



Strategic Plan 2025



Marion County Fire Rescue

2631 Southeast Third Street
Ocala, Florida 34471



"We proudly protect life and property with honor, compassion, and respect."

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Message from the Chief

I am proud to present the 2025 Marion County Fire Rescue Strategic Plan, a comprehensive guide shaped by the collective efforts of our dedicated uniformed and civilian personnel, with invaluable input from our community stakeholders. This plan reflects our shared vision for a resilient workforce and a steadfast commitment to serving the people of Marion County with excellence and integrity.



Our mission to provide exceptional, all-encompassing fire rescue services remains at the heart of everything we do.

This strategic plan not only outlines our priorities but also serves as a roadmap for future growth, fostering unity within our department and charting a clear path to meet the evolving needs of our community and the dedicated individuals who serve them.

I extend my deepest appreciation to the Marion County Commissioners and the members of Marion County Fire Rescue for their tireless support and contributions to this effort. Your dedication has been instrumental in shaping this plan and strengthening our foundation for success.

Together, we stand ready to tackle the challenges ahead and seize opportunities to innovate and improve. United in purpose and driven by our commitment to the community, we look forward to building a brighter, safer future for Marion County.

Sincerely,

James Banta

James Banta
Fire Chief



Acknowledgments

The 2025 Marion County Fire Rescue Strategic Plan would not have been possible without the dedication and contributions of many individuals and organizations. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the members of Marion County Fire Rescue—both uniformed and civilian—whose expertise, insight, and commitment to excellence have shaped this vision for the future. Special thanks go to the Marion County Commissioners for their steadfast support and guidance, as well as to our community stakeholders, whose valuable feedback has ensured this plan reflects the needs and aspirations of those we serve. Together, your efforts have laid the groundwork for a stronger, more resilient organization prepared to meet the challenges of tomorrow.

Rachel Wapinsky

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George Warren

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Freddie Brown

Harrison Sprechman

Jay Boardman

Tim Moody

Austin Angle

Brent Murray

Chad Belger

Colleen Cohill

Frank York

Brian Fugate

Clifton Murphy

Marcel Estep

Josh Alvarez

Joshua Carter

Joe Rinaudo

Beryl Turner

Tina Shahid

Abbey Williamson

Bryan Anderson

Anthony Lucin

Daniel Garcia

Frank Giattino

Zane O'Brien

John Phillips

Brad Olmsted

Summer White

Greg Johnson

Timothy Ecker

Ryan Lietz

Shane Goode

Steve Johnson

Michael Poole

Blake Williams

Adam Lynch

James Cussins

Pam Doherty

Robert Tarbox

Brennan Shaw

William Murphy

Mark Boymer

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Lonnie Blackburn

Nicholas Ghigliotty

James Banta

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Marion County Fire Rescue Strategic Planning

Process Overview

Change is inevitable, but meaningful growth requires intentional effort and a clear framework to navigate the complexities of an evolving environment. This process begins with more than just setting aspirational goals; it involves crafting a comprehensive strategic roadmap. This roadmap includes specific objectives, realistic timelines, well-defined roles, and measurable milestones, all designed to ensure long-term success and alignment with the Marion County Fire Rescue (MCFR) mission and vision.

The strategic plan serves as a compass, guiding MCFR's efforts to address challenges, leverage opportunities, and deliver exceptional service to the community. It provides a framework for making informed decisions, optimizing resources, and fostering innovation to meet the growing and diverse needs of Marion County's residents. At its core, the plan reaffirms the department's dedication to professionalism, continuous improvement, and operational excellence.

The process began with identifying overarching strategic goals that reflect the department's priorities and community expectations. These goals were then broken into actionable objectives through collaborative dialogue, brainstorming sessions, and a thorough evaluation of current and future needs. Input from internal and external stakeholders was crucial to ensure the plan represents the collective vision and upholds the interests of the community it serves.

Key stakeholders, including leadership, team members, and community representatives, participated in this inclusive process. Their contributions shaped a plan that balances operational priorities with adaptability, allowing the department to remain responsive to unforeseen circumstances and emerging demands. This inclusive approach not only fosters transparency but also builds a sense of shared ownership among all involved.

The culmination of this process is an actionable work plan—a dynamic, living document that evolves to meet new challenges while maintaining focus on the department's mission. By integrating collaboration, innovation, and flexibility, the MCFR Strategic Plan provides a clear pathway to achieve strategic goals, positioning the organization to thrive in a dynamic environment.



Environmental Scan

External Stakeholder Feedback



The strategic planning process actively involved key external stakeholders, including the Marion County Board of County Commissioners and members of the EMS Advisory Board. Their participation provided valuable insights into community needs, resource allocation, and future service expectations. This collaborative approach ensures that the department's goals align with broader county objectives and enhances public trust through transparent, inclusive decision-making.



Internal Stakeholder Feedback



Member Survey:

In preparation for the strategic planning session, MCFR distributed a comprehensive survey to gather valuable feedback from department members across all ranks and roles. The survey explored various aspects of organizational performance, including training and professional development, performance evaluations, communication effectiveness, work environment, and employee morale. It also assessed perceptions of both internal and external services, the adequacy and maintenance of facilities and apparatus, and the department's relationship with the community. Through a mix of multiple-choice questions, rating scales, and open-ended prompts, the survey was geared towards identifying strengths, challenges, and opportunities for growth. The insights gained serve as a foundation for data-driven decisions, ensuring the department continues to evolve in alignment with member input and community needs.





Our Mission:

We proudly protect life and property with honor, compassion, and respect.

Our Values:

Humbleness:

A grateful modesty, free of ego and arrogance, placing others' needs first.

Integrity:

Upholding the ethics, morals and honesty expected of an employee, even if no one is around.

Commitment:

A spirit of determination and dedication that leads to professionalism and mastery of our trade and our lives.

Accountability:

Accepting personal responsibility and ownership of your actions as an individual, team or organization.

Respect:

Honor and value others.

Discipline:

Adhering to the highest standards regardless of the challenges encountered.



Strategic Work Plan

Definition of Terms

The main components of a strategic plan: Goals, Objectives, and Tasks are defined as follows:

GOAL:

A goal is the largest overarching element of a strategic plan. These plans are broad enterprises on which the organization may have multiple areas of focus.

OBJECTIVE:

A smaller component of and subordinate to a goal, an objective focuses on one area but is still general. If all the objectives under a goal are accomplished, the goal will have been achieved.

TASK:

A smaller component of and subordinate to an objective, a task is usually defined as specific, measurable, action-oriented, realistic, and time-sensitive. If all tasks under an objective are accomplished, the objective will have been accomplished.

MCFR developed one overarching goal to focus this strategic plan on obtainable results. Members collaborated to narrow the objectives to a workable list that can be assigned to a member. There was a spirit of cooperation and respect within the room amongst leadership staff, which lent itself to an environment for open and honest discussion with the goal of helping move the organization forward.

Strategic goals, objectives, and tasks become essential to the organization's efforts. By following these components carefully, the organization will be guided into the future and should benefit from reduced obstacles and distractions. The goals, objectives, and tasks were identified in a two-day planning work session with uniform and civilian members of MCFR and the MCFR executive team.

The following list defines each goal with its subordinate objectives and each objective with its subordinate tasks. The following are actionable items determined through feedback to create



the basis of the recommended strategic plan. Details for the goal, each objective and the associated tasks are provided below.

GOAL # 1 – To enhance firefighter well-being, optimize operational efficiency, and strengthen workforce sustainability within MCFR by exploring strategies to improve staffing levels, scheduling, and workload distribution.

Objective #1: Evaluate strategies to decrease mandatory overtime and improve overtime procedures.

Task 1.1.1

Assess the feasibility of a station-level approach for managing sick call coverage by piloting a bullpen system within each battalion to determine its effectiveness in handling overtime internally. A formal policy may be required to establish structure and guidelines for implementation.

Task 1.1.2

Explore the capabilities of Telestaff's bullpen functions to enhance overtime management and improve tracking of staffing needs. A standardized policy should be considered to ensure consistent application across battalions.

Task 1.1.3

Consider incremental staffing adjustments to achieve a target of 4 personnel per engine and 3 per rescue, analyzing the impact on reducing mandatory overtime and improving operational readiness.

Task 1.1.4

Further refine the deferral process to enhance flexibility in overtime assignments while maintaining adequate staffing levels.

Task 1.1.5

Review the impact of voluntary overtime on the overall mandate process and explore potential refinements to optimize coverage.



Task 1.1.6

Examine opportunities to strengthen the Out-of-Class process while developing structured task books for Battalion Chiefs and Division 1 to ensure leadership readiness and decision-making consistency.

Objective #2: Identify approaches to increase staffing as a way to reduce workload, stress, and burnout.

Task 1.2.1

Explore the implementation of one (1) three-person rescue per battalion within the first year, assessing its impact on personnel workload and response times.

Task 1.2.2

Evaluate the potential expansion to two (2) three-person rescues per battalion within two years, considering operational efficiency and firefighter well-being.

Objective #3: Investigate alternative scheduling options to enhance employee health and retention.

Task 1.3.1

Assess the implementation of a six-week Kelly Day rotation at 18 months, evaluating its effectiveness in providing scheduled time off and reducing fatigue.

Task 1.3.2

Explore a transition to a three-week Kelly Day cycle at 36 months, analyzing its potential impact on work-life balance and workload distribution.

Task 1.3.3

Conduct a feasibility study on transitioning to a 24/72 work schedule within five years, considering financial, operational, and wellness impacts. This study should include policy discussions on employee agreements, scheduling, and budget considerations.

Objective #4: Explore methods to increase staffing levels on transports and fire apparatus.

Task 1.4.1

Conduct a comparative study of staffing policies from other agencies to identify best practices for transport units and fire apparatus staffing.



Task 1.4.2

Evaluate the need for hiring additional personnel, considering options for incremental growth to meet the demand for increased staffing levels.

Task 1.4.3

Develop performance-based metrics to guide the phased implementation of increased staffing levels, ensuring sustainability and long-term effectiveness. A formal policy framework may be needed to align these metrics with organizational goals and workforce planning.

GOAL # 2 – Through good leadership improve administration and senior staff relationships and processes. Continue to provide the highest quality of service, maintain accountability eliminate redundancy and recognize the great work of MCFR employees.

Objective #1: Continue to provide honest and genuine evaluations to promote the growth of personnel within our department.

Task 2.1.1

Finalize the annual evaluation process and self-evaluation process ensuring a fair, thoughtful consideration of the employee's efforts throughout the year.

Task 2.1.2

Create a 6-month benchmark evaluation for any new job classification.

Objective #2: Actively recognize the great work MCFR employees do through formal ceremony and informal recognition.

Task 2.2.1

Enhance and expand our Medal Day ceremony. Foster participation and improve the ceremony itself.

Task 2.2.2

Utilize social media and local TV station to recognize employees and spotlight exceptional acts.



Task 2.2.3

Sustain and promote employee recognition through the Human Resources “KUDOS” program.

Objective #3: Deliver and uphold the highest quality customer service both internally and externally, using the mission, vision and core values as guiding principles.

Task 2.3.1

Display the mission, vision, and core values on all station and office TV’s.

Task 2.3.2

Leverage outlets such as the All-Hands Officer Meetings to reinforce the importance of departmental guiding principles.

Objective #4: Eliminate redundancy in job duties, forms and processes.

Task 2.4.1

Evaluate job tasks in the administration offices to streamline work processes and maximize effectiveness.

Task 2.4.2

Eliminate the need for duplicate forms, spreadsheets, etc.

Task 2.4.3

Evaluate the ability to consolidate software programs into multi-modular suites.

Objective #5: Strengthen and advance effective communication within the department from top to bottom.

Task 2.5.1

Utilize modalities such as all-hands meetings, staff notes, and information boards to disseminate information.

Task 2.5.2

Create an annual anonymous survey to promote communication and gather feedback from the department.



Objective #6: Expand new infrastructure development and enhance existing buildings.

Task 2.6.1

Evaluate aging buildings and implement replacement and remodeling program to ensure functionality of infrastructure.

Task 2.6.2

Consider future accommodations for growing administrative staff.

Task 2.6.3

When designing new stations and offices, consider future growth needs not just immediate needs.

Objective #7: Cultivate employee development for promotion and foster an environment that supports career growth.

Task 2.7.1

Create and support mentorship opportunities at every level of the department.

Task 2.7.2

Create a formal mechanism to capture the “lessons learned” from our most senior members.

Task 2.7.3

Establish and expand structure and promotional opportunities for our single-certified employees.

Task 2.7.4

Strengthen and cultivate relationships between line personnel and senior staff.

Objective #8: Uphold and reinforce accountability for employees at every level, by providing consistent policies and procedures.

Task 2.8.1

Finalize all updates on existing SOG's and SOP's and only make revisions annually, if needed.

Task 2.8.2

Allow all employees to view Kronos and maintain awareness of their own payroll.



Task 2.8.3

Utilize the Company Officer and Station officers to reinforce the discipline process supported by clear expectations.

Task 2.8.4

Consider the feasibility of creating a specialized role within Human Resources to address Fire Rescue-specific issues and policies.

GOAL # 3 – Advance the growth and success of the Community Paramedicine (CP) program while expanding the awareness and education of the mission and establishing a mechanism for the CP practitioners to maintain emergency skills.

Objective #1: Expand the number of providers operating as community paramedics to expand outreach and increase service levels.

Task 3.1.1

Open and post job opportunities for both internal and external candidates, allowing the program to pull top-tier applicants with diverse experiences and attributes.

Task 3.1.2

Provide a robust orientation and clearance process to become a CP team member; allowing proper training and preparation for the unique challenges the CP Medic will face.

Task 3.1.3

Implement a program evaluation annually or every 18 months to ensure that the program is meeting all stakeholder needs and that the amount of operational CP Medics is sufficient for community growth.

Objective #2: Provide opportunities for the Community Paramedics to maintain emergency skills and performance.

Task 3.2.1

Assign CP Medic as third on a rescue once a month or as the team finds appropriate.

Task 3.2.2

Create a policy that would allow CP Medics to perform in a PRN status to support their emergency skills and performance.



Objective #3: Increase the knowledge and awareness about the CP program to expand the program as an asset to the community and the department.

Task 3.3.1

Create in-service training for MCFR crews and employees to increase education and awareness of the program.

Task 3.3.2

Utilize social media, pamphlets and flyers to broadly distribute information about CP throughout the community.

Task 3.3.3

Intentionally target the growing 55+ community through special events and presentations to increase awareness about the CP program and the resource pairing capabilities.

GOAL # 4 – Ensure transparent and consistent communication across all levels of the department by fostering collaborative input, welcoming new ideas, and efficiently collecting and sharing information.

Objective #1: Improve relationships with internal and external stakeholders to increase understanding, teamwork, and achieve shared goals.

Task 4.1.1

Enhance the ride-along program to include all internal stakeholders, i.e. Health Clinic, Dispatch, HR, etc. to improve relationships and foster open communication.

Task 4.1.2

Initiate and hold ongoing trainings with external stakeholders, i.e. neighboring departments, utilities department and other community partners to streamline collaborative efforts, increase mutual knowledge, and build lasting relationships.

Objective #2: Increase the frequency and clarity of communication throughout all levels of the organization while ensuring a transparent and consistent message.

Task 4.2.1

Each division will prepare and distribute a monthly update that provides timely, detailed information about the associated operations to keep the department informed.



Task 4.2.2

Enhance monthly updates by including a message from the Fire Chief alongside meeting notes from senior and executive staff.

Task 4.2.3

All committees will distribute timely updates, as appropriate, on projects, decisions, and ideas and include instructions for submitting new ideas.

Objective #3: Leverage emerging technologies and the media to inform and educate the citizens and friends of MCFR. This initiative intends to create goodwill and trust in the community.

Task 4.3.1

Improve department visibility through an increase in social media presence. Posts should include special events, significant calls, and public education and prevention.

Task 4.3.2

Improve the department's visibility through traditional media outlets to include TV, magazines, etc.

Task 4.3.3

Enhance internal communication through technologies such as First Arriving, Facebook Groups and "Fire Chief James Banta - Forum".

GOAL # 5 – Enhance the recruitment, retention, and overall well-being of Marion County Fire Rescue personnel by addressing provisions within the collective bargaining agreement. This includes ensuring competitive wages, desirable benefits, and supportive policies through collaborative efforts between senior staff and union leadership. Efforts will focus on cost analyses, benchmarking against similar departments, and amending policies to better serve current and future employees.

Objective #1: Expand annual vacation leave accrual rates.

Task 5.1.1

Benchmark Comparisons: Research surrounding counties to identify standard accrual rates.



Task 5.1.2

Cost Analysis: Conduct a cost-benefit analysis to determine the financial impact of increased annual leave.

Task 5.1.3

Retention Evaluation: Assess the potential impact of enhanced leave benefits on long-term employee retention.

Objective #2: Evaluate increasing sick leave accruals for extended work hours.

Task 5.2.1

Regional Comparisons: Evaluate accrual rates from departments within a 60-mile radius.

Task 5.2.2

Overtime Impact Analysis: Analyze the potential overtime costs associated with increased sick leave.

Task 5.2.3

Mental Health Considerations: Investigate whether additional sick leave may improve mental health and career longevity.

Objective #3: Evaluate Increasing sick leave sell-back at retirement.

Task 5.3.1

Comparative Analysis: Review sick leave sell-back policies from comparable departments.

Task 5.3.2

Financial Impact Study: Analyze the potential cost implications of raising the sell-back rate from 1% to 4% per year.

Task 5.3.3

Union and HR Collaboration: Provide findings to union and HR representatives to support collective bargaining discussions.

Objective #4: Facilitate competitive wage packages.

Task 5.4.1

Consider reviewing and comparing wages with similar fire departments to maintain a competitive level of compensation.



Task 5.4.2

Cost Analysis: Perform financial assessments to evaluate potential wage adjustments.

Task 5.4.3

Collaborative Strategy: Develop and present recommendations to Human Resources and union officials for inclusion in contract negotiations.

Objective #5: Establish objective drug screening policies for board consideration.

Task 5.5.1

Screening Effectiveness Review: Assess the effectiveness of current random drug screening protocols.

Task 5.5.2

THC Testing Evaluation: Examine the relevance and accuracy of THC tests in accordance with industry standards for firefighters and emergency responders as they relate to NFPA 1582.

Task 5.5.3

NFPA 1582 Compliance: Determine the impact of NFPA 1582 guidelines on drug testing practices and establish a policy for guidance.

Objective #6: Optimize workplace injury management and support.

Task 5.6.1

Liaison Assignment: Appoint a liaison to track and facilitate the recovery of injured employees.

Task 5.6.2

Clinic Collaboration: Conduct regular meetings with the employee clinic to review and refine the workers' compensation process.

Task 5.6.3

Legal Coordination: Work with legal representatives to expedite approvals for necessary medical care.

Task 5.6.4

Employee Mentorship: Implement a mentorship program to support employees navigating the workers' compensation system.



Objective #7 Explore opportunities to enhance retiree support through insurance benefits.

Task 5.7.1

Comparative Analysis: Review retiree benefit policies from comparable departments.

Task 5.7.2

Financial Impact Study: Analyze the potential cost implications of providing some type of allowance for retirees to cover health insurance premiums

Task 5.7.3

Explore avenues to generate funding for the program initially (i.e. unused sick leave from employees resigning/retiring/terminated)

Task 5.7.4

Long term cost analysis: Perform financial assessments to evaluate potential adjustments as more members will be retiring annually in the future compared to the present.

GOAL # 6 – Enhance reliability and efficiency while reducing downtime, with a focus on expanding the fleet.

Objective #1: Enhance fleet hour tracking by integrating it with fuel key fob technology.

Task 6.1.1

Reinforce the importance of accurate hour tracking for effective Preventive Maintenance intervals.

Task 6.1.2

Identify inconsistencies in reported hours and implement corrective measures as needed.

Objective #2: Explore options to increase the number of spare engines and rescues.

Task 6.2.1

Assess the feasibility of acquiring additional ambulances designated as spares.



Task 6.2.2

Consider the procurement of additional engines for backup purposes.

Task 6.2.3

Work with training teams to enhance Emergency Vehicle Operators Course (EVOC) for new hires, focusing on real-world driving scenarios.

Objective #3: Establish a designated Emergency Vehicle Technician (EVT) for walk-ins to handle quick repairs, i.e., batteries, windshield wipers while minimizing disruptions to ongoing projects.

Task 6.3.1

Assess the need to hire additional EVT personnel.

Task 6.3.2

Define specific roles and responsibilities for EVT personnel.

Objective #4: Assess the feasibility of outsourcing oil changes and fuel filter replacements to quick-change service providers to ensure strict adherence to maintenance schedules and improve reliability.

Task 6.4.1

Identify suitable external service providers that can supplement routine maintenance without disrupting scheduled operations.

Task 6.4.2

Explore potential contract agreements for outsourced services.

Task 6.4.3

Consider implementing after-hours EVT availability to conduct on-site station repairs, minimizing apparatus travel and wear while leveraging lower call volume periods.

Objective #5: Explore strategies to recruit and retain additional EVT personnel.

Task 6.5.1

Investigate opportunities to attract local candidates for EVT positions.

Task 6.5.2

Engage fleet staff in researching comparable fleet organizations to ensure competitive compensation.



Task 6.5.3

Assess potential incentive adjustments for EVT pay and benefits.

Objective #6: Plan for the development of a new fire maintenance facility.

Task 6.6.1

Evaluate the need for property acquisition to support a new facility.

Task 6.6.2

Explore design and construction plans for a modernized fire shop.

Objective #7: Evaluate the need for additional fuel stations for apparatus.

Task 6.7.1

Identify priority stations for fueling station expansion.

Task 6.7.2

Develop an implementation plan for phased fuel tank installations.

GOAL # 7 – Reduce the overall workload across all of MCFR by reassigning, adjusting, or potentially eliminating certain tasks. This may include activities such as hydrant testing, adjustments to the dispatch matrix, streamlining report writing, and eliminating responses to non-urgent calls or events.

Objective #1: Adjust the dispatch matrix to reduce call volume

Task 7.1.1

Reevaluate Smoke Odor Responses: Explore the option of eliminating engine responses to odor-of-smoke calls, suggesting that dispatch personnel provide guidance to the caller for source identification before dispatching units.

Task 7.1.2

Evaluate limiting engine responses to out-of-zone illegal burns when no immediate emergency exists, prioritizing in-zone units.



Task 7.1.3

Reduce Responses to Obvious Signal 7 Calls: Explore opportunities to reduce responses to obvious Signal 7 (deceased person) calls, as these incidents primarily fall within law enforcement responsibilities.

Task 7.1.4

Assess the impact of reducing or discontinuing responses to Non-Fire/EMS Call Responses: Evaluate the elimination of responses to non-emergency, non-fire/EMS-related calls, such as water leaks, sinkholes, AC malfunctions, home lockouts, and smoke detector battery changes.

Task 7.1.5

Restrict Third-Party Calls with No Medical Complaint: Assess the feasibility of discontinuing responses to third-party calls that lack a definitive medical complaint, such as reports of potentially intoxicated individuals walking along roadways or well-being checks without direct contact.

Objective #2: Reduce or eliminate on-duty units assigned to special events.

Task 7.2.1

Utilize Rescue Personnel for Event Staffing: Consider using extra personnel assigned to rescue units to staff dedicated event trucks.

Task 7.2.2

Explore Private Agency Partnerships: Investigate the possibility of partnering with private agencies to provide coverage for special events.

Task 7.2.3

Leverage Light-Duty Personnel: Evaluate the use of light-duty personnel, ensuring compliance with medical restrictions, to handle tasks such as smoke detector installations and battery replacements.

Objective #3: Reduce non-emergency calls from healthcare facilities.

Task 7.3.1

Collaborate with Healthcare Providers: Initiate discussions with healthcare partners, such as HCA and AdventHealth, to explore the potential use of private transport services for non-acute patients.



Task 7.3.2

Form an implementation committee: Establish a committee to define standards and develop an educational program for healthcare facilities regarding non-emergency call protocols.

Task 7.3.3

Deploy Dedicated BLS Transport Units: Explore the possibility of placing dedicated Basic Life Support (BLS) units in service, potentially staffed with personnel from high-performance units.

Task 7.3.4

Consider Nurse Triage for Dispatch: Investigate the implementation of a nurse triage system within dispatch operations to better assess call acuity and assign appropriate resources.

Objective #4: Streamline ESO report writing.

Task 7.4.1

Implement ESO Fire QI Branch: Assess the creation of a quality improvement (QI) branch to standardize call coding and potentially reduce redundant reporting.

Task 7.4.2

Leverage Light-Duty Personnel for QI: Explore assigning light-duty personnel to conduct EMS report compliance reviews or consider increasing QI/billing staff for this function.

Task 7.4.3

Expand ESO Training: Develop and implement training initiatives to ensure consistent and effective use of ESO software across all personnel.

Objective #5: Eliminate on-duty hydrant testing (wet hydrants).

Task 7.5.1

Evaluate External Contracting: Investigate the cost and feasibility of outsourcing hydrant testing and flushing to a third-party vendor.

Task 7.5.2

If appropriate implement a phased testing program:

- Year 1: Form a dedicated team of four (4) personnel to perform full-flow hydrant testing for select stations.



- Year 2: Expand the team’s responsibilities to include full-flow testing and flushing for stations with over 500 wet hydrants.
- Year 3: Complete full testing and flushing for all wet hydrants in the county. Dry hydrants will continue to be tested by zone personnel.

Goal # 8: Develop and implement consistent standards and policies for uniforms and operational gear to improve firefighter morale, comfort, and safety, while supporting retention and recruitment efforts through increased satisfaction and professionalism.

Objective #1: Evaluate and potentially expand uniform disbursement.

Task 8.1.1

Assess budget adjustments to accommodate potential increases in uniform allotments.

Task 8.1.2

Review and modify vendor contracts as needed.

Task 8.1.3

Maintain the current practice of providing two sets of bunker gear and leather fire boots after one year of service.

Objective #2: Explore the feasibility of placing extractors at each station.

Task 8.2.1

Identify potential funding sources, including departmental budget allocations and grant opportunities.

Task 8.2.2

Assess vendor availability for installation and ongoing maintenance.

Task 8.2.3

Evaluate the impact on reducing workload, labor time, and wear on department vehicles.



Objective #3: Assess the implementation of cascade Self Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA) fill stations at all fire stations.

Task 8.3.1

Secure funding through department budgets and grant opportunities.

Task 8.3.2

Coordinate with vendors for installation and maintenance

Task 8.3.3

Evaluate the potential benefits related to workload reduction and operational efficiency

Objective #4: Explore options for issuing Class A uniforms to all personnel upon completing probation to enhance professionalism and department representation.

Task 8.4.1

Assess the feasibility of increasing the uniform budget to accommodate this initiative.

Task 8.4.2

Establish a contract with a reliable vendor to ensure quality and availability.

Goal # 9: Develop and implement fire station designs that accommodate future growth, operational efficiency, and disaster response needs. This includes improving communication regarding work orders, planning for Capital Improvement Projects (CIP), and incorporating scalable layouts to support future expansion.

Objective #1: Evaluate and implement commercial equipment in new and existing fire stations.

Task 9.1.1

Incorporate commercial equipment into the design of all newly built fire stations.

Task 9.1.2

Assess older equipment in existing stations to determine upgrade needs.



Objective #2: Design strategies for station renovations while maintaining crew operations.

Task 9.2.1

Establish a standardized station design with a two-phase build approach to accommodate both urban and rural station layouts.

Task 9.2.2

Develop policies that allow for property acquisition through developer credits or impact fee incentives to support station expansion.

Task 9.2.3

Ensure new station structures are designed to accommodate future growth, with layouts supporting a standard crew size of an Engine and Rescue while allowing for square footage expansion and additional apparatus as needed.

Goal # 10 – MCFR will enhance its peer support program while maintaining current service levels. Improvements will include creating a guide for treatment entry and departmental reintegration, establishing formal pathways for team involvement in mental health services, and increasing trained responders for crew support.

Objective #1: Establish a clear process for employees seeking mental health services.

Task 10.1.1

Evaluate the existing process and confirm relationships with treatment centers and providers.

Task 10.1.2

Ensure team members are knowledgeable about self-referrals versus peer- or family-referred cases.

Task 10.1.3

Develop a step-by-step document outlining available treatment options and pathways.



Task 10.1.4

Expand personnel education on recognizing signs of distress and when to seek services.

Objective #2: Develop a standardized procedure for returning to duty after mental health treatment.

Task 10.2.1

Research existing policies related to returning employees (FMLA, light duty, etc.).

Task 10.2.2

Coordinate with HR and Payroll to ensure compliance with legal rights and policies.

Task 10.2.3

Explore the use of a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) or task book for returning employees.

Task 10.2.4

Define light-duty assignment parameters to accommodate outpatient treatment.

Objective #3: Increase awareness of mental health programs and promote healthy lifestyle options.

Task 10.3.1

Plan and implement a "Family Day" event to introduce personnel and families to available services.

Task 10.3.2

Utilize first-arriving boards as a means of disseminating information about mental health resources.

Task 10.3.3

Allocate paid hours for peer support team members to conduct station visits.

Objective #4: Expand personnel participation in mental health support programs, including chaplaincy.

Task 10.4.1

Research models from other departments that utilize line personnel in chaplain roles.



Task 10.4.2

Explore the feasibility of impact bargaining or a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the union.

Task 10.4.3

Establish a process for selecting and testing interested personnel for chaplaincy roles.

Task 10.4.4

Determine staffing needs for both 24/48 and 40-hour shift positions.

Objective #5: Ensure sustainability of the peer support program by increasing full-time staff.

Task 10.5.1

Investigate fire departments that have integrated mental health personnel into their response teams.

Task 10.5.2

Determine the minimum staffing levels required to provide consistent program support.

Task 10.5.3

Assess the feasibility of adding a mid-level provider to the mental health team, similar to a Physician's Assistant (PA) in Community Paramedicine.

Task 10.5.4

Identify county facilities that could accommodate additional staff or office space.



Goal #11 – MCFR will enhance its training division by implementing a structured, accountable system for onboarding new hires, providing consistent and progressive training, and supporting ongoing professional development. This initiative will ensure all personnel have the necessary skills, knowledge, and leadership abilities for optimal performance while maintaining accountability throughout their growth.

Objective #1: Collaborate with training teams to develop a week-long driving course incorporating real-world driving and familiarization.

Task 11.1.1

Establish a schedule for new hire classes.

Task 11.1.2

Provide hands-on driving experiences for new hires.

Task 11.1.3

Facilitate hospital navigation exercises to improve familiarity.

Objective #2: Revise the hiring process to remain competitive, incorporating additional assessment tools such as written and practical exams alongside interviews.

Task 11.2.1

Define specialized training branches to oversee new hires, promotional exams, and continuing education for current employees.

Task 11.2.2

Assess staffing needs to support this structural change.

Task 11.2.3

Standardize the number of required ride-along shifts to 10 for both EMTs and paramedics.

Task 11.2.4

Explore additional recruiting opportunities, including outreach to prior military personnel with relevant experience.



Task 11.2.5

Adjust new hire probation to begin on their first day in the field.

Task 11.2.6

Fully implement the six-month evaluation process for HP new hires.

Task 11.2.7

Develop a second evaluation before the completion of the first year/probationary period.

Task 11.2.8

Strategically assign new hires to locations that support their long-term career development.

Task 11.2.9

Ensure all new hires, including EMTs and paramedics, gain exposure to critical operational components such as dispatch, QI, and billing.

Task 11.2.10

Develop a structured, goal-oriented curriculum with standardized lecture slides, schedules, scenarios, and realistic field training applications.

Objective #3: Provide equal support and emphasis on fire and EMS training.

Task 11.3.1

Establish a consistent skill rotation schedule, incorporating scenario-based training aligned with MCFR fire operations.

Task 11.3.2

Utilize both local battalion areas and central training locations to involve multiple units in training.

Task 11.3.3

Promote an EMS training culture by encouraging crews to engage in focused skills development at stations.

Task 11.3.4

Implement structured EMS training requirements similar to fire training to ensure proficiency across EMS crews.



Objective #4: Minimize the impact of training on operational readiness.

Task 11.4.1

Deploy instructors to battalion stations for on-site training, reducing travel time and operational disruption.

Task 11.4.2

Position training resources within battalion-specific areas to improve accessibility and efficiency.

Task 11.4.3

Utilize relief engine and transport staff to maintain response coverage during training rotations.

Task 11.4.4

Consider hiring overtime personnel to backfill crews during mandatory training sessions.

Objective #5: Develop structured task books for every rank and specialized discipline, including special teams (i.e., CC1, Community Paramedicine, FTO, TRT, HM, etc.).

Task 11.5.1

Shift focus away from lengthy video-based learning modules, favoring interactive classroom and hands-on training methods.

Task 11.5.2

Implement structured mentorship programs to support succession planning and career progression.

Task 11.5.3

Create promotional pathways for EMTs to transition into FTO roles.

Task 11.5.4

Maintain a supportive and structured training environment, using successful models such as MCFR fire academy classes as a foundation.



GOAL #12 – Foster an organizational culture that promotes pride, ownership, and responsibility by building on employee strengths, encouraging innovation without compromising standards, and reinforcing a solid foundation of leadership.

Objective #1: Embrace and support fire department traditions.

Task 12.1.1

Leverage Digital Display Boards: Utilize First Arriving digital display boards to showcase MCFR history, including photos, retiree profiles, and significant events in county history.

Task 12.1.2

Engage Retirees: Coordinate station visits with retired personnel, potentially in collaboration with the chaplain program, to foster a connection between past and present generations of firefighters.

Task 12.1.3

Promote Station Pride: Encourage stations to cultivate a sense of pride and ownership in their workspace, traditions, and team identity.

Objective #2: Provide positive employee recognition.

Task 12.2.1

Expand and broaden the Employee Recognition Ceremony by expanding the scope of the annual Employee Milestone Day to celebrate achievements and years of service.

Task 12.2.2

Maintain Recognition Gifts: Sustain the tradition of presenting service awards such as coins, plaques, and possibly Class A dress uniforms.

Task 12.2.3

Explore Community Recognition: Investigate opportunities to implement a community spotlight program to publicly recognize employee contributions.

Objective #3: Increase employee engagement.

Task 12.3.1

Enhance Leadership Outreach: Encourage chief officers to make at least one meaningful, personalized contact with each employee annually.



Task 12.3.2

Increase Battalion Chief Interaction: Promote more frequent and intentional face-to-face interactions between battalion chiefs and station personnel.

Task 12.3.3

Improve Self-Evaluation Process: Review and revise the self-evaluation process to make it more engaging and reflective of employee contributions and growth opportunities.

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GOAL #13 – Expand Rescue/Medic Unit Deployment to meet increasing community demand, optimize response times, and ensure equitable service coverage across Marion County’s urban, suburban, and rural areas.

Objective #1: Implement data-driven deployment strategies.

Task 13.1.1

Conduct Annual Workload Analysis: Use ESO/First Due data to identify districts consistently exceeding workload thresholds or showing the highest year-over-year demand increases.

Task 13.1.2

Prioritize Deployment Based on Demand: Rank potential deployment sites annually, focusing on areas with the greatest operational gaps in EMS coverage.

Task 13.1.3

Integrate CRA/SOC Findings: Align deployment decisions with the Community Risk Assessment (CRA) and Standards of Cover (SOC) to ensure deployment matches identified risks and hazards.



Objective #2: Incorporate staffing and capital planning into annual budget cycles.

Task 13.2.1

Annual Unit Addition: Incorporate the addition of one Rescue/Medic Unit per fiscal year into the MCFR budget proposal and capital improvement plan.

Task 13.2.2

Staffing Forecast Model: Create a 10-year staffing model that accounts for anticipated demand growth, unit expansion, and recruit training pipeline requirements.

Task 13.2.3

Fleet and Facility Readiness: Ensure apparatus procurement, station bay space, and support equipment are included in advance of unit placement.

Objective #3: Ensure equitable service delivery across diverse service areas.

Task 13.3.1

Urban Deployment: Position new units to reduce response times in high-density districts where call volume significantly exceeds system averages.

Task 13.3.2

Suburban Deployment: Focus on areas with increasing residential and commercial growth that are approaching or exceeding workload thresholds.

Task 13.3.3

Rural Deployment: Evaluate outlying districts for high travel times or limited coverage, ensuring equitable access to EMS care county-wide.

Objective #4: Evaluate and adjust deployment for system efficiency.

Task 13.4.1

Performance Monitoring: Review response time performance, unit hour utilization, and patient outcomes quarterly to validate deployment effectiveness.



Task 13.4.2

Community Feedback: Incorporate feedback from advisory committees and community partners to assess the impact of unit expansion on local service delivery.

Task 13.4.3

Continuous Improvement: Adjust deployment strategies annually, considering updated incident trends, population growth, and budget realities.

GOAL #14 – Expand Aerial Ladder Deployment to enhance fireground capabilities, improve vertical access, and support community growth in urban, suburban, and rural service areas.

Objective #1: Align aerial ladder deployment with community growth and risk.

Task 14.1.1

Conduct Fire Risk Analysis: Use CRA/SOC data to identify districts with vertical growth (multi-story commercial, residential, and industrial facilities) requiring aerial coverage.

Task 14.1.2

Prioritize Placement: Develop a ranked list of priority districts based on risk assessment, response time gaps, and incident demand profiles.

Task 14.1.3

Growth Forecast Integration: Incorporate county development and zoning projections to ensure future aerial placement anticipates, rather than reacts to, population and infrastructure growth.



Objective #2: Integrate aerial apparatus into long-term capital planning.

Task 14.2.1

Capital Investment Plan: Include aerial apparatus procurement in the annual capital improvement plan, ensuring funding aligns with identified deployment needs.

Task 14.2.2

Station Infrastructure Readiness: Evaluate existing stations for bay size, structural capacity, and geographic suitability to house aerial apparatus, and plan renovations or new builds as required.

Task 14.2.3

Fleet Lifecycle Management: Develop a replacement and rotation schedule for aerial apparatus to maintain frontline reliability and reserve capacity.

Objective #3: Ensure staffing, training, and operational readiness.

Task 14.3.1

Staffing Plan: Establish a staffing pipeline for additional aerial companies, including projected promotions and recruit classes.

Task 14.3.2

Specialized Training: Implement annual training standards for aerial operations, technical rescues, and master stream deployment.

Task 14.3.3

Officer Development: Provide company officer training focused on tactical decision-making, aerial placement, and large-structure incident command.

Objective #4: Evaluate aerial deployment effectiveness and community impact.

Task 14.4.1

Performance Monitoring: Track aerial unit utilization, response times, and contribution to multi-alarm or complex incidents.

Task 14.4.2

Community Input: Engage commercial property managers, builders, and advisory boards to assess needs and confirm placement strategies.



Task 14.4.3

Annual Review: Reassess aerial ladder coverage annually to adjust priorities based on incident data, growth patterns, and fiscal realities.

Implementation Methodology

Emergency services face ongoing challenges in adapting to a swiftly evolving landscape. With advancements in tools and technologies, heightened regulatory oversight, and shifting risk landscapes, failing to anticipate these changes can result in reactive decision-making rather than proactive planning. Fire departments can preempt organizational hurdles by consistently assessing both internal and external environments and orienting themselves to meet the demands of these contexts. By leveraging data analysis and trend monitoring, organizations can maintain agility and remain at the forefront of service delivery, making necessary adjustments to stay ahead.

Role of Goal Managers

The organization is tasked with appointing a manager for the goal, who will oversee the coordination. Once assigned, the goal manager must have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. They are responsible for identifying and assembling inclusive and capable task teams for each objective within the goal, determining the funding requirements necessary for efficient completion of their assignments, maintaining continuous oversight of the status and progress of each task team under their supervision, addressing obstacles or barriers encountered by the task teams, and providing regular updates on goal status, progress, challenges, strategies to overcome obstacles, successes, and accomplishments. Their role is vital in ensuring effective communication of the plan's status to the organization.

Role of Task/Program Teams

Each objective is entrusted to a task/program team comprising of members, prioritizing those with a passion for achieving the objective, relevant expertise, or aligned job assignments. Each task team should convene initially to designate a chairperson, collectively understand the objective, seek clarification from the goal manager as needed, identify funding requirements, and initiate the formulation of a work plan. This systematic approach will facilitate the task team in achieving the objective within the designated timelines.



Once the work plan is devised, the task team chairperson should coordinate the establishment of a meeting schedule conducive to team members' availability and minimizing organizational conflicts (i.e., training sessions, vacations, etc.). Noteworthy actions and encountered challenges of the task teams should be diligently documented for periodic status updates to the goal managers.

Role of MCFR Members

Every member of MCFR bears the responsibility of comprehending the strategic plan, internalizing its mission, vision, values, goals, and objectives, and contributing to the organization's success, regardless of their team affiliation. By staying informed about the ongoing efforts to enhance organizational effectiveness, members can identify potential opportunities that task teams can leverage to achieve their objectives. Additionally, members must hold the organization accountable for adhering to its stated timelines and outcomes. While flexibility is essential to accommodate unforeseen circumstances or unexpected opportunities, deviations from commitments should not become habitual excuses for failing to achieve predetermined goals.

It's crucial to maintain realistic expectations regarding the strategic plan's outcomes. Addressing long-standing challenges won't happen overnight, as many have evolved over years. Each member must view themselves as integral to the solution. Despite collective determination, some issues may demand more resources and time than currently available. Hence, it's paramount to manage these endeavors with a keen focus on efficiency and effectiveness.

Communication Methods

The strategic plan should be communicated consistently and through various channels to ensure widespread understanding and engagement. The internal planning team should strategize on multiple communication approaches, which include:

- Conducting meetings between chief officers and all crews periodically to review the strategic plan.
- Integrating discussions on mission, vision, and values into training sessions.
- Emphasizing a single aspect of the action plan during training sessions, allocating dedicated time for strategic planning discussions.



- Making the strategic plan accessible to all members by uploading it electronically and posting a hard copy at each station.
- Providing quarterly status updates, acknowledging achievements, and transparently addressing challenges.
- Holding semi-annual meetings between the internal planning team and goal managers to exchange insights, brainstorm solutions, and provide progress updates.
- Annual meetings of the internal planning team to revise the plan and ensure accountability.
- Incorporating quarterly reports from the Fire Chief to the Marion County Board of County Commissioners as a standard agenda item throughout the plan's duration.

While these strategies have their pros and cons, the overarching goal remains consistent: to utilize effective communication methods and maintain regular, transparent dialogue within the organization. By consistently reinforcing the plan's importance and celebrating achievements, the organization fosters a culture of anticipation and collective commitment to realizing its goals.

Each task team can utilize the plan to monitor their work performance and offer regular updates to goal managers. This ensures standardized progress and serves as a foundation for communicating advancements to the department. Whether employing this planning sheet, an internally devised spreadsheet, or another organizational tracking device, the key is to maintain detailed monitoring at the task team level while considering the broader departmental perspective.

