



Strategic Plan

2019-2024



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Executive Summary

In 2018, Athens Clarke County Fire and Emergency Services Department (ACCFESD) contracted with the Center for Public Safety Excellence (CPSE) to develop a five-year strategic plan. Changes in the service delivery model for ACCFESD along with evolving expectations and other factors made this effort essential to the success of ACCFESD and meeting the needs of the community. The approach taken was community based with input also sought from all ranks, all shifts, and all Divisions of ACCFESD.

The key components of this strategic plan include:

- Review and revision of mission statement
- Review of core values
- Identification of programs and services provided
- SWOT analysis
- Critical issues and service gaps identified
- Future performance measurement initiative discussion
- Development of seven goals and related objectives

The ultimate goal of this plan is twofold; to paint a clear picture of what our future “target of excellence” looks like and to map out how we get there. The map that resulted through this planning process addresses the following topics; Department recruiting and retention, enhancing Department communications, strengthening community relationships, expanding Department technological capabilities, enhancing training and education, improving working partnership with Central Communications, and preparing to pursue international accreditation.

As a final note in this summary, we also conducted an online and social media survey and have received 38 responses so far with the following feedback: firefighting service received the highest rating with 76% of the responses being excellent or good, emergency medical response received the second highest rating with 71% of the responses of excellent or good, the weakest rating received was in reference to our website with only 60% of the responses being excellent or good. The characteristics of our personnel surveyed revealed an 81% rating of excellent or good for courtesy, 79% rating of excellent or good for responsiveness, and 82% rating of excellent or good for professionalism. The overall rating from the survey for ACCFESD was 97% 4/5 out of 5 points possible.

Jeff Scarbrough

Fire Chief

Athens-Clarke County Fire & Emergency Services

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Introduction

The Athens-Clarke County Fire & Emergency Services Department (ACCFESD) provides an all-hazards approach in the protection of the lives and property of the residents, businesses, and visitors of the City of Athens and Clarke County, Georgia. ACCFESD is consistently working to achieve and/or maintain the highest level of professionalism and efficiency on behalf of those it serves, and thus, contracted with the Center for Public Safety Excellence (CPSE) to facilitate a method to document the department's path into the future via a "Community-Driven Strategic Plan." The following strategic plan was written in accordance with the guidelines set forth in the Commission on Fire Accreditation (CFAI) *Fire & Emergency Service Self-Assessment Manual 9th Ed.* and is intended to guide the organization within established parameters set forth by the authority having jurisdiction.

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

ATHENS-CLARKE COUNTY FIRE & EMERGENCY SERVICES DEPARTMENT

STRATEGIC PLAN

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Organizational Background

Athens-Clarke County, Georgia found its origination near the beginnings of the United States. With the founding of the University of Georgia in 1785, Clarke County was later established in 1801 and the City of Athens was established in 1805. The area continued to grow and evolve, while keeping its focus on being a place of higher learning. Athens and Clarke County has a detailed past, playing an important role in American history.



The Athens-Clarke genesis dates to 1849 when it was originally chartered, and to 1850 when it was incorporated as the Athens Fire Company No. 1. As the area grew and more demand was created, the Pioneer Hook and Ladder Company No. 1 was created and incorporated in 1860. These volunteer fire companies evolved into a municipal, career fire department, the Athens Fire Department, in 1891, which employed 15 paid firefighters.

The department was transferred to Clarke County in 1982 and became the Clarke County Fire Department. After the city and county unification, the name was changed to the Athens-Clarke County Fire Department. In 1990, the city and the county consolidated into a unified government to better serve its citizens.

Today, Athens-Clarke County thrives with an approximate population of 125,000 within its 121 square miles. With the university as the center point, a good economy exists that supports the various businesses within the area. The Athens-Clarke County Fire & Emergency Services Department provides prompt, dependable, and



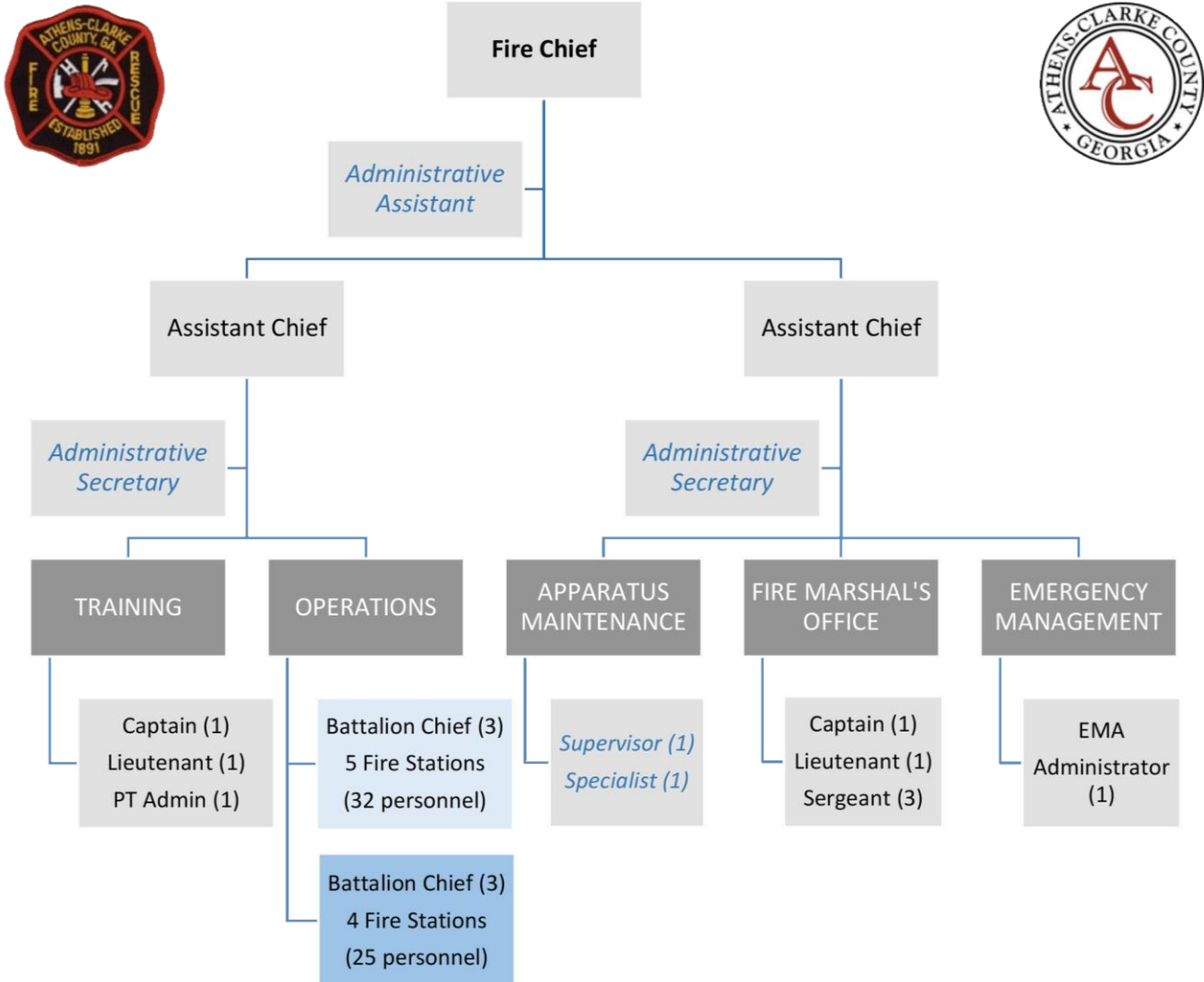
professional services to all those within the county. Services are delivered from nine fire stations, located strategically throughout the jurisdiction. Staffed with 187 professionals, the department strives to reduce the impact of emergencies with dedication to education and training in support of the residents, businesses, and visitors to the Athens-Clarke County. The department embraces excellence in all that it does and continues to be dedicated to those it serves.





ATHENS-CLARKE COUNTY FIRE & EMERGENCY SERVICES DEPARTMENT

Organizational Structure



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Community-Driven Strategic Planning

For many successful organizations, the voice of the community drives their operations and charts the course for their future. A community-driven emergency service organization is one that seeks to gather and utilize the needs and expectations of its community in the development and/or improvement of the services provided. To ensure that the community remains a focus of an organization's direction, a community-driven strategic planning process was used to develop this strategic plan.

A strategic plan is a living management tool that provides short-term direction, builds a shared vision, documents goals and objectives, and optimizes the use of resources. The process of strategic planning can be defined as “a deliberative, disciplined approach to producing fundamental decisions and actions that shape and guide what an organization (or other entity) is, what it does, and why.”¹

Effective strategic planning benefits from a consistent and cohesively structured process employed across all levels of the organization. Planning is a continuous process, one with no clear beginning and no defined end. While plans can be developed on a regular basis, it is the process of planning that is important, not the publication of the plan itself. Most importantly, strategic planning can be an opportunity to unify the management, employees, and stakeholders through a common understanding of where the organization is going, how everyone involved can work to that common purpose, and how progression and success will be measured.



Community Stakeholders Work Session

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





ATHENS-CLARKE COUNTY FIRE & EMERGENCY SERVICES DEPARTMENT

The Community-Driven Strategic Planning Process Outline

1. Define the programs provided to the community.
2. Establish the community's service program priorities and expectations of the organization.
3. Identify any concerns the community may have about the organization, along with aspects of the organization that the community views positively.
4. Revisit the mission statement, giving careful attention to the services and programs currently provided, and which logically can be provided in the future.
5. Revisit the values of the organization's membership.
6. Identify the internal strengths and weaknesses of the organization.
7. Identify areas of opportunity 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.



Community Stakeholders Work Session



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Process and Acknowledgements

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

Development of this strategic plan took place in January 2019, beginning with meetings hosted by a representative from the CPSE for members of the community (as named in the following table). The department identified community stakeholders to ensure broad representation. The community stakeholders were comprised of some who reside or work within the Athens-Clarke County Fire & Emergency Services Department's coverage area, and some who were recipients of ACCFESD's service(s).

Athens-Clarke County Fire & Emergency Services Department's Community Stakeholders			
Robby Atkins	Carla Braswell	Don Cargile	Steve Harris
Mike Hunsinger	Suki Janssen	Joe Lockman	Charlie Maddox
Mike Mathews	Drew Raessler	Mark Sizemore	Christy Terrell

Community Group Findings

A key element of the Athens-Clarke County Fire & Emergency Services Department's organizational philosophy is having a high level of commitment to the community, as well as 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, input was gathered during the meeting that revolved around community expectations and concerns (prioritized), as well as positive and other comments about the organization. Specific findings of the community stakeholders are provided in the appendix of this document. The department 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.





ATHENS-CLARKE COUNTY FIRE & EMERGENCY SERVICES DEPARTMENT

Community Priorities

To best dedicate time, energy, and resources to services most desired by its community, the Athens-Clarke County Fire & Emergency Services 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
Fire Suppression	1	68
Emergency Medical Responses	2	63
Technical Rescue	3	54
Hazardous Materials Mitigation	4	43
Emergency Preparedness	5	37
Community Risk Reduction	5	37
Fire Cause Investigation	7	21
Public Fire and Life Safety Education	8	13

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



Community Stakeholders Work Session



2019-2024 Strategic Plan

Department Stakeholder Group Findings

The department stakeholder work sessions were conducted over the course of three days. These sessions served to discuss the organization's approach to community-driven strategic planning, 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 that represented a broad cross-section of the department, as named and pictured below.

Athens-Clarke County Fire & Emergency Services Department's Stakeholders				
Tyler Akin <i>Sergeant</i>	Josh Allen <i>Sergeant</i>	Roy Allen <i>Corporal</i>	Mike Ash <i>Battalion Chief</i>	Josh Carey <i>Sergeant</i>
Aaron Colditz <i>Sergeant</i>	Chase Crawford <i>Firefighter</i>	Chris Culver <i>Captain</i>	Ben Cunningham <i>Firefighter</i>	Brent Erwin <i>Lieutenant</i>
Roger Evans <i>Battalion Chief</i>	Gary Freeman <i>Battalion Chief</i>	Ryan Grove <i>Firefighter</i>	Tyler Haas <i>Firefighter</i>	Jason Hamby <i>Corporal</i>
Scott Hawks <i>Lieutenant</i>	Kyle Hendrix <i>Assistant Chief</i>	Keith Holloman <i>Battalion Chief</i>	Jacob Jones <i>Lieutenant</i>	Mark Melvin <i>Assistant Chief</i>
Jason Pierce <i>Captain</i>	Chad Pitts <i>Sergeant</i>	Mike Prchal <i>Sergeant</i>	Jeff Reno <i>Battalion Chief</i>	Whitney Sapp <i>Sergeant</i>
Jeff Scarbrough <i>Fire Chief</i>	Shane Smith <i>Captain</i>	J.W. Thaxton <i>Captain</i>	Emily Thompson <i>Firefighter</i>	Rick Vaughn <i>Lieutenant</i>



Department Stakeholders





ATHENS-CLARKE COUNTY FIRE & EMERGENCY SERVICES DEPARTMENT

Mission

The purpose of the mission is to answer the questions:

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

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

Athens-Clarke County Fire & Emergency Services Department takes pride in providing prompt, dependable, and professional services to reduce the impact of emergencies in our community with dedication to education and training.



Department Stakeholders Work Session



2019-2024 Strategic Plan

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. The department understands that alignment is required within the entire organization to ensure that current and future goals are values-based. Additionally, the department understands that the cultural acceptance of core values takes time for positive change to occur. Therefore, it was determined that no revision to the values, as previously created, was needed during this planning period. However, a workgroup met to revisit the existing values to confirm they align with the community stakeholder input, as well as to have a consensus understanding of their meaning in order to move forward in creating values-based goals, objectives, and critical tasks. The department's values remain:

Value: Honesty

Behavior: Demonstrating moral character through my words and actions.

Question: Am I being honest, trustworthy, and accountable?

Value: Dependability

Behavior: Keep my commitments and take personal responsibility for my actions.

Question: Can the community and my fellow firefighters depend on me?

Value: Teamwork

Behavior: Working together as an inclusive, cohesive group, toward common goals.

Question: Do my actions demonstrate putting the team's needs over my own?

Value: Professionalism

Behavior: Giving my best in my actions, decisions, appearance, and communications.

Question: Is this the best I/we can do? What am I doing to advance my skills and knowledge?

Value: Camaraderie

Behavior: Treat colleagues with respect, and help them with life challenges.

Question: How am I supporting and caring for my ACCUG and Fire Service family?

The mission and values are the foundation of this organization. Thus, every effort will be made to keep these current and meaningful so that the individuals who make up the Athens-Clarke County Fire & Emergency Services Department are guided by them in the accomplishment of the goals, objectives, and day-to-day tasks.





ATHENS-CLARKE COUNTY FIRE & EMERGENCY SERVICES DEPARTMENT

Programs and Services

The department stakeholders identified the core programs provided to the community, as well as many of the services that enable the organization to deliver those programs. The department's core programs are provided below, while supporting services are provided in [Appendix 2](#).

Core Programs of the Athens-Clarke County Fire & Emergency Services Department		
Fire Suppression	Emergency Medical Responses	Technical Rescue
Hazardous Materials Mitigation	Emergency Preparedness	Community Risk Reduction
Fire Cause Investigation	Public Fire and Life Safety Education	



Department 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, as well as those that pose a danger. Department stakeholders participated in this activity to record ACCFESD's strengths and weaknesses, as well as the possible opportunities and potential threats. Information gathered through this analysis provides guidance toward the larger issues and gaps that exist within the agency. The information gleaned will assist the agency in finding its broader critical issues and service gaps.

[Appendix 3](#) consists of the SWOT data and analysis collected by the department stakeholders.



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Critical Issues and Service Gaps

Following the identification and review of the department's SWOT, two separate groups of department stakeholders met to identify themes as primary critical issues and service gaps (found in [Appendix 4](#)). The critical issues and services gaps identified by the stakeholders provides further guidance toward identification of the strategic initiatives, which will ultimately lend direction for the development of 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 the development of goals and objectives.

Athens-Clarke County Fire & Emergency Services Department's Strategic Initiatives		
Workforce Development	Internal Communication	External Communication
Technology	Training	Dispatch
Accreditation		



Department Stakeholders Work Session





ATHENS-CLARKE COUNTY FIRE & EMERGENCY SERVICES DEPARTMENT

Goals and Objectives

To continuously achieve the mission of the Athens-Clarke County Fire & Emergency Services Department, realistic goals and objectives with timelines for completion must be established. These will serve to enhance strengths, address identified weaknesses, provide a clear direction, and address the concerns of the community. 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 ACCFESD's leadership.

Goal 1	Create a culture within ACCFESD that attracts, develops, and sustains member longevity.	
Objective 1A	Develop a consistent and comprehensive hiring process to attract quality applicants.	
Timeframe	7 months	Assigned to:
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Create a team to identify target audiences that would improve the department's recruitment pool.• Research recruiting processes from comparable fire departments and organizations.• Evaluate the recruiting process and ACCFESD.• Establish a marketing/recruiting team of department members to engage recruits.• Share the plan with human resources and solicit feedback.• Implement the marketing/recruiting plan through the team, utilizing:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Social media○ Job fairs○ Community events○ Websites○ Print media.• Analyze the feedback from the process.• Identify any additional needs.• Revise the current plan as needed and implement.	
Funding	Capital Costs:	Consumable Costs:
Estimate	Personnel Costs:	Contract Services Costs:



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Objective 1B Implement strategies to enhance the quality of life and promote retention for ACCFESD members and families.		
Timeframe	18 – 24 months	Assigned to:
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a team to develop a survey. • Create the survey. • Survey the entire department to identify quality of life concerns. • Create a team consisting of department members and human resources to analyze the survey results and define current needs of the department. • Publish the findings through Target Solutions. • Allow for feedback from department members, consisting of a two-week timeframe. • Add any additional concerns from the feedback. • Evaluate the department's current programs and identify any additional resources needed to include but, not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Chaplain program ○ Family support plan ○ Mentor program ○ Employee assistance program ○ Critical incident stress management ○ Wellness program. • Determine the appropriate programs to address the needs. • Evaluate the cost and request needed funding. • Identify approved programs. • Inform members of the programs and the process to enroll in them. • Monitor the programs to determine effectiveness. • Review the programs every six months and make any revisions needed. 	
Funding Estimate	Capital Costs: Personnel Costs:	Consumable Costs: Contract Services Costs:
Objective 1C Create strategies to ensure succession planning within the department.		
Timeframe	2 years, ongoing	Assigned to:
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a team consisting of a battalion chief, captain, and lieutenant to identify critical duties within the fire department requiring succession planning. • Survey/interview the identified critical duty positions and teams. • Develop a plan for continuity of operations. • Identify and recruit interested members. • Select the interested members. • Train the selected members. • Monitor and revise the process as needed. 	
Funding Estimate	Capital Costs: Personnel Costs:	Consumable Costs: Contract Services Costs:





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Objective 1D	Review, evaluate, and revise the department's policies and procedures in order to provide up-to-date, refined guidance for employee safety and direction.	
Timeframe	18 – 24 months	Assigned to:
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a team from all ranks and shifts to review the current guidelines. • Identify outdated policies and procedures. • Update and revise outdated policies and procedures. • Submit drafts to department leadership. • Review the final drafts. • Obtain approval. • Publish the policies and procedures in Target Solutions, department intranet, and in hard-copy format in each station. • Ensure each member has read and understood the updated policies and procedures. • Annually, review policies and procedures and revise as needed. 	
Funding Estimate	Capital Costs: Personnel Costs:	Consumable Costs: Contract Services Costs:



Department Stakeholders Work Session



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Goal 2	Enhance department communication for better information dissemination among shifts, battalions, and personnel.	
Objective 2A	Standardize formal communications that proficiently conveys information throughout the organization.	
Timeframe	6 months	Assigned to:
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a team of six personnel to identify current forms of formal communication. • Analyze the strengths and deficiencies of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Email ○ Texts ○ Memoranda ○ Letters ○ Target Solutions. • Determine the appropriate method of use for each form of formal communications. • Report findings to the leadership team for approval. • Create SOPs to implement any new methods. • Distribute updated methods and train personnel accordingly. • Review annually and revise as needed. 	
Funding Estimate	Capital Costs: Personnel Costs:	Consumable Costs: Contract Services Costs:
Objective 2B	Enhance informal communication to improve the dissemination of information within the organization.	
Timeframe	6 months	Assigned to:
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a committee of at least six members to evaluate the current methods of informal communications. • Analyze the current usage of communications amongst personnel. • Evaluate the findings. • Determine appropriate forms of communication to use with personnel. • Establish procedures for the use of communications that affords the transparency of information. • Educate members on the appropriate forms of communications. • Review and revise as needed. 	
Funding Estimate	Capital Costs: Personnel Costs:	Consumable Costs: Contract Services Costs:





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Objective 2C	Formalize after-action reviews to better educate personnel through the organization.	
Timeframe	6 months	Assigned to:
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Form a team of captains to work with the training division to research current after-action report methods. • Determine the current effectiveness and identify areas for improvement. • Research other organizations for accepted standards. • Adapt findings to fit the organization. • Create a guide for conducting after-action reports to ensure consistency and share of information between personnel. • Submit the guide for approval. • Educate and train personnel on the approved guide. • Review and revise as needed. 	
Funding Estimate	Capital Costs: Personnel Costs:	Consumable Costs: Contract Services Costs:



Department Stakeholders Work Session



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Goal 3	Strengthen community relationships through outreach and partnerships.	
Objective 3A	Develop a comprehensive public information and outreach program to ensure the community is fully informed and involved.	
Timeframe	6 months	Assigned to:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a committee of at least six members to analyze the current programs. • Identify current programs including, but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Open House(s) ○ Clowning ○ Fire Safety House ○ Fire explorers ○ Community Academy ○ Reading at schools ○ Smoke alarm program. 	
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify target audiences for each program. • Research other programs and methods utilized by other comparable departments. • Analyze the department's capacity of time and finances. • Review which methods work best for the Athens-Clarke County community. • Create a plan of action. • Submit the plan of action to department leadership for approval. • Secure funding through various alternative funding sources, if necessary. • Train personnel with alignment to specific skillsets. • Implement the approved plans. • Analyze the effectiveness of the implemented programs. • Make any revisions necessary on a quarterly basis. 	
Funding	Capital Costs:	Consumable Costs:
Estimate	Personnel Costs:	Contract Services Costs:



Department Stakeholders Work Session





ATHENS-CLARKE COUNTY FIRE & EMERGENCY SERVICES DEPARTMENT

Objective 3B	Develop strategies that will maximize opportunities to collaborate with all media outlets.	
Timeframe	1 year	Assigned to:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a committee for the purposes of evaluating local and state media outlets to include, but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Radio ○ Social media ○ Television ○ University of Georgia ○ Print media. • Evaluate the programs and outlets. 	
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish professional working relationships to overcome turnover of management and personnel. • Evaluate internal ACCUG resources relative to a public information officer. • Determine the value of internships utilizing local journalism students. • Conduct a media academy to fully educate and inform participants about the depth and breadth of the department's programs. • Integrate media personnel with different shifts and battalions. • Incorporate opportunities for feedback sessions for analyzing effectiveness. • Make any revisions necessary on a quarterly basis. 	
Funding	Capital Costs:	Consumable Costs:
Estimate	Personnel Costs:	Contract Services Costs:
Objective 3C	Develop relationships with logistical partners to support the department and the community's needs.	
Timeframe	1 year	Assigned to:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a committee of at least six members to foster relationships with potential and current community partners. • Analyze the functions, abilities, and services provided by the community partners. • Allocate matching resources to each department or community need. 	
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborate with local EMA to prevent duplication of efforts. • Study limitations of local EMA staffing. • Make recommendations based on the study results. • Create a guide to be distributed to partners. • Review and revise every six months. 	
Funding	Capital Costs:	Consumable Costs:
Estimate	Personnel Costs:	Contract Services Costs:



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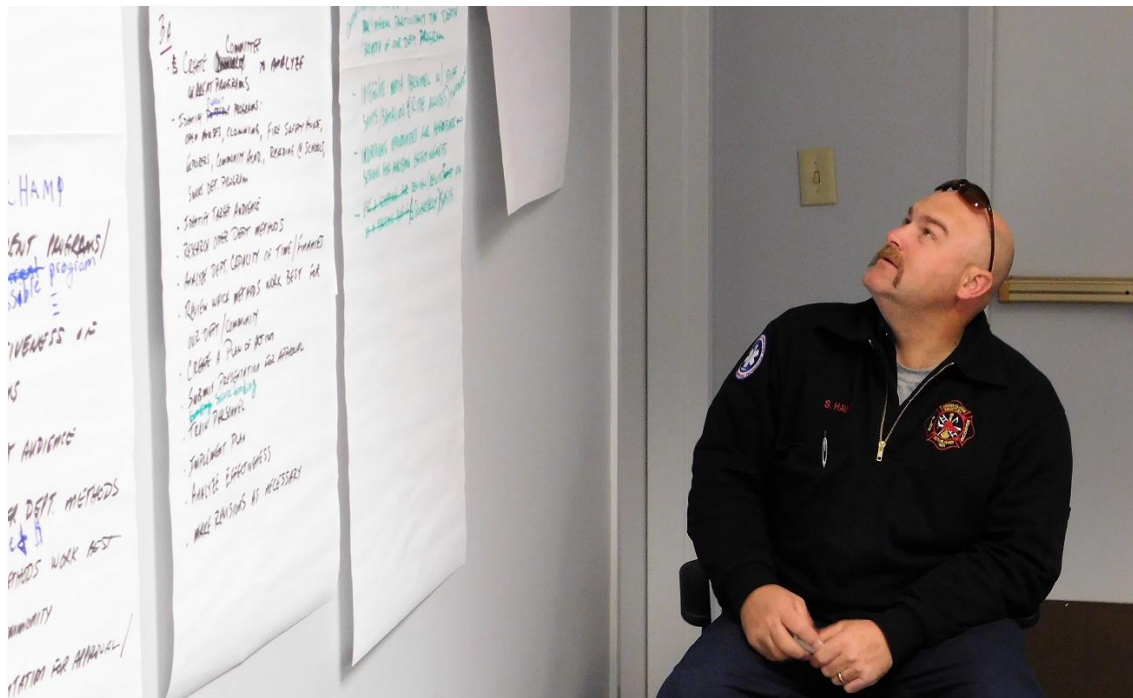
Goal 4	Expand and enhance the department's technological capabilities to improve the department's efficiency.	
Objective 4A	Develop an IT support system with the department to decrease dependency on outside services.	
Timeframe	1 year	Assigned to:
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a committee within the fire department, including current IT support providers. • Identify department personnel with an interest in IT support roles. • Identify the current process for IT support. • Analyze what works and what doesn't work. • Research the IT support processes currently being used by ACCPD and other comparable departments in public safety. • Create a report of findings and determine the process moving forward. • Conduct a cost analysis of options. • Develop a plan of action that includes changes. • Present to the department leadership for approval. • Implement the approved plan. • Review the process as needed based on feedback. • Conduct any approved revisions as needed. 	
Funding Estimate	Capital Costs: Personnel Costs:	Consumable Costs: Contract Services Costs:
Objective 4B	Evaluate and improve a comprehensive plan to better utilize the technology available to the department.	
Timeframe	6 months	Assigned to:
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Form a committee to determine the department's technological needs and to determine what is available. • Select department members interested in training classes (train-the-trainer). • Create a survey for dispersal to department members to obtain feedback on station needs. • Review the findings from the survey. • Standardize available technology and equipment at the station level by utilizing a list of needs for standardization. • Perform a cost analysis for equipment to be standardized. • Develop a plan of action for each station. • Present the plan of action to department leadership for approval. • Implement the approved plan. • Review the process as needed based on feedback. • Conduct any approved revisions as needed. 	
Funding Estimate	Capital Costs: Personnel Costs:	Consumable Costs: Contract Services Costs:





ATHENS-CLARKE COUNTY FIRE & EMERGENCY SERVICES DEPARTMENT

Objective 4C	Identify, evaluate, and research computer software requirements for current and future needs.	
Timeframe	6 months	Assigned to:
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a committee to address software needs for the department. • Identify the current software being used by the department. • Analyze the strengths and weaknesses of the current software. • Research the software being used by comparable departments. • Research software for fire department use currently available. • Perform a cost analysis for software needs. • Develop a plan of action for software. • Present the findings to the department leadership for approval. • Obtain the software. • Train personnel on the new software. • Implement the new plan and install the software for station use. • Review the software being used and obtain feedback. • Revise as needed and as determined by department needs. 	
Funding	Capital Costs:	Consumable Costs:
Estimate	Personnel Costs:	Contract Services Costs:



Department Stakeholders Work Session



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Goal 5	Enhance training and education to improve service delivery to the community and the safety of responders.	
Objective 5A	Evaluate and improve the training center facilities to meet current and future demands.	
Timeframe	3 years	Assigned to:
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a committee to evaluate current conditions and future facility needs. • Identify the limitations of current facilities. • Analyze what is working and what is not working. • Research other training facilities. • Create a report of findings and submit it to the department's leadership. • Conduct a cost analysis for proposed projects. • Explore funding options for the proposed projects. • Prioritize and implement the approved projects. • Evaluate the training center annually relative to current and future needs. 	
Funding Estimate	Capital Costs: Personnel Costs:	Consumable Costs: Contract Services Costs:
Objective 5B	Enhance career development programs to prepare members for roles and responsibilities.	
Timeframe	2 years	Assigned to:
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a committee to evaluate current career development programs. • Analyze job tasks for every position and career development needs. • Evaluate the current career development process. • Identify any gaps in the career development process. • Research methods to obtain career development. • Develop a comprehensive career development outline. • Develop needed career development programs for all levels of the organization. • Implement the programs to facilitate personnel career development. • Continuously review the implemented programs and revise as indicated. 	
Funding Estimate	Capital Costs: Personnel Costs:	Consumable Costs: Contract Services Costs:





ATHENS-CLARKE COUNTY FIRE & EMERGENCY SERVICES DEPARTMENT

Objective 5C	Analyze and improve continuing education and training of personnel to maintain and strengthen knowledge.	
Timeframe	1 year	Assigned to:
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a committee to evaluate continuing education and training. • Identify limitations for continuing education and training for every position. • Analyze continuing education and training opportunities. • Research methods to overcome limitations. • Conduct a cost analysis of all options. • Create a report of findings to the department's leadership. • Implement the approved plan to improve continuing education. • Annually review the process and revise as indicated. 	
Funding	Capital Costs:	Consumable Costs:
Estimate	Personnel Costs:	Contract Services Costs:
Objective 5D	Assess and obtain all-hazard simulators and training props to prepare personnel through realistic training.	
Timeframe	1 year	Assigned to:
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a committee to evaluate the current simulators and props used by the department. • Analyze the current inventory and condition. • Identify what is working and what is not working. • Research other simulation programs and training props. • Develop a prioritized list of simulation aids and equipment. • Conduct a cost analysis of each option. • Create a report of findings and provide it to the department's leadership. • Explore funding options. • Implement the approved plan to obtain simulation aids and equipment. • Annually review the process and revise as indicated. 	
Funding	Capital Costs:	Consumable Costs:
Estimate	Personnel Costs:	Contract Services Costs:



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Goal 6	Improve our working partnership with Central Communications.	
Objective 6A	Develop a comprehensive plan to determine protocols, procedures, and information needs for more effective operations.	
Timeframe	1 year	Assigned to:
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Form a committee of personnel. • Identify dispatch SOPs/SOGs for our department. • Analyze current processes for what works and what does not work. • Research comparable call centers for information and ideas. • Evaluate possible changes to our dispatch procedures. • Develop a plan of implementation. • Present the plan to Central Communications for approval. • Implement the approved plan of action. • Review the plan annually and revise as needed. 	
Funding Estimate	Capital Costs: Personnel Costs:	Consumable Costs: Contract Services Costs:
Objective 6B	Develop cross-training classes for dispatch personnel to establish better working relationships as it pertains to information needed for consistent and effective response.	
Timeframe	1 year	Assigned to:
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify communication needs and issues for our agency. • Form a team consisting of members of both agencies. • Research and identify each agency's SOPs and SOGs. • Identify any shortfalls or inconsistencies between agency SOPs and SOGs. • Collaborate to develop and implement new SOPs and SOGs to enhance communications between agencies. • Present the evidence to support the need for dedicated fire dispatchers. • Support budget requests from Central Communications for fire dispatchers. • Implement the approved plan for cross-training between agencies. • Review quarterly for the first year and then every six months thereafter. • Revise the process as needed. 	
Funding Estimate	Capital Costs: Personnel Costs:	Consumable Costs: Contract Services Costs:





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Objective 6C	Develop strategies to improve efficiency and consistency with Central Communications.	
Timeframe	2 years	Assigned to:
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a 911 steering committee. • Analyze what is working and what is not working. • Research industry best practices for 911 operations. • Review all information gathered. • Identify opportunities for improvement. • Develop a plan of action. • Conduct a cost analysis of improvements and prioritize the list. • Present to the department leadership for guidance and approval. • Implement and train members affected by the changes. • Review quarterly and revise as needed. 	
Funding Estimate	Capital Costs: Personnel Costs:	Consumable Costs: Contract Services Costs:



Department Stakeholders Work Session



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Goal 7	Prepare for, pursue, achieve and maintain international accreditation to better serve our community and to embrace excellence.	
Objective 7A	Form team or committee structures with management components as needed to pursue and maintain accreditation.	
Timeframe	30 days	Assigned to:
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the needed team or committee structure(s) for the various components of the accreditation process. • Create management oversight positions to lead the teams or committees, as well as the process overall. • Establish team or committee member criteria. • Determine the composition of the teams or committees. • Solicit participation to meet the composition of the teams or committees. • Develop and complete the selection process. • Provide for the needed educational components provided through the Commission on Fire Accreditation International to ensure the relevant members have the needed training. 	
Funding Estimate	Capital Costs: Personnel Costs:	Consumable Costs: Contract Services Costs:
Objective 7B	Prepare a community-driven strategic plan.	
Timeframe	3 months and on-going	Assigned to:
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold an external stakeholder meeting where community members provide feedback on program priorities, service expectations, concerns and strengths perceived about ACCFESD. • Provide internal stakeholder work sessions to evaluate (and update if necessary) the mission, vision, and values; determine internal strengths and weaknesses, external opportunities and threats; establish critical issues and service gaps, determine goals and objectives to achieve over five years. • Determine a work plan for the accomplishment of each goal and implement the plan. • Annually evaluate objectives accomplished with the plan. • Report annual plan progress to internal and external stakeholders. 	
Funding Estimate	Capital Costs: Personnel Costs:	Consumable Costs: Contract Services Costs:
Objective 7C	Conduct a community hazards and risk assessment and publish a Community Risk Assessment - Standards of Cover document.	
Timeframe	6 – 12 months	Assigned to:
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obtain instruction on hazard and risk assessment, and standards of cover preparation. • Perform community hazards and risk assessment. • Evaluate historical community emergency response performance and coverage. • Establish benchmark and baseline emergency response performance objectives. • Establish and publish the Community Risk Assessment - Standards of Cover. • Maintain, and annually update the Standards of Cover document. 	
Funding Estimate	Capital Costs: Personnel Costs:	Consumable Costs: Contract Services Costs:





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Objective 7D	Conduct and document a self-assessment of the department utilizing the CPSE/CFAI Fire and Emergency Services Self-Assessment Manual criteria.	
Timeframe	6 months	Assigned to:
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obtain instruction on writing a CFAI self-assessment manual. • Assign self-assessment manual category and criterion writing to the department accreditation committee/team members as appropriate. • Review self-assessment and ensure all reference items are in order. 	
Funding Estimate	Capital Costs: Personnel Costs:	Consumable Costs: Contract Services Costs:
Objective 7E	Achieve agency accreditation by the CFAI.	
Timeframe	4 months	Assigned to:
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply for “Candidate Agency” status with the CFAI. • Prepare for CFAI Peer Assessor Team visit. • Upload Strategic Plan, Standards of Cover, and Self-Assessment Categories and Criterion for review and comment by CFAI Peer Team. • Host CFAI Peer Team site visit for accreditation review. • Receive CFAI Peer Team recommendation to CFAI for Accredited status. • Receive vote during the CFAI hearings in favor of Accredited status. 	
Funding Estimate	Capital Costs: Personnel Costs:	Consumable Costs: Contract Services Costs:
Objective 7F	Maintain accreditation with the CFAI.	
Timeframe	Ongoing	Assigned to:
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit required Annual Compliance Reports. • Attend CFAI “Dayroom Discussion” web-meetings for continued education. • Participate in the accreditation process by providing “peer assessors” for external department review and identification of possible best practices. • Participate in the annual CPSE Excellence Conference for continued education and networking with other accreditation teams and accredited agencies. • Submit Annual Compliance Reports as required by CFAI policies. • Establish succession development of internal accreditation team in preparation for next accreditation cycle. 	
Funding Estimate	Capital Costs: Personnel Costs:	Consumable Costs: Contract Services Costs:



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Vision

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

Athens-Clarke County Fire & Emergency Services Department's 2024 Vision

is to continue to fulfill our personal and organizational commitment to reduce the impact of emergencies in our community with dedication to education and training, while living our core values in all that we do. This vision, our true futurity, will only become reality by striving to accomplish our goals. We will become this future by:

Always investing in our greatest asset, our members, and ensuring we have a professionally developed workforce that is prepared to meet the needs of Athens-Clarke County. Our members will be highly trained to meet our calling of providing prompt, dependable, and professional services. Our focus on internal communications will help us be more effective and ultimately, provide a return to those we serve.

Continuing to find ways to further connect with those who live, work, and play in our community. Our enhanced external communications will bridge any gaps and help us to further educate and support our stakeholders. With improved use of technology and greater alignment with our emergency dispatch services, we will strive for more efficiency and always be the best of the best. The efficacy of our pursuits will be proven by our attainment of international accreditation, a distinction that truly aligns with our mission.

Committing ourselves to service, embracing our proud history, living and changing for the future, and pursuing excellence in all that we do. Together we will strive to bring this vision to fruition.





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Performance Measurement

To assess and ensure that an organization is delivering on the promises made in their strategic plan, the organization's leaders must determine performance measures for which they are fully accountable. As output measurement can be challenging, the organization must focus on the assessment of progress toward achieving improved output. Jim Collins states, "What matters is not finding the perfect indicator, but settling upon a *consistent and intelligent* method of assessing your output results, and then tracking your trajectory with rigor."² Organizations must further be prepared to revisit and revise their goals, objectives, and performance measures to keep up with accomplishments and environmental changes.

To establish that the 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 analyzing and evaluation of performance data; and
- The use of that data to drive continuous improvement in the organization.

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

Reinventing Government

David Osborn and Ted Gaebler

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



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

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

The Success of the Strategic Plan

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

“No matter how much you have achieved, you will always be merely good relative to what you can become. Greatness is an inherently dynamic process, not an end point.”

Good to Great and the Social Sectors
Jim Collins

Provided the community-driven strategic planning process is kept dynamic and supported by effective leadership and active participation, it will be a considerable opportunity to unify department 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.³

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





ATHENS-CLARKE COUNTY FIRE & EMERGENCY SERVICES DEPARTMENT

Glossary of Terms, Acronyms, and Initialisms

ACC	Athens-Clarke 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.
ACCPD	Athens-Clarke County Police Department
ACCUG	Athens-Clarke County Unified Government
ATF	Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosive
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.
Efficiency	A performance indication where inputs are measured per unit of output (or vice versa).
EMA	Emergency Management Agency
EMS	Emergency Medical Services
EMT	Emergency Medical Technician
Environment	Circumstances and conditions that interact with and affect an organization. These can include economic, political, cultural, and physical conditions inside or outside the boundaries of the organization.
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
GMAG	Georgia Mutual Aid Group
GPSTC	Georgia Public Safety Training Center
IAFF	International Association of Firefighters
Input	A performance indication where the value of resources is used to produce an output.
ISO	Insurance Services Office
IT	Information Technology
LEPC	Local Emergency Planning Committee



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MDT	Mobile Data Terminal
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.
NFA	National Fire Academy
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.
PT	Physical Training
PTSD	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
SOG	Standard Operating Guideline
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
SPLOST	Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax
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. An aim. The result of an action. Something to accomplish in assisting the agency to move forward.
Strategic Objective	A specific, measurable accomplishment required to realize the successful completion of a strategic goal.
Strategic Plan	A long-range planning document that defines the mission of the agency and broadly identifies how it will be accomplished, and that provides the framework for more detailed annual and operational plans.
Strategic Planning	The continuous and systematic process whereby guiding members of an organization make decisions about its future, develop procedures and operations to achieve that future, and determine how success is to be measured.
Strategy	A description of how a strategic objective will be achieved. A possibility. A plan or methodology for achieving a goal.
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats.
UGA	University of Georgia
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 Expectations

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

Respondents were asked to list, in priority order, up to five subjects relative to the expectations they have for the Athens-Clarke County Fire & Emergency Services Department. Responses were then analyzed for themes and weighted. The weighting of the prioritized responses was as follows: if it was the respondent's first entry, then it received five weighted points. Weighting gradually decreased so that if it was the respondent's fifth entry, then it received one weighted point. The weighted themes were then sorted from the highest cumulative weight to the lowest cumulative weight and listed below. The numbers in the parentheses are the cumulative weighted value that correlated with the theme identified. While the themes are listed in prioritized, weighted order, all responses were important in the planning process. The following are the expectation responses of the community stakeholders:

Community Expectations of the Athens-Clarke County Fire & Emergency Services Department (in priority order)

1. Provide prompt response to fires, vehicle extrication, etc. Respond to fire/emergency calls in a timely manner. Quick response. Respond to life-threatening situations with speed and skill to assist. (52)
2. Provide first response to serious/critical medical issues and provide backup response for EMS units. Respond to structure fires and emergencies in the community. Monitor and manage emergencies. (22)
3. Continue to train and work on patient care skills. Training - communicate with the external public more often on training received so public knows they are in good hands. Properly trained. Qualified personnel - well-trained. (20)
4. Continue to obtain more equipment and supplies for patient care. Properly equipped. Reliable trucks and equipment. (18)
5. To educate the community on fire safety. More educational opportunities for the community on fire safety at stations. Safety education. Good community outreach programs. Educate the public at-large on public safety issues/fire prevention/etc. (18)
6. Provide the community with preventive measures to reduce the need for fire service. Ensure new structures are building such as to not create a public safety hazard. (9)





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7. Adequate water supply and pressure. (7)
8. Continue to enhance and work to respond to medical and trauma calls. (5)
9. Continue to increase the number of EMTs in the department. Staffed appropriate for ACC size/need. (5)
10. Reliability. (5)
11. Expect each firefighter to go home safely, at the end of the day. Safety is a priority! Be your brother/sister's keeper. (4)
12. HazMat capability. (4)
13. Be more visible in the community. (3)
14. Accessibility - calling 911, call and transfer. (3)
15. Ensure buildings are occupied and used, such as to not create a public safety hazard. (3)
16. Expect each member of the team to know how to operate during an emergency. (2)
17. Expect firefighters to be familiar with the community - streets, hazards, schools, etc. (1)
18. Maintain positive comments and inter-governmental relationships to build confidence in both. (1)



Community Stakeholders Work Session



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Areas of Community Concern

The planning process would be incomplete without expression from the community stakeholders regarding concerns about the organization. Some areas of concern may, in fact, be a weakness within the delivery system, while some weaknesses may also be misperceptions based upon a lack of information, understanding, or incorrect information.

Respondents were asked to list, in priority order, up to five concerns they have about or for the department. Responses were then analyzed for themes and weighted. The weighting of the prioritized concerns was as follows: if it was the respondent's first entry, then it received five weighted points. Weighting gradually decreased so that if it was the respondent's fifth entry, then it received one weighted point. The weighted themes were then sorted from the highest cumulative weight to the lowest cumulative weight and listed below. The numbers in the parentheses are the cumulative weighted value that correlated with the theme identified. While the themes are listed in prioritized, weighted order, all responses were important in the planning process. The following are the concerns of the community stakeholders prioritized and weighted accordingly:

Areas of Community Concern about the Athens-Clarke County Fire & Emergency Services Department (verbatim, in priority order)

1. Attract and retain quality personnel. Recruitment/retention - all public safety. (20)
2. Budget limitations. Potential reduction in operating/capital budgets, which will affect staffing, equipment, vehicles, maintenance, etc. Is there adequate funding for future capital projects? (18)
3. Coverage areas. Are stations appropriately located to serve all of the community? (11)
4. I have not personally experienced this, but have heard response time for emergency services could be improved. Response time in certain parts of the community. (9)
5. The expense of equipment/vehicles for use on medical calls. Are the trucks and equipment up-to-date? (8)
6. Lack of communication to the general public. (5)
7. Is there adequate water supply and pressure for the future? (5)
8. Support from county administration. (5)
9. Data sharing - what information can be shared with other agencies that may be able to assist. (5)
10. Staff being spread too thin, being on other calls. (5)





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11. Culture - who can be a firefighter? What is the makeup of the department? (4)
12. Proactiveness of management with regards to emergency management office. (4)
13. Is training sufficient to address community hazards? No evidence to say otherwise. (4)
14. Too much politics and not letting leaders lead the department. (3)
15. Public's lack of understanding of emergency preparedness. (3)
16. Public image - not just in emergencies. (3)
17. Continuity of operations with retirement of key staff. (3)
18. Not as visible as some community members would like - meaning use fire stations more for community functions, more community engagement. (3)
19. Roles and responsibilities - what do you do? (2)
20. Fire code enforcement. (2)
21. Although not part of the fire department, often associated with ambulatory services - criticized for response time - is there something that fire can do? More fire paramedics? (2)
22. Crowded downtown and older structures. (2)



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Positive Community Feedback

The CPSE promotes the belief that, for a strategic plan to be valid, the community's view on the organization's strengths must be established. Needless efforts are often put forth in over-developing areas that are already successful. However, proper utilization and promotion of the strengths may often help the organization overcome or offset some of the identified weaknesses.

Positive Community Comments about the Athens-Clarke County Fire & Emergency Services Department (verbatim, in no particular order)

- Great leadership staff.
- Positive staff.
- Community involved.
- Currently provides an active social media page that outlines programs within the department.
- Fire department partners very well with the other public safety agencies, hospitals, healthcare organizations, emergency medical services, etc.
- Fire department has active training programs on not only fire issues but also on emergency medical training.
- Fire department provides staff to respond to active shooter/active threat incidents involving police and EMS.
- Organized structures and stations - great firefighters, nice stations; training w/utilities (communicate the strengths).
- Leadership.
- Equipment, trucks.
- Emergency preparedness.
- First responder.
- New stations.
- Rating.
- Great community outreach, but could see more of this around the country.
- All fire stations look great at first appearance – seem to be kept up very well.
- Equipment and trucks look to be maintained and in good condition.





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- Fire personnel are always dressed professionally and maintain a sense of pride in their work.
- Leadership.
- Communication/outreach/relationship building.
- Part of EMS system.
- Training collaboration with other agencies.
- Solution oriented.
- Community engagement and visibility – car seat safety checks, etc.
- Working with community partners to address areas of improvement (i.e. new Cleveland Road station and the need for a sheltered bus stop in area.
- Willing to respond and helpful and friendly when doing so.
- Competent, professional, and well-trained staff, at least to the untrained eye.
- Able to assist with new construction. This may fall under inspections.
- Work with other first responders on emergency scene to include police, EMS.
- Represent all great in a positive manner.
- Professional high/with fire staff.
- Overall well regarded. Rarely hear concerns or complaints in my organization about the fire department.
- Professionalism of staff.
- Leadership.
- Community support for the department.
- Time for training.
- Quality of facilities (newer stations).
- Great to work with.
- Fast response times.
- Staff I interact with always professional and willing to assist.



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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 the Athens-Clarke County Fire & Emergency Services Department (verbatim, in no particular order)

- Continue to do an excellent job.
- Expectations are not always shared with the community.
- I am happy to see the department work toward a strategic plan. This shows their commitment to the community.
- Communications with partners.
- My organization would like stations to offer other services that makes sense, like in other communities (e.g. school programs, recycling extinguishers, smoke detector disposal, etc.).
- Is there data that may help others to help fire? For example, frequent routes of response that may need improvement.
- Athens-Clarke County has a great fire department with excellent leadership. Fire department works extremely well with all community partners. I am very glad to see their (undecipherable wording) policy has changed over the last several years too.
- Can fire and police data be linked on crash reports? Hospitals too?
- From the top down, I have found the department to be professional and willing to assist in any way. Athens-Clarke County is lucky to have such a great department.





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Appendix 2

Supporting Services of the Athens-Clarke County Fire & Emergency Services Department		
ATF	Athens Transit	Central Communications
Charitable/Civic Organizations	Chamber of Commerce	Athens Clarke County Leadership
CPSE	Department of Natural Resources	Department of Transportation
Faith-Based Organizations	FBI	Federal and State Environmental Protection Agencies
FEMA	Fleet Maintenance	Georgia Emergency Management Agency
Georgia Public Safety Training Center	Georgia Mutual Aid Group	Hospitals
LEPC	Local EMA	Local Media
Mutual Aid Agencies	National EMS	National Fire Academy
NFPA	Other Colleges and Universities	Public Utility Companies
Public Health	Public Works	Railroads
American Red Cross	State and Local Law Enforcement	State Fire Marshal's Office
Tax Payers	Training	Unified Government Departments
University of Georgia	US Forest Service	Vendors



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Appendix 3

Strengths

It is important for any organization to identify its strengths to ensure that it can provide the services requested by the community, and that strengths are consistent with the issues facing the organization. Often, identification of organizational strengths leads to the channeling of efforts toward primary community needs that match those strengths. Programs that do not match organizational strengths, or the primary function of the organization, should be seriously reviewed to evaluate the rate of return on staff time and allocated funds.

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

Strengths of the Athens-Clarke County Fire & Emergency Services Department	
Quality personnel	Training center
Reliable equipment	Proficient prevention department
Strong mutual aid relationship	Special ops personnel
Knowledgeable leadership	Diverse skillset
Above-average facilities	Water distribution
Technological advances	Wellness program
Adequate staffing	Target Solutions
EMT program – continuing education	County pension
Command staff – forward-thinking	Use of overtime
Tuition reimbursement	Crew integrity
Fire investigators	Community involvement – Facebook page
Cancer bill – proactive, two sets of gear, hoods, etc.	Exhaust systems
HazMat physical – every two years	Strong relationship within ACCUG
Truck replacement program	Our good reputation
Ability to work as a team	Training programs
Fleet maintenance	Fire experience
Adaptability to ever-changing needs	Fiscal responsibility
Current ISO rating	Atmospheric monitoring
Taking care of our own	Salary compensation
Night switch	MDTs
Infrastructure	Community support





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Weaknesses

For any organization to either begin or to continue to move progressively forward, it must not only be able to identify its strengths, but also those areas where it functions poorly or not at all. These areas of needed enhancements are not the same as threats to be identified later in this document, but rather those day-to-day issues and concerns that may slow or inhibit progress. The following items were identified by the department stakeholders as weaknesses:

Weaknesses of the Athens-Clarke County Fire & Emergency Services Department	
Lack of experience	Complacency
Lack of internal communication	Air quality equipment usage and training
Lack of motivation	Lack of technology/IT support
Administrative workload	Lack of officer development
Lack of personnel	Gaps of promotional testing
Low morale due to pay issues	Fewer applicants
No Open House(s)	Special operations plan of action
Equipment accountability process	Use of vacation for training
Fire tactics – SOPs outdated	Lack of state-certified classes offered locally
PT test	Aging workforce
Older equipment	Truck not fully staffed – four on the rig
Minimum staffing	Lack of budget
Preplan process	Auxiliary truck conditions
Lack of second set of gear	Pay process
Lack of public information officer	Lack of command aide
Lack of educator	Lack of EMS officer
Lack of HazMat technicians	Special operations funding
Lack of consistency between shifts/battalions	



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Opportunities

The opportunities for an organization depend on the identification of strengths and weaknesses and how they can be enhanced. The focus of opportunities is not solely on existing service, but on expanding and developing new possibilities both inside and beyond the traditional service area. The department stakeholders identified the following potential opportunities:

Opportunities for the Athens-Clarke County Fire & Emergency Services Department	
Funding – grants, scholarships	GPSTC-offered training
UGA partnerships	NFA-offered training
Billed services – HazMat, technical rescue	Athens Tech Fire Science
Other agency training	SPLOST funding
Community education	Community academy
Logistical partnerships	Job Fair recruitment
Social media communication	Redundant alarm fines
Career advancement	Education of the mayor and commission
Media engagement	Additional facilities
IAFF resources	Chaplains – peer counseling
Wellness program	New firefighter mentor program
School mentor program	LEPC – increased funding
Partnership with faith-based organizations	Increased mutual aid training opportunities
MAG group study	PTSD awareness and training for the department
Training with corporations	EMT certification
Working on strategic plan	Dedicated fire dispatcher
Partnership with schools	Fire explorers
Utilization of buildings in the community for training	





ATHENS-CLARKE COUNTY FIRE & EMERGENCY SERVICES DEPARTMENT

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 department stakeholders were as follows:

Potential Threats to the Athens-Clarke County Fire & Emergency Services Department	
Human resources stipulations	Competing departments – turnover
UGA – stress on the department/taxes	Tax base moving to surrounding counties
MAG group study	Cuts from SPLOST/budget
Aging infrastructure	HazMat/target hazards
Generational changes	Community perception
Development and planning processes	ACCUG department funding
Social media – negative image	High-risk/low-frequency events
Legal litigation	Economic downturn
Risk of illness, injury	Change of county leadership
Acts of terror	Natural disasters
Low-risk/high-frequency events	Political pressure
Dispatch/central personnel	New building construction
Promotion process	Traffic-flow changes
Water rescue	Communication between external agencies
Overcrowded occupancy - downtown	



2019-2024 Strategic Plan

Appendix 4

Critical and Service Gap Issues Identified by the Department Stakeholders	
Group 1	Group 2
Workforce Development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Recruitment/retention ○ PT test ○ Complacency ○ Morale ○ Employee support/outreach ○ Promotion/hiring consistency ○ Succession planning ○ Incentive pay 	Internal Support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ PTSD ○ Chaplain ○ Mentor ○ Family support plan
Internal Communications <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Information communication – shift change ○ Lack of consistency between shifts and battalions ○ Chain of command 	Internal Communications <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Talking between shifts and battalions ○ Use of email ○ Fire dispatch ○ Promotional testing ○ Accurate dissemination ○ After-action review
External Communications <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Lack of public information officer ○ Media engagement ○ Data sharing ○ Perception ○ Be more visible in the community 	Community Outreach <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Media outreach – radio, TV, newspaper ○ Open House ○ Logistical partnerships ○ Fire Explorer program ○ Public information officer ○ Smoke Alarm program ○ Fire safety house ○ Clowning for the fire service ○ Community academy ○ Read to the kids in schools ○ Social media
Training <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Formal officer development ○ Facilities and props ○ Personal time usage 	Training <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Officer development ○ Props ○ Expansion of the training center ○ Live burns within the community ○ Classes from outside sources ○ Better training with mutual aid ○ HazMat technician





ATHENS-CLARKE COUNTY FIRE & EMERGENCY SERVICES DEPARTMENT

Critical and Service Gap Issues Identified by the Department Stakeholders (continued)

Group 1	Group 2
Technology <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ MDT support and training○ IT support○ Lack of computers○ Updated computers○ Preplans○ Fire inspections○ WIFI	Dispatch <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Protocols and processes○ Staffing○ Fire training
Administrative Process <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Administrative workload○ Lack of technology○ Equipment accountability○ Employee evaluations○ Policies and procedures	Administration <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Workload○ Equipment accountability○ Promotional testing

