

District of Oak Bay Fire Department
Strategic Directions Action Plan

2013



Introduction

The Oak Bay Fire Department, established in 1937, is a key public service provided by the District of Oak Bay. The Fire Department currently employs 26 career firefighters and two support personnel.

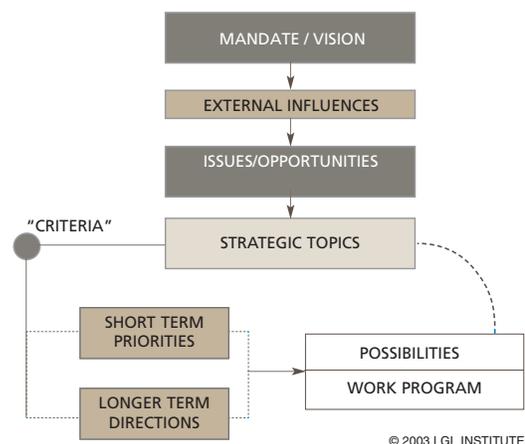
Within the context of District of Oak Bay, the Department's mission is to: *provide enhanced fire protection and public safety services that will avoid loss of life and property through fire prevention, emergency preparedness and intervention.*

June 24, 2013 members of the Department participated in a Strategic Directions Workshop to:

- review influences on the Department
- assess the Department's current capacity to achieve its objectives
- determine key areas that require attention
- explore options to address these needs
- develop and apply criteria to set priorities
- prepare action plans to move priorities forward
- sustain ongoing attention to being strategic

This report documents the methodology /approach taken, workshop outcomes and areas for follow-up:

1. **Mandate** - understanding of the Department's purpose to guide strategy development
2. **Strategic Assessment** - expectations and strategic topics for attention within the Department's mandate
3. **Strategic Possibilities** - possible actions for the Department's evaluation as priorities
4. **Strategic Action** - activities to be taken for selected priorities in 2013 along with action plans as the basis for 2014 business planning



Methodology

This section outlines the aims and process for the development of the District of Oak Bay Fire Department's *Strategic Directions Action Plan*. It presents the *Review Model* that guided the planning process.

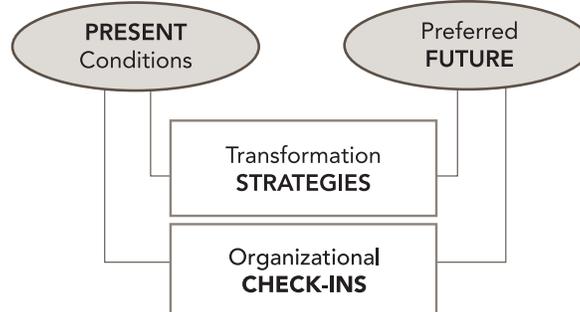
Purpose

Strategic Planning is a process to define an organization's direction, determine long range planning goals and guide decision-making. Most strategic plans address high level initiatives and overarching goals. Metaphorically, a strategic plan is an organizational roadmap.

If strategic planning is the roadmap, **Strategic Priority Setting** is the vehicle to reach the destination. It is a tool to narrow the array of choices facing an organization (often faced with limited resources).

Dr. Gordon McIntosh, with 35 years of management, educator and consultancy experience in local government and fire services, facilitated the Department's **Strategic Direction** planning workshop June 24, 2013. His role was to solicit and summarize input, offer recommendations and engage members and management in developing strategies to move forward in fulfilling the Department's mandate and meeting Council's expectations.

Strategic Model



Workshop participants used a *Strategic Planning Model* (see display above) to guide the assessment and the 'way forward':

- the **preferred future** for the Department was described using member expectations for success.
- **present conditions** in terms of 'what works well' and 'areas for attention' led to strategic topics for further investigation.
- **transformation strategies** were established by defining achievable strategic actions based on the Department's mandate and available resources.
- **ongoing check-in** is required to monitor, adjust and sustain attention to strategic priorities and seek ongoing possibilities for service excellence.

1 Mandate

It is important that an organization has a clear understanding of its purpose to guide strategy development, decision-making and daily activities. Formal mandates are requirements that include statutes of incorporation (Bylaw 4489) and municipal policies. A variety of informal mandates are also embodied in the expectations of members and the organization. Workshop participants confirmed the Department’s mandate and expectations.

OAK BAY MANDATE CHART	
FUNCTION/Activities	MANDATE / Expectations
EMERGENCY Incident Response Fire suppression Emergency medical aid Specialized rescue (confined space) Hazardous material response Municipal/Provincial inter-agency support Dispatch communication services Oak Bay Emergency Program	The department creates and maintains a cooperative organization to manage risks from major emergencies and disaster that may affect the municipality and its residents
PUBLIC Assistance Police, Ambulance, Public Works cooperation Lost persons Flood damage Smoke detector / carbon monoxide program	The department maintains a watchman 24/7 to answer public enquiries and non-emergency requests for assistance.
PUBLIC Education Fire Fire safety program Safety Program - CPR training Departmental safe work practices training Fire extinguisher training Juvenile Fire Setter Referral Program Self contained breathing apparatus training	Fire Fighters are proud to serve and be involved in the community providing various opportunities for community and organizational fire education.
FIRE Prevention Fire and life safety inspections Fire / building code compliance Fire investigations re: Fire Service Act Environmental incident investigation Oil tank / burning appliance inspections	The Department reduces loss of life and property from fire by eliminating fire hazards and enforcing the rules and regulations that are necessary for public safety.
FIRE Engineering Proposed construction plan input Fire / building code bylaw matters Hydrant testing	
Within the Department’s mandated areas, there are several cross cutting functions. These include preparation of program budgets, ensure emergency response capability, skill development, records management, property and equipment maintenance and staff liaison.	

2 Strategic Assessment

Describing Trends

Participants discussed a vast array of professional and community influences impacting the strategic future of the Department:

- **Technology** - the need to keep current with new communication and suppression techniques and devices to provide quality services
- **Public Regard** - constant efforts required to go beyond basic services and be seen in public during special events
- **Social Media** - need to be communicating with modern communication to keep members, Council and the public informed
- **Economic Pressures** - increased public and Council scrutiny regarding requests for and use of fiscal resources
- **Work Place** - changing personnel in the hall with different perspectives and values among younger recruits
- **Regional Services** - overarching interest to share resources amidst different political interest, Department practices and resource capacity
- **Professionalism** - fact paced enhancements to NFPA standards and requirements for certification and career advancement

Establishing Strategic Topics

From this 'expectation' discussion, participants identified a list of Strategic Topics which became the focus for the balance of the planning workshop.

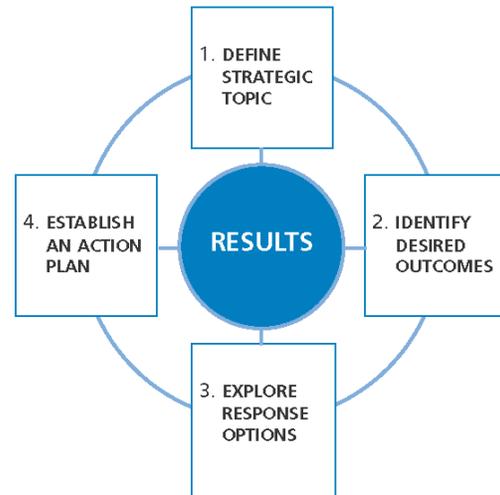
1. Health and Wellness Strategy
2. Equipment Priorities
3. Training Schedule
4. Succession Plan
5. Leadership Capacity
6. Routine Review
7. Association Management Relations
8. Information Technology
9. Public Relations
10. Pre-plan Templates

3 Strategic Possibilities

Solution Seeking

To move from strategic topics to strategic priorities, a four step process, the Solution Seeking Model was utilized.

Participants began by clarifying the strategic topic, then identifying desired outcomes if the topic was successfully addressed. Next, options or ways to achieve the desired outcome were explored and a 'preferred strategy' was selected.



The solution seeking discussion generated enough information to consider the strategic topics as **strategic possibilities**. This does not make them priorities – yet. There are too many of them given the Department’s limited capacity. An organization’s capacity box is not readily visible but does have limitations or boundaries. It is useful to look at organizational capacity as a box of balls. If the box is full then the organization must be realistic about putting more initiatives inside. Some of the limitations to consider in assessing capacity include:

- Policy – procedures that define mandate and roles
- Finances – available net resources
- Culture – traditions and norms delineating acceptable behaviours
- Risk – tolerance for the Department’s legal exposure
- Human resources – available staff and competency levels

These capacity box elements are impacted by dynamic internal and external factors:

- Funding – available funding beyond day-to-day operations
- Scrutiny – level of visibility for the Department’s actions
- Demands – diverse requests from internal and external sources
- Environment – conditions impacting the Department
- Support – legitimacy and trust among stakeholders

The net result of ‘unpacking’ each of the strategic topics was a list of strategic possibilities for consideration as short term priorities and longer term directions (see next page).

STRATEGIC POSSIBILITIES

June 2013

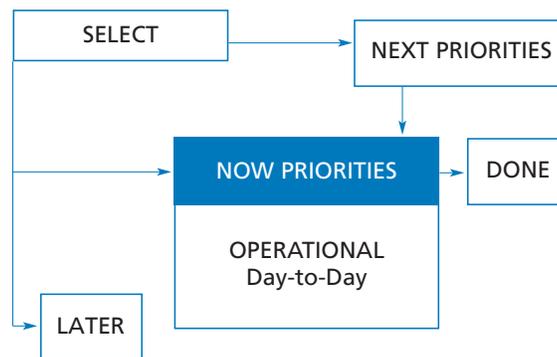
POSSIBILITIES / OPTIONS	ACTION
1. Health and Wellness Strategy	Develop a proposal for the 2014 budget to create a strategy to enhance the health and wellness of members. See also #6.
2. Equipment Priorities	Establish a checklist for each truck. Develop a prioritized chart of capital needs for the next 5-10 years.
3. Training Schedule	Define existing position requirements and create an eligibility list for advancements (in 2013) to establish targets for the 2014 training schedule.
4. Succession Plan	Define existing position requirements with the association and create an eligibility list for advancements (in 2013). Also see #3.
5. Leadership Capacity	Conduct a leadership development workshop for members to create personal leadership assessments and learning plans in 2014.
6. Routine Review	Conduct a review of existing day-to-day duties with a view to freeing up time for member fitness.
7. Association / Management Relations	Agree on an agenda format and annual meeting schedule. Explore ways to improve communication within the Department.
8. Information Technology	Develop social media guidelines. Review information technology needs with a view to formalizing and resourcing IT as a core function.
9. Pre-Plan Templates	Complete requirements for forms to be electronic.
10. Public Relations	Update website statistical information, events and training opportunities monthly. Develop an information page in Oak Bay News.

4 Strategic Action

Strategic Priorities Chart

Based on the number of possibilities, organizational capacity and the application of the reality, urgency and responsibility criteria, the strategic possibilities were translated into five **strategic priorities** to be addressed NOW (see Strategic Priorities Chart, next page).

The Strategic Priorities Chart captures the Department's priorities and operational strategies at the time of the June workshop. Items listed in **BOLD CAPITALS** indicate priorities the Department wishes to address NOW. These items automatically enter the appropriate operational unit at the bottom of the chart. This shows the alignment of staff work with organizational direction. Items in CAPITALS indicate priorities that will be addressed NEXT or when a NOW item has been completed.



In addition to strategic priorities, there are other matters receiving the attention of staff. These Operational Strategies are noted in regular font on the Strategic Priorities Chart. The chart should be reviewed regularly as a reminder of the Department's capacity to make adjustments, change priorities and celebrate achievements. It should be included in every Departmental meeting agenda as a constant reference, updated quarterly and reviewed annually.

Strategic Priorities Work Program

Specific actions to implement Department's NOW and NEXT priorities are contained in the Strategic Priorities Work Program (see Appendix 2). It defines the key issue to be addressed and desired outcomes for each priority and (column 1), options and preferred strategy for achieving the priority (column 2) and actions and timelines for implementation (column 3).

Extracted from this document, the Strategic Priorities Chart and Work Program are intended to be working documents, updated quarterly and reviewed annually as part of the Department's business planning process.

Oak Bay Fire Department STRATEGIC PRIORITIES CHART

June 2013

DEPARTMENT PRIORITIES

NOW

1. **ROUTINE SCHEDULE REVIEW: Suggestions - September**
2. **TRAINING PROGRAM: 2014 Schedule - December**
3. **MANAGEMENT/ UNION RELATIONS: Communications Protocol - July**
4. **SUCCESSION PLAN: Eligibility Pool - January**
5. **PRE-PLAN TEMPLATE: E-version - September**

NEXT

- INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SUPPORT: Review
- LEADERSHIP CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT: Session
- HEALTH & WELLNESS STRATEGY

OPERATIONAL STRATEGIES

CHIEF

1. **SUCCESSION PLAN: Eligibility - January**
 2. **MANAGEMENT/UNION: Protocol - July**
(Brad)
 3. IT SUPPORT: Business Case - Oct. (Jason)
- Training Budget Proposal
 - Mutual Aid Agreement Review

ADMINISTRATION

1. **TRAINING: 2014 Schedule - December**
 2. H&W: Fitness Program - Dec. (Cam & Tom)
 3. **ROUTINE REVIEW: Suggestions - Sept.**
- Joint Training with SFD - 2014 (Don)
 - LEADERSHIP CAPACITY: Workshop - 2014
 - HEALTH & WELLNESS STRATEGY
 - Personal Learning Plans

RESPONSE

1. Equipment on Trucks: List - July (Gord)
 2. Mobile Response Templates - October
 3. Smart Phone Apps: Set-up - August (Jason)
- Equipment Needs Matrix (Gord)
 -

PREVENTION

1. **PRE-PLAN TEMPLATE: E-version - Sept. (Rob)**
 2. Smoke Alarm Initiative - July
 3. Investigation Photography: Start - August
- -

LEGEND:

BOLD CAPITALS = NOW Priorities; **CAPITALS** = NEXT Items;
Regular Title Case = Operational Items

Strategic Priority Work Program

PRIORITY/Desired Outcomes	OPTIONS/ Strategy	ACTION - What, When
NOW		
<p>1. ROUTINE SCHEDULE REVIEW <i>What can be done to ensure adequate time for health & wellness activities?</i> * Suggestions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhanced personal well being • healthy workplace • Engaged members • Motivated personnel • Fresh and creative ideas • Eliminate traditional but unnecessary tasks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In house • Consultant • Combination • Management / Union • Management • Union 	<p>1. Review task assignment process - Sept. 2. Modify work schedules - Oct.</p> <p>See: HEALTH AND WELLNESS PROGRAM</p>
<p>2. TRAINING PROGRAM <i>How can we work more effectively with neighbouring departments?</i> * Integrated / Regional Training Program</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inter-department participation • Updated mutual aid commitments / measurements • Increased access to quality instructors • Knowledgeable, competent personnel • Joint team integration in complex incidents (high rise) • Effective inter-departmental communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional • Oak Bay • In house • Consultant • Combination 	<p><u>REGIONAL AGREEMENT</u></p> <p>1. Meeting to assess agreement (Dave) - July 2. Determine required adjustment (Dave) - Sept.</p> <p><u>SAANICH FIRE</u></p> <p>1. Start up once equipment is in place 2. identify requirements to complete tasks</p>
<p><i>What are our training priorities for 2014?</i> * Schedule</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defined training levels • Meet NFPA standards • Consistent measurement tool • Base line for each job description • Record of competency levels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In house • Consultant • Combination 	<p>1. Develop position profiles (Dave & Brad) - July 2. Undertake officer self assessments - July (in tandem with #4 SUCCESSION PLANNING) 3. Consolidate assessment results (Don) - Oct. 4. Propose training schedule (Don) - Dec.</p> <p>NEXT Develop personal learning plans (see LEADERSHIP CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT)</p>

PRIORITY/Desired Outcomes	OPTIONS/ Strategy	ACTION - What, When
<p>3. MANAGEMENT / UNION RELATIONS <i>What can be done to improve communication and create a positive culture within the Department?</i> * Communication Protocol</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engaged members • Respectful communication • Fresh and creative ideas • Contract knowledge • Regular labour management meetings • Positive workplace culture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In house • Consultant • Combination <p>PRINCIPLES Confidentiality Active Listening Clear Expectations Focus on Issues</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop meeting schedule (Dave & Brad) - July 2. Develop communication protocol (Brad) - July
<p>4. SUCCESSION PLANNING <i>How do we educate members to assume future leadership roles?</i> * Eligibility Pool</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personnel identified for management positions • Union buy in to process and results • Competency based training program • Accreditation / training certification • Funding sources in place 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In house • Consultant • Combination <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management / Union • Management • Union 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop position profiles (Dave & Brad) - July 2. Undertake officer self assessments - July 3. Identify eligibility pool (Dave & Brad) - October 4. Prepare submission for 2014 budget (Dave) - October <p>NEXT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate personal development plans - 2014
<p>5. PRE-PLAN TEMPLATE <i>How do we improve efficiency?</i> * Updated Format</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrated with FDM • Standardized between mutual aid partners • Efficient use of technology • Monthly assignments • Greater accountability • Four sided building photos 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In house • Consultant • Combination 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Update format - July

PRIORITY/Desired Outcomes	OPTIONS/ Strategy	ACTION - What, When
NEXT		
<p>INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SUPPORT <i>How can we take advantage of technology to improve effectiveness and efficiently?</i> * Business Case</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trained and adaptive staff • Maintenance budgets in place • Up to date technologies • Defined roles for IT coordinator • IT committee requirements • Inter-departmental support • Paperless records 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In house • Consultant • Combination 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Formalize IT structure (Dave & Jason) - August 2. Assess function needs (Jason) - August 3. Prepare business case (Jason) - October <p><u>LONGER TERM</u> Develop SOG re: social media guidelines Set-up smart phone apps Investigate paperless training record modules</p>
<p>LEADERSHIP CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT <i>How can we assist members to develop increased skills?</i> * Leadership Development Program</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pool of members for advancement • Competent and confident fire fighters • Defined competencies • Motivated personnel • Seamless incident command 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In house • Facilitator • CAFC profiles • Develop profiles 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Consult and engage union re: process 2. Prepare proposal for 2014 budget 3. Conduct workshop using CAFC profiles 4. Define training needs 5. Develop leadership capacity development program
<p>HEALTH & WELLNESS <i>How do we ensure members achieve optimum fitness levels and are fully prepared to perform their duties?</i> * Health and Wellness Strategy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structured training opportunities • Nutritional information and support • Confidential medical screening / personal assessment • Individual goal oriented fitness plans • Municipal funding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In house • Consultant • Combination • Management • Health & Safety Committee 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Prepare proposal for 2014 budget (Cam & Tom) - October 2. Develop strategy 3. Work with Oak Bay recreation centre

Bolded items indicate the Department **priority**, the preferred **option** to achieve the outcome and the primary **action** necessary to address the priority. The question used by participants to focus their priority setting discussion is *italicized*.