	
Timeframe	3 months-ongoing	**Assigned to:** Deputy Chief of Support Services
Critical Tasks	☐ Perform an annual cost analysis. ☐ Review all items to ensure the needs of the department are being met. ☐ If gaps are identified, make recommendations for change.	

Strategic Plan Vision

On the final day of the process, the CPSE presented a strategic plan vision of where the organization will be in the future if the strategic plan is accomplished. This is not to override the department's global vision but to confirm the futurity of the work that the agency stakeholders designed. This 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

Alexandria Fire Department's 2027 vision is to be an internationally accredited agency that strives for continuous improvement with a community-driven approach to service. As a forward-thinking organization, we will employ, operate, and maintain optimal infrastructures with a fiscally viable method for the deployment and sustainability of resources. In addition, we will strengthen our relationships with the community, our service partners, and department stakeholders we serve through comprehensive communication practices.

Recognizing our greatest resource and human investment, we will make every effort to develop, support, mentor, and prepare our members to be the best they can be. Our concept is to achieve this using appropriate staffing models, effective succession planning, and contemporary professional development. We envision a future agency that recruits, welcomes, and retains inventive personnel with expertise and the demonstrative principles of our values.

We will be an initiative-focused agency that builds a collaborative leadership environment through individual professionalism and organizational accountability to deliver our mission, live our values, and make this vision a reality.

Performance Measurement

To assess and ensure that an organization is delivering on the promises made in its strategic plan, 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 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

To establish that the department's strategic plan is achieving results, performance measurement data will be implemented and integrated as part of the plan. An integrated process, known as "Managing for Results," will be utilized, which is based upon:

- The identification of strategic goals and objectives;

- The determination of resources necessary to achieve them;

- The 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 <u>degree</u> to which customers are <u>satisfied</u> with a program or how <u>accurately</u> or <u>timely</u> 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 asking for and receiving input from the community and personnel of the organization during the development stage of the planning process. To assist in developing 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 support from the City of Alexandria, the personnel of the organization, and the community-at-large.

Provided the community-driven strategic planning process is kept dynamic and supported by effective leadership and active participation, it will be a considerable opportunity to unify 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 mission, goals, and vision. Further consideration must be made on how the organization will measure and be accountable for its progress and successes.

Glossary of Terms, Acronyms, and Initialisms

Accreditation   A process by which an association or agency evaluates and recognizes a program of study or an institution as meeting certain predetermined standards or qualifications. It applies only to institutions or agencies and their programs of study or their services. Accreditation ensures a basic level of quality in the services received from an agency.

ACHS   Alexandria City High School

ALS   Advanced Life Support

CERT   Citizens Emergency Response Team

CFAI   Commission on Fire Accreditation International

CIP   Capital Improvement Plan

COG   Council of Governments

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.

DECC   Department of Emergency and Customer Communications

DROP   Deferred 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 organization's boundaries.

IAFC   International Association of Fire Chiefs

IAFF   International Association of Firefighters

ICMA   International City Managers Association

Input   A performance indication where the value of resources is used to produce an output.

ISO   Insurance Services Office

JPR   Job Performance Requirements

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

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.
OSHA	Occupational Safety and Health Administration
RMS	Records Management System
RTF	Rescue Task Force
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
Stakeholder	Any person, group, or organization that can place a claim on, or influence the organization's resources or outputs, is affected by those outputs, or has an interest in or expectation of the organization.
Strategic Goal	A broad target that defines how the agency will carry out its mission over a specific period of time. An aim. The final result of an action. Something to accomplish in assisting the agency to move forward.
Strategic Objective	A specific, measurable accomplishment required to realize the successful completion of a strategic goal.
Strategic Plan	A long-range planning document that defines the mission of the agency and broadly identifies how it will be accomplished, and that provides the framework for more detailed annual and operational plans.
Strategic Planning	The continuous and systematic process whereby guiding personnel 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
TECC	Tactical Emergency Casualty Care
VDEM	Virginia Department of Emergency Management
VDFP	Virginia Department of Fire Programs
Vision	An idealized view of a desirable and potentially achievable future state - where or what an organization would like to be in the future.

Appendix 1 – Community Comments

Community Expectations

Understanding what the community expects of its fire service organization is critically important to developing a long-range perspective. With this knowledge, internal emphasis may need to be changed or bolstered to fulfill the community's needs.

Respondents were asked to list, in priority order, up to five subjects relative to expectations for the Alexandria Fire Department. Responses were then analyzed for themes and weighted. 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 verbatim expectation responses of the community stakeholders (in priority order):

1. Timely and prompt to all calls. Response time matters. Quick response. Respond with urgency. Respond to emergencies effectively and in a timely manner. Respond to emergencies within 2-3 minutes. Respond as quick as possible. Quick effective response to emergencies. To have adequate number of stations for quick response. Short response time. Efficient response. Swift response. Swift and professional response to emergency calls. Quick response. Quick response. Response time. Fast response. They will arrive as quickly as possible to my emergency. Respond timely. Respond immediately to fires within the city. Fast response times. Quick response to a fire. Quick response time to the incident. Speedy response. Have a response time that is equitable across all areas/neighborhoods of the city. Speed of response. (201)

2. Respond to fires. Respond to medical emergencies. Respond to emergencies. Responding to fire emergency calls. Responding to other calls - EMS, gas, or other environmental response. Responding to fires. Responding to emergencies and rescue. Control and put out fires that saves lives. EMS. Fire rescue/suppression. Major event response. Save lives. Protect the lives and property. Respond to calls. Put out fires. Provide ladders for EMS response. They will do everything possible to stop my emergency. They are on call 24/7. Availability. Have a plan on how to evacuate senior citizens that live in the Plaza on N. Howard Street who are disabled and cannot go down the stairs. Respond to a medical emergency. Respond to a fire in a condo and other buildings. Respond to a person(s) trapped in an elevator. Rescue pets trapped in trees and storm sewers. Ambulance to home emergency. Will come when alarm is activated in condo. Will put out fire. Will save people trapped. Ability to extinguish different types of fires. Ability to treat injuries quickly when EMS ambulances are unavailable. (120)

3. Knowledgeable and well-trained. Competent in emergency situations. Competent in risk reduction and mitigation. Provide services by well-trained personnel. Keep up to date on best practices. To be well trained in all areas of response. Recertify regularly, physically and professionally. Continuously train staff on best practices. Conduct regular self-assessments to determine areas needing improvement. Training. Knowledgeable staff. Competency. Excellent training. Actively maintaining and training a competent, respectful workforce. Knowledgeable to ensure that everything is done well. Education. Well trained. Training. Trained appropriately. Have fire and EMS staff fully trained but NOT cross-trained - some want to fight fires, others want to provide medical assistance, not all want to do both. Well-trained staff. Trained staff. Maintain training standards and certifications for all fire department personnel. (110)

4. Good communications skills with residents, businesses, and non-profits. Community engagement. Hold public meetings to increase public trust. Transparency with accurate data. Engage regularly with the community. Be accessible and a place where people aren't scared to come for help. Educate the public on hazardous conditions in the community. Be available for community events. Be plugged in to every area of the community so that no residents feel like they have been forgotten

by the fire department. Be accessible to the public. Conduct community outreach to all areas of the community, including the underserved. Fire station open houses. Community outreach. Share information about community resources. Engaging in the community, especially with youth, about fire safety. Providing fire and safety education. Attending community events (health fairs). Communication and outreach. Educate public on fire safety. Community education outreach for safety-schools, etc. Perform community outreach. Community awareness/training/preparedness seminars (CPR, etc.). Provide education and outreach to the community. (90)

5. Provide adequate qualified staffing to meet needs. To have the proper number of personnel. Ensure adequate staffing. To have an adequate loyal workforce that is well paid and has competitive benefits. Salary for personnel that allows them to afford to live here. Personnel that are committed to a career in Alexandria. Pay equity. Staffing to complete the mission. Receive similar pay and benefits as surrounding jurisdictions. Adequate staffing. Well-paid staff. Adequately staffed. Ample staffing to handle all types of incidents. Qualified personnel. Maintain adequate number of staff to effectively serve the City of Alexandria. To be staffed fully to handle emergencies as they are trained to and not shutting down engines at certain stations and pulling resources from other areas. (70)

6. Professional. Professional in service. Kindness and empathy with those needing. Keep citizens at the heart of every decision. Professional accountability and admit fault when mistakes are made. Professional, caring services on all occasions. Friendly and personable staff. Kindness/customer service. Treat everyone with respect and dignity. Genuine care for the community and those they serve. Professional. Professional. Friendly. Trust. (65)

7. Inspect commercial and education facilities in a timely manner. Carry out safety checks regularly. Implement all phases of a risk reduction program. Keep the public accountable to fire standards and codes. Fire safety. Promote and prioritize prevention. Fire prevention. Enhance the community safety. Fire prevention information. Information on home fire extinguishers. Frequent, thorough inspections of city property for safety. Will check/supply fire extinguisher as needed. Work with the business community on fire regulations, permits, and prevention policies. Perform regular safety checks on high rises and public buildings. Fire prevention. (43)

8. Have the proper equipment for emergencies. Proper equipment to meet the needs of the city. Proper modern and well-maintained equipment. Have the correct equipment. Properly equipped. Well equipped. Adequate equipment. State-of-the-art vehicles and equipment. Maintain and purchase equipment that allows fire department personnel to effectively do their job. Ensure equipment is in good working order and upgraded regularly. (32)

9. Provide services without discrimination or bias. Respectful to all community personnel despite age, race, etc. Demonstrate an inclusive environment. Treat all people with respect. Caring. (17)

10. No line of duty deaths. Safety. Safety. (14)

11. Have fire stations throughout the city to cover all jurisdictions adequately. Comprehensive coverage in Alexandria. Have adequate number of fire stations. (12)

12. Realistic long-term planning for budget. Effective strategic planning. (8)

13. Awareness. Fire awareness. Exploring ways to be a better neighbor (eco-friendly, more equitable, etc.). Community awareness. (7)

14. Answer phone. Responsive. (7)

15. Timely dispatching. Reliable 911 service. Smart 911. (6)

16. Utilization of CERT volunteers. (4)

17. Hire firefighters that are representative of the Alexandria population. Respect for personnel of all diverse backgrounds. (4)

18. Post-incident investigation(s) conducted (if warranted). (4)

19. Student opportunities. (3)

20. Problem solvers. (3)

21. Support well-being of families. (3)

22. Good track record. (3)

23. Accountability. (2)

24. Thorough work to ensure their work is completed. (2)

25. Community leaders. (1)

26. Using major roads except when necessary to use neighborhood streets. (1)

27. Meeting regional needs for fire suppression. (1)

Areas of Community Concern

Respondents were asked to list, in priority order, up to three concerns they have about or for the department. Responses were then analyzed for themes and weighted. 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 (verbatim, in priority order):

1. Poor employee retention. Retention of quality personnel. Enough on staff for the safety of the community? Are you able to fully staff fire and EMS positions? Understaffed? Revolving door of personnel. Loss of recruits to other departments. Enough staff on-duty for the safety of the community? Is recruiting successful? Is better pay needed to keep personnel? The department needs to be well staffed. Succession planning. Recruitment of new employees given the cost of living in Alexandria. Staffing shortage. Staff capacity to respond to calls. Staff shortage. Adequate numbers of trained firefighters. Poor morale. Alexandria is a training ground for staff to go to other jurisdictions. Not having enough personnel to respond efficiently. Concerned not enough staff. Ability to maintain and train qualified staff during challenging times. Staffing. (135)

2. I would like to see more community awareness to increase public knowledge on what the department does. Increase community feedback opportunities (similar to this one). Need to build a strong relationship with the business community. More communications with the public justifying fire department needs. Improvement needed in communications with the public. We are in a six-story apartment building – what type of evacuation procedure will the fire department expect if we need to evacuate? Lack of data shared with the public. Lack of adequate communications with residents and civic associations. Infrequent professional communication and collaboration with healthcare staff. Failure to address concerns through proper channels at healthcare facilities. Responsiveness to facilities for inspections. Concern that the FD is not easy to access by personnel of the press. Concerned that the FD voice is not always heard/listened to by the City Council. How are neighborhood language barriers addressed? Lack of willingness to stand-up for what they believe in the face of City pressure. Would like to see the fire department involved with educating residence staff on safety. Not responding when EMS dispatch believed the person was in nursing care – when they were

not under care. Can they reach me in my high rise? What can I do in case of a fire in a high rise. What if my neighbor has a fire (in my high rise) and I can't get out? Do my neighbors understand fire safety? Not knowing the plan to evacuate disabled citizens from the Plaza in the event of a fire. Coordination with other Alexandria first responders. (88)

3. Are all areas of Alexandria covered adequately by Alexandria fire stations? Do you have enough fire stations? Questionable coverage to some areas of the city. Some fire stations are old. Do you have the proper facilities? Coordination of coverage by other departments? Explosive growth of high-rise apartments and buildings challenge response capabilities. I've seen Fairfax respond when we have stations closer. Are there enough responders for an apartment fire – not pushed to the limit? The fire department does not respond equitably throughout the city. Lack of capacity required to respond to emergency fire calls. Lack of capacity required to respond to other calls for service (EMS). Existing and future stations should include mixed uses, including community facilities and affordable housing. Inadequate protection throughout the city. (67)

4. Need to be well funded. Lack of funding. Inadequate pay scale to attract FD staff. If we build more fire stations, where does the funding come from? Is the department making the most effective use of the funds they are given to operate with? Adequate funding. Problematic pay structure that increases turnover, encourages not living in the community, or can't support candidates from diverse backgrounds. Are staff fairly compensated? Firefighter adequate compensation. Inadequate pay. Inadequate funding. Ability and funds to acquire equipment and training to keep in the forefront of fire/rescue. (48)

5. We want to make sure our firefighters are cared for. Resources for firefighter stress and burnout? Proper care of firefighters? Firefighters need to have a good work/life balance. That they are mentally prepared, have mental support. Counseling for staff to address stress and trauma. Training regarding mental health issues. Concern for department personnel safety. (26)

6. Adequate resources. That they have all the resources to do their job. Number of vehicles available for emergencies. Adequate numbers of vehicles and equipment. Not having enough/right equipment needed for the job. Concerned there is not enough equipment. (22)

7. Hearing news of discrimination in the department. White supremacists/nationalists in the department. Potential for harm as city agents caused by bias (i.e., making a youth feel discriminated against, leading to system distrust). Want to be treated professionally even if our core values/religious beliefs are different. Training regarding LGBTQ issues. (17)

8. Time it takes to respond to a call for service. Response times. Time it takes to respond to a call. Getting addresses mixed up and not responding timely. (16)

9. Lack of diversity of both race and gender. That they have racial and gender diversity in their teams. Diversity, equity, and inclusion in the fire department. Commitment to diversity in recruitment, promotion, and management. (15)

10. City population increase. City density increase. Road proliferation slowing down response time. Traffic and road issues that hinder ability to arrive safely at incidents. (12)

11. That they are not overworked, spread too thin. Overworked staff leading to mistakes. Capacity of the department to meet demands. (10)

12. Training - do staff have all the qualifications needed? Training. (9)

13. Hurricane and earthquake response. (7)

14. Increased use of my neighborhood street as a thruway for response. Neighborhood safety - lots of children running around. (7)

15. CERT administration – major difficulties with funding, background checks completed. Need a volunteer management system. Need to improve CERT email capabilities. Lack of CERT integration. (6)

16. Eagerness to help with activities outside of life safety/prevention. (5)

17. Can they reach me in my high rise? (5)

18. Property damage during non-life-threatening incidents. (4)

19. Poor leadership. (4)

20. Entry into buildings slowed due to property management issues. (4)

21. Noise. (4)

22. Notifications that provide an idea of where vehicles are when maneuvering through traffic. (2)

23. When was the last hazardous materials control study done? (1)

24. Environmental damage. (1)

Positive Community Feedback

The CPSE promotes the belief that the community's view of 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. The following are the identified strengths recognized by the community stakeholders (verbatim, in no particular order):

- Everyone that we have dealt with has been responsive to our questions.
- Fire trucks are respectful when we have false alarms.
- Always friendly.
- Highly qualified.
- They have the best equipment.
- They are very dedicated.
- They seem to love Alexandria.
- Our department is full of true public servants who want to help people.
- The department tries to be involved in the community and are visible to residents and visitors.
- The new fire station on Cameron Mills looks great.
- Great looking fire trucks.
- Responds quickly when called.
- Professional.
- Fire stations close by to communities.
- Well-trained.
- Compassionate.
- Observed teamwork and caring for each other's welfare.

- Personnel skilled in dealing with public.

- Nice to have a fire department that covers the city.

- They work with neighboring counties and states.

- Diversity is good but could do better. Room for improvement.

- Willing to listen to the community they serve.

- I think AFD does a lot of great community work.

- AFD always responds promptly.

- AFD has a diverse workforce.

- Help building in access management.

- Help residents outreach.

- Eager to assist.

- I have not worked with AFD, so unfortunately, I do not have any feedback to share.

- When called upon in emergency situations, the employees are positive and respectful.

- Always professional.

- Friendly and welcoming when approached.

- An awareness of organizations that support city functions/operations i.e., ALIVE Hunger Free Alexandria.

- Always easy to work with.

- Everyone that I've worked with in the department is professional.

- The department is often present at community activities.

- They do a wonderful job in all areas.

- They have a very welcoming, positive community presence.

- Hard-working, genuine, and caring.

- Well trained and takes amazing care of equipment.

- Instills feelings of safety and security.

- Willingness to have speakers for community meetings.

- CERT training classes and exercises are provided, but the teams are rarely used.

- The response time in emergencies is especially quick.

- The firefighters, inspectors, and all personnel of the AFD are cordial and courteous.

- The equipment seems to be in top shape and maintained meticulously.

- Fire personnel are courteous and dress for the occasion with the right gear.

- Fire engines are properly equipped, clean and shiny.

- Fire personnel respond very quickly.

- Fire tests are carried out regularly.

- Very responsive (campus calls).

- Good communications (PIO).

- Quite attentive (Fire Chief Smedley).

- Professionalism.

- Dedication to the community.

- Excellent response.

- Your wish to become accredited is positive.

- Responsiveness.

- Upper levels of department collaboration with healthcare stakeholders.

- Knowledgeable.

- Professional.

- Longevity of many leaders – this helps with collaboration with community partners.

- Organized – forward-looking.

- Community involvement – awareness training.

- Training programs.

- Response to city needs – training citizens.

- Requesting input.

- Visible.

- Good apparatus/equipment.

- Good technical programs.

- Response time. In my experience, response time has been great.

- When the fire chief has been called in communities for non-emergency issues they have been responsive, i.e., open flame cooking on decks.

- The feeling of safety knowing that the FD is located near and with easy access.

- Wonderful public outreach in communities having events like National Day Out, and other events centered around children.

- Wonderful personnel that care for the people dearly in emergency situations, and in a kind way.

- Continually looking at where resources are needed throughout the city.

- Continuous training and education are done.

- Responsive – timely and helpful – go beyond basic treatment.

- Seamless mutual aid with other agencies.

- Leadership and vision for moving forward with improvement.

- Very responsive.

- Professional staff. Strong.

- Belief that they provide a fast response to fire and medical emergencies.

- Every firefighter that has come to inspect our building has been professional.

- Alexandria's hiring process is designed to ensure that anyone that is hired is qualified. Great job!

- Fires are low in Alexandria to the best of my knowledge. (Doing a great job being proactive)

- The fire station in front of my workplace has good infrastructure to be able to set off at any time they are needed.

- Our firefighters/responders continue to passionately protect the public throughout the pandemic.

- Officers that I have encountered are friendly and professional.

- Awareness of older population and they will adjust to engage them.

- The department seems open to public feedback.

- Seem very present and responsive.

- Great when they go to the schools to show their fire equipment to the kids.

- Seem to coordinate well with the police.

- Seem very helpful when people need them.

- Great attitude.

- Very professional.

- Friendly, personable staff.

- Knowledge.

- Response times.

- Well-trained.

- Respond quickly.

- Stronger leader.

- Passionate.

- Efficient/quick response when needed.

- Very thorough.

- Effectively addressed my problems and concerns.

- Knowledgeable.

- Kind.

- Community service.

- You respond quickly, professionally, and thoroughly.

- You've responded to two calls from my staff this year – perfectly.

- Respectful and caring when interacting with the community (emergency and non-emergency settings).

- Prepared to respond to crises (including carrying NARCAN).

- Does a good job of connecting with the community at local events.

- Seem to be very well respected by the community, particularly kids.

- Creative and innovative approaches to working in an urban space.

- Generally regarded as a positive force.

- Quick capacity to respond to all calls for service.

- Trust in the fire department's ability to resolve crises.

- They are courteous.

- They seem to respond to all calls.

- I have not had many interactions with the fire department (thankfully), but I have also not heard anything negative about them from those that have.
- Quick to respond.
- Involved in the community (parades).
- Response times.
- Driving skills.
- Station is an integral part of the neighborhood.
- Enable other community serving issues.
- Responded promptly to my car crash and assisted EMS in helping me out of my vehicle.
- Responded promptly to my neighbor's many calls to EMS.
- Responded promptly to a neighborhood house on fire.
- Thank you.
- Friendly staff.
- Trained.
- Participate in community events and education.
- Response time is very good.
- Knowledge to complete mission is very good.
- Firefighters and EMS are dedicated to doing their job.
- Engage with the community willingly.
- Knowledgeable and professional.
- Location.
- You all came quickly when I thought I had a fire in my chimney.
- Responds timely for medical emergencies.
- Offers training to on-site emergency preparedness personnel.
- Responds quickly to person(s) trapped in condo elevators.
- Superb response time with ambulance.
- Living on N. Howard Street, nice sirens are quiet unless true life or death situation.
- Quick response time and professionalism.
- Community outreach/programs, etc.
- Knowledge of buildings and community to help with quick response.
- Speedy response by emergency medical technician and police.
- Have never dealt with the fire department.
- Understand they will come if a person is trapped in an elevator.
- Fire engine on call visible and I can hear the alarm.
- Professionalism.
- Response times.

- Community education.

- Rapid response times.

- Skills.

- Strong leadership.

- Record of service excellence.

- Distinctive history going back to Friendship Firehouse.

- Good community outreach.

- Free smoke alarms and inspections.

- Staff truly cares about the city.

- They go to schools to set good examples for our youth.

- Work in all weather conditions without complaints.

- Willingness to put yourselves in danger to help others.

- Trusted community personnel.

- Perception of being a "safe place."

- Excellent response time as first responders.

- Excellent response time as fire suppressors.

- Wonderful community presence! The fire department seems to make an intentional effort to be a part of the community.

- Participation in community events.

- Safety.

- Competence.

- Trust.

Other Thoughts and Comments

The community was asked to share any other comments about the department or its services. The following written comments were received (verbatim, in no particular order):

- This exercise makes me realize that I need to learn more about the fire department; they deserve our active support and encouragement, and our gratitude.

- Appreciative of those who choose this line of service.

- The diversity of firefighters and chiefs is improving.

- Thank you for all that you do.

- Don't know other strengths because we have no interaction with AFD except in emergencies.

- Fire prevention inspections are way overdue.

- Support the intersection of AFD and the Citizen Corps Council's Resilient Alexandria program – struggling to get answers on city resources.

- It would be helpful for each association to have a liaison like the police and sheriff's office do.

- Overall, I think the AFD has been very responsive. I do wish we could have more community outreach programs.

- Change nomenclature from Fire and EMS to Emergency Services to integrate all facets.

- The department is being recognized by the city council, not the stepchild to the police department, and similarly getting funding for equipment and staffing.

- As a healthcare provider – would love to have more dual educational opportunities. The team has been amazing, and we have been so fortunate to have a fire department in this city for all our citizens and healthcare providers. Thank you!

- Sometimes hard to figure out who responded – what station. Have had to call around to find out.

- Continue the safety shows in communities. Improve technology use. Perhaps, park the fire engines in high incident areas on a rotation basis so response time is reduced. Otherwise, great job. Thank you.

- The AFD is a valuable and valued organization.

- Concern that there is a lack of CERT program utilization.

- Thank you for all your work for us.

- I am concerned that the lack of affordable housing may drive employees out of the city in which they work.

- Lutheran Social Services of the National Capital Area has a Refugee and Immigrant Services Department. One frequent need our clients have is access to free/reduced-cost car seats for children and car seat installation training. This is the greatest need our agency has that I would like to share with you. Also, I invite a fire department representative to email vccishare@gmail.com to receive an invitation to our Virginia Community Capacity meetings for Northern Virginia. Thank you.

- Every personnel of our department whom I have met has been wonderful.

- I only wish that there were some ways they could be allowed to tell citizens what is going on – fire, auto emergency, chemical fire, escapee search, etc. That's everyone's question, and an answer would be such a boost to community support, loyalty, and engagement.

- Overall, very grateful for all our fire department does for our community.

- We use the fire department for many reasons in our community, and we have no problems. Very professional.

- Thank you for the important work you do to keep our community safe.

- I'd like to have a clearer understanding of our staff/capacity issues, particularly as it comes to EMS integration.

- It would be great if there was a program to help residents of low-income communities become firefighters.

- I think salaries need to increase.

- I am very happy with the fire department.

- Not happy with consolidation plans moving stations.

- Thankful for ALL you do to keep us safe!!!!

- Living in a condo, I worry people never have their own dryer vent cleaned, thereby causing a fire. How can we take care of this?

- Would like demo fire extinguisher.

- The fire department responded quickly when there was a small fire outside our building on N. Howard Street in 2013 or 2014.

- Keep up with the great work co-locating your facilities with affordable housing!

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 its strengths are consistent with the organization's issues. Often, identifying organizational strengths leads to channeling efforts toward primary community needs that match those strengths. Programs that do not match organizational strengths, or the organization's primary function, should be seriously 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:

Our people are young, dedicated, and physically fit	Our people are professional
We have a common goal of wanting to move the department positively	We have top-of-the-line equipment (apparatus, turnout gear, ALS equipment)
Our diverse workforce	Some of the fire stations are new and
Our training program has improved	The department is very resilient
Improved and unified culture	Community interaction and support
Small department and a small area allow us to get to know everyone as well as members of the community	ALS service provided through extensive capabilities and protocols, extensive scope of practice
We work well with mutual aid partners	Good relationship with Alexandria hospital
The services we deliver are at a high level	Ability to provide minimum four-person staffing
Traumatic exposure recovery program	We have low fire fatalities and property loss
Enhanced EMS response capabilities. (Bike medics, special weapons, and tactics medics, mini ambulance, etc.)	We provide a wide scope of internal/external services (system re-testing, fleet maintenance)
Rich department history	Good ability to identify alternate resources
Improved relationships with internal partners	We have a top-notch health and wellness program
Good ISO rating	High closure rate of fire investigations
Number of stations with the size of the city	Traumatic exposure recovery program
Have established community trust and relationship	Ability to adapt to organizational change
Good Internal functions to assist city resources (HR, IT, facility maintenance)	Internal training enhances stakeholder relations (TECC, RTF, etc.)
Strong and involved medical director	OEM is internal division
Community training (CERT, community academy)	Ability to meet the mission despite internal conflicts
We are efficient and accomplish a lot with limited resources	Cohesive environment based on a collective approach

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 but rather those day-to-day issues and concerns that may slow or inhibit progress. The agency stakeholders identified the following items as weaknesses:

Lack of professional development track across the organization	Lack of appreciation for our resources, capabilities, and opportunities compares to our peers
Lack of adequate staffing department-wide (vacancies, positions, and promotions)	Lack of awareness and/or desire to gain knowledge of the various divisions within the department
Lack of consistent messaging and unified leadership at various levels in the department	Inconsistent department compliance and accountability for mandated requirements
Ability to write professionally	Budget and our dependency on grants
Data analysis capabilities	Lack of administrative support and logistics
Station locations based on call volume	Inadequate compensation
Lack of unity. No matter what the executive staff says, some personnel will be resistant to accepting it	Department is in limbo because of collective bargaining, not allowing decisions to be finalized
Age and lack of infrastructure (stations, offices, storage, etc.)	Lack of internal training programs, dependent on outside agencies
Differing opinions not welcome at times	We never finish anything and try to do too much
Workload and tasking results in over-commitment and burnout	Policies are not contemporary or lacking in context to address the needs of the department
We do a lot of things very well but also think we do more than we actually do	Hiring outside chiefs; takes time to learn the city and how it operates
Inefficient succession planning or processes	We have silos in the department
Very young department with a lack of experience	Inadequate quality assurance on fore reporting
Lack of room, nowhere to hold classes	Inadequate data collection systems
Too many informal processes	Loss of institutional knowledge
Limited training capacity for new hires	Scope of work leads to too much multi-tasking
Retention of employees	Lack of transparency from the top down
Lack of fire department facilities in developing areas	

Opportunities

An organization's opportunities depend on identifying strengths and weaknesses and how each can be enhanced. The focus of opportunities is not solely on existing services but on expanding and developing new possibilities inside and beyond the traditional service area. The agency stakeholders identified the following potential opportunities:

Influence future development in the city to better accommodate emergency response (safety, station locations, response, etc.	The opportunity for staff to influence our profession through regional, state, and national programs (COG, NFPA, VDEM, OEMS, etc.)
Increased access to grants and funding	Training opportunities for operations and others
Advocate for additional/improved resources with new city officials	Regional response system with automatic aid and standard operating procedures, NOVA command
Diversity of the national capital region (recruit talent)	Access to regional resources
New city manager/council and their vision includes us and making us competitive	Political climate is right to address staffing shortages and compensation disparities
Jurisdictional size allows for testing of pilot programs (i.e., food on stove)	Regionalized EMS programs to enhance our EMS services
Opportunity to educate the public through community outreach	Partner with external organizations to improve our outcomes and help people
Internal accreditation	Recruitment through the cadet program vis ACHS
Utilization of contractors to assist city departments and more efficiently funding actions	City growth (Virginia Tech, Amazon, Metro) gives the ability to ask for more
Ability to tap into an abundance of fiscal resources	Collaboration with regional partners
Community college in the region allows us to partner for training	State and outside funding resources to assist in building future fire station
Make changes to the service delivery	New staff coming in from outside recruitment
Ability to use state grants for rebuilding the burn building	Early involvement in city planning processes helps determine the resources needed
Establish improved public/private partnerships (i.e., fire stations)	The area's economic status allows for better handling of economic downturn
Adapting our EMS system to participate in emergency triage, treatment, and transport (ET3) through the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (EMS billing changes)	

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 entirely and/or directly controlled by the organization. Some of the current and potential threats identified by the agency stakeholders were as follows:

Reliance on technology (vulnerability, ability to use, interoperability)	Changing political influences/philosophy (legislation, CIP budget, unfunded mandates.
Partner agencies unable to support the mission	Centralization of city functions
Infrastructure design for streets, small area plans	Privatization/American Medical Response (AMR)
Employee retention and recruitment affected by regional partners	Stakeholder/community expectations may be affected by mission creep, ex. Terrorism
Reliance on mutual aid	Strain on resources due to pandemics
Traffic congestion	Traffic calming, narrow streets, bike lanes
Natural events; weather events, climate changes, tornados, tropical storms	Development occurring in areas not close to our fire stations
Developing city results in increased population and increased call volume	National Capital Region is a potential target for terrorism
Media input, television input, possible unrealistic expectations	Population turnover changes community expectations
Diversity creates language and cultural barriers	Changes in the EMS scope of practice
Fuel storages	Supply chain disruptions
Social media influence (Tik Tok, IG challenges	Economic contraction from inflation
Contracted services (fleet, dispatch)	Increased active violence creates a strain on resources
Lack of understanding about our department among residents coupled with their influence	City services are inadequate and not supportive, takes too long to get anything
Cybersecurity weakness	Global conflict (shortages in fuel, food, etc.)
Increased civil disturbances and generalized hatred of individuals in uniform	Vehicle shortages, waiting on units to be built

Service gaps at DECC - no staffing, computer aided dispatch (CAD) not up to date, not knowing what units are available

Appendix 3 – Critical and Service Gap Issues Identified by Agency Stakeholders

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

Initiative Link	Group 1	Group 2
Communication	Communication ○ Lack of consistent messaging ○ Silos ○ Lack of transparency ○ Social media outreach ○ Personnel compliance ○ Training ○ Differences in opinion are not always welcomed ○ Too many informal processes ○ Ability to write professionally ○ Lack of leadership	Communication ○ Over-committed ○ Too many informal processes ○ Silos ○ Lack of data ○ Lack of policies and procedures ○ Information overload ○ Number of systems (platforms) ○ Transparency ○ Internal and external messaging Policies ○ People power ○ Administrative turnover ○ Priorities ○ Processes (review, Lexipol, etc.) ○ Burnout ○ Logistics (computers) ○ Funding ○ Time ○ Competing interests ○ Lack of technical expertise ○ Input
Recruitment and Retention	Recruitment and Retention ○ Pay and benefits ○ People (staffing) ○ Conflicting interests ○ Onboarding ○ Poaching ○ Retirements ○ Opportunities ○ Career ladder ○ Schedule (work hours) ○ Develop fiscal resources ○ Burnout	Recruitment and Retention ○ Compensation ○ Competitive environment ○ Marketing ○ Quality of life ○ Work hours ○ Staff ○ Mentorship ○ Burnout ○ Promotional processes
Training	Improved Training Program ○ Burnout ○ Lack of dedicated staffing ○ Funding ○ Staff to backfill ○ Equipment ○ Over-commitment due to staffing ○ IT support ○ Facilities ○ Changing priorities ○ Relationships with community colleges	Professional Development ○ Classes for academic development ○ Career ladder ○ Initial to advanced training ○ Employer/employee support

Initiative Link	Group 1	Group 2
Succession Planning	Succession Planning o Pay scale compression o Dedicated staff for promotional process o Funding for career professional development o Regular schedule of promotional exams o Training opportunities o Expand the drop program o Ability for individuals to work in multiple areas o Inadequate compensation o Develop incentives for people to give more notice before leaving o Outdated job classifications o The evaluation process does nothing or goes nowhere o Burnout	N/A
Staffing	Support Staff o Compensation o Career ladder o Budgetary process o Training opportunities o Facilities o City processes o Burnout o Data analysis	Staffing o Recruitment and retention o Compensation packages o Comprehensive staffing plan o Scheduling o Professional development o Mentorship o Affordable housing/cost of living o Processes (i.e., vacant positions, reclassification, promotions) o Competition to hiring o Deployment model
Equipment and Infrastructure	N/A	Facilities and Infrastructure o Station locations o Offices o Station conditions o Logistics o Training spaces o Facilities o IT hardware and software o Fleet o Fixed assets o Planning o Traffic management

The following information is the raw data comprised from the deliberation of the two workgroups. The information in each table is not linked directly to a strategic initiative but remains important. The department is best served to understand and embrace this other information as it moves forward for deliberative purposes and consideration of support of the strategic initiatives.

Topic	Group 1		Group 2
Response Time	Response Times o Call volume o Motivation to get out the door o Station locations o Staffing	o Burnout o DECC issuers o Population density o Data analysis	N/A

2022-2027 **STRATEGIC PLAN**