Large Group Methodology
For Strategic Planning
In The
Fire Service

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Abstract

The Quincy Fire Department was committed to the process of re-writing its strategic plan. Past experiences with strategic planning had indicated that planning methods proved less effective than was desired. The department wished to build greater support and understanding for the planning process and its results through the increased participation of its members and external stakeholders. The planning design team committed to a planning conference entitled “Future Quest”, which involved more than 50 department members and external stakeholders. This project documents the use of a Large Group Intervention (LGI) as a planning method with in a fire department. Toward that end the project focused on three research initiatives: What impediments, if any, are present in the usage of LGI strategic planning methodology with in a fire department? What design elements proved effective or detrimental in utilizing LGI methodology in fire department strategic planning? What observable benefits, if any, are gained through the usage of LGI planning methods? The study demonstrated that LGI techniques could produce a logical, comprehensive strategic plan, which is understood and embraced by stakeholders.
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Introduction

In the 21st Century, the operation of a Municipal Fire Department involves challenges, which are increasing in complexity, and difficulty. Expanded service demands coupled with growing budget pressures have rendered efficient management strategies essential. Accordingly, the creation and implementation of effective strategic plans has become increasingly important to the fire service (Compton, 2002).

The American Fire Service has had mixed results in the area of strategic planning (Wallace, 2006). Use of marginal planning techniques has caused some departments to struggle with strategic planning and many have prompted difficulties in the implementation of strategic plans once created (Wallace, 2006). The frequent lack of success in strategic planning by fire departments may indicate that the strategic planning methodology commonly employed in the private sector may not be entirely appropriate for use in the public sector. A notable exception may be the use of Large Group Intervention methodology as a strategic planning tool. Large Group Intervention (LGI) methods have been employed with in the private sector for more than a decade as a strategic planning tool. LGI methods utilize the inclusion of interested stakeholders into work teams who jointly develop strategic plans through shared perspective, concerns and ideas. There has been demonstrated success in its use by not- for- profit and educational organizations (Bell, M. & Tunncliff G. 1996). Many of these organizations share significant similarities to fire departments in structure and culture.

The Quincy Fire Department (QFD) in Quincy Illinois had not updated its strategic plan in well over 7 years. Significant changes in its working environment and its relationship with stakeholders necessitated that the department undertook the process of organizational reevaluation and the updating of its strategic plan.
The problem addressed in this research project is that past attempts by the Quincy Fire Department at strategic planning and implementation have met limited success. Planning efforts have suffered from a lack of understanding and support by the stakeholders tasked with meeting strategic objectives, rendering the plans of little practical use.

It was the hypothesis of the researcher that the use of Large Group Intervention (LGI) techniques would bring diversity of perspective to the planning process, increase employee support of strategic planning and facilitate strategic plan implementation through increased stakeholder enthusiasm, understanding and endorsement of strategic objectives.

The purpose of this research project is to document and evaluate the design and use of LGI methods for the purpose of strategic planning with in the Quincy Fire Department.

Through the use of evaluative research methods, this project will seek to answer the following research questions:

1. What design elements proved effective or detrimental in utilizing LGI methodology in fire department strategic planning?
2. What challenges and obstacles, if any, might impede the Quincy Fire Department in the use of an organization wide strategic planning process?
3. What observable benefits, if any, are gained through the usage of LGI planning methods?
Background and Significance

The Quincy Fire Department is a relatively small career department of 72 full time employees serving the municipality of Quincy, Il. Quincy is located in the West Central Region of the state. Of the fire department employees, 66 are active in the front line provision of fire protection and non-transport emergency medical services to the city’s residents. The six remaining employees form the administrative division of the department including the Fire Chief, a Deputy Chief of Operations and a Deputy Chief of Administration. In support of these positions is a Budget Administrator and two Administrative Secretaries. The department operates on a budget of just over $7 million a year and responds to just over 3,000 runs annually.

In addition to the traditional services provided by fire departments, Quincy’s Fire Department provides numerous value added services as well. These include a robust public education program, a fire prevention team, an arson investigation team, a water rescue team, a 30-man technical rescue team, and a hazardous materials team trained to respond to chemical emergencies as well as chemical and biological weapon attacks.

The fire department also runs a Regional Training Facility, which is responsible for the training of not only its own firefighters, but also firefighters throughout West Central Illinois, Northeast Missouri, law enforcement and industrial safety brigades.

The department is able to provide this ambitious cadre of services due to its relatively unique organizational structure. In providing its core services of emergency medical and fire protection, the department utilizes a traditional scalar, paramilitary organizational structure typified by a fire chief who has various levels of command structure reporting to him. In providing its value added services, the department utilizes the same personnel, but has a parallel operations structure, which is significantly flatter.
and more decentralized; utilizing over 40 “service officer positions”. Service officers are individuals who are either solely responsible for the management of a program, or who participate in nearly autonomous work teams responsible for the management of the various programs. Of the 66 line personnel in the Quincy Fire Department over 30 are responsible for traditional program management functions including budgeting, policy creation, planning and implementation relative to their particular programs. Many employees serve on more than one project team. Team leaders and those individuals solely responsible for programs often report directly to the fire chief or a designee directly below the fire chief.

The structure of the department fosters an organizational culture featuring engaged, committed employee’s, who represent several specialized interests with in the department. The significant personnel investment made by employee’s in their area of expertise has also created a high degree of “ownership” in the departments operational structure. That sense of ownership has created an expectation of participation.

Like most fire agencies, the Quincy Fire Department has diverse stakeholders both internally and externally. The strategic direction of the department affects several public agencies, the business community and citizen groups. As such department operations are of significant interest to the city’s administration, elected officials and private sector special interest groups. In response to this reality the Quincy Fire Department initiated a 35-member group entitled the Citizens Advisory Board. The board represents numerous external stakeholder groups who act as advocates for public interest.

In a lecture at Benedictine University in October 2007, Dr. Phillip Anderson said, “To be effective and implemented successfully a strategic plan must consider the organizations culture, needs and structure. Those who make routine decisions and guide
daily activity must embrace it. It must be real to the rank and file!” (Anderson, 2007).
The structure of the Quincy Fire Department conjoined with the expectations of its
diverse stakeholder group makes strategic planning with in the department an exercise of
communal importance.

The decentralized matrix that allows the Quincy Fire Department to employ so
many programs also contributes to difficulties in employing traditional strategic planning
methods. The department has many decision makers and a myriad of individuals who are
responsible for the implementation of strategic plans. Past history in strategic planning
has indicated that the rank and file members have poorly understood strategic plans. In
an organizational structure such as the Quincy Fire Departments, employee “buy in” is
essential since members at all levels of the organization have some management duties,
and as such are responsible for implementation. The presence of numerous decision
makers and the departments value of good will amongst internal and external
stakeholders makes consensus regarding strategic direction vital. For the Quincy Fire
Department to successfully plan and build the future, it was imperative that members
throughout the organization participate in the planning process. They had to understand
its goals and commit to them. It was the believe of the fire departments staff that a Large
Group Strategic Planning exercise, available to all members of the department in
addition to external stakeholders would prove to be an effective solution to the
departments planning needs.

Large Group methods theoretically should provide a diverse perspective of the
department’s strengths and weaknesses, as well as its opportunities and challenges.
Through whole organization participation, it was assumed that employee acceptance and
commitment would be achieved through better understanding of the planning process, its
intent and objectives. This achievement should improve the prospects of effective implementation of strategic objectives.

While the focus of this research project is on the appropriateness of LGI planning strategies with in the Quincy Fire Department, it may have significant implications to the larger fire service community. This project was completed in conjunction with the Executive Leadership program at the national Fire Academy, a running theme throughout the Executive Fire Officer curriculum is the Chief Officers obligation to plan and implement comprehensive risk reduction programs that efficiently protect the welfare of their citizens, and the fire fighters whom they lead. Those same values are reflected in the operational objectives of the U.S. Fire Administration (see Table 1). The fire service cannot meet these objectives without sound, rational management practices. Those practices are dependent on the development and implementation of meaningful strategic and operational plans.

Several authors (Cooperrider et.al 2005, Lawler & Worley 2006, Senge 1990) have found that the inclusive nature of LGI planning methods have facilitated strategic plans that are better embraced by stakeholders and so more efficiently implemented.

Literature Review

Significant economic and social pressures have conspired to dramatically change public and non-profit organization management. These pressures include, but are not limited to demographic shifts, taxing limits, privatization of government services, escalating costs of providing service particularly in the areas of labor and healthcare services, and the redistribution of public/private responsibilities (Bryson, 1988).
These resulting social and economic pressures have resulted in substantial shifts in revenue flow for local governments, which have become stable at best and more likely unpredictable or even declining. Even more important for local governments is the fact that as they face uncertain revenue streams, they do so in an environment of increasing hostility by taxpayers, and increasing service demands. Local governments, including fire departments, increased demands by federal and state governments in the form of service and labor regulations (Bryson, 1988).

A History of Strategic Planning in the Public Sector

Early in the 1990’s, one of government’s first and most common responses to modernizing its management systems was to make strong commitments to strategic planning. In an article entitled *The History of Strategic Planning*, Philip Blackerby (1994), reviewed the history of Strategic Planning as it applied to local units of government. He asserts that strategic planning methods were borrowed from the private sector and applied to the public sector. At first concepts such as marketing, customer service, revenue development and risk management were relatively rare within municipal agencies. Rather, local governments tended to focus on tactical issues such as efficiency of land use, cost of providing services and economic forecasting built around estimated tax revenue. Planning was also conducted in a management structure with narrow chains of authority and on a rather scalar organizational chart (Blackerby, 1994).

Strategy and organizational structure were relatively independent of each other and in most cases; programs were modified to meet existing and intractable organizational structures as needed. As a result of this management condition, planning in the public sector tended to focus only on internal concerns and specific inputs. Gradually the areas of service reliability, cost controls and even market share became viable concerns for the
public sector. It was this switch from input planning to output planning which hallmarked the transition of public sector management, specifically local government into the realm of true strategic planning (Blackerby, 1994).

Initial planning efforts made by public sector managers tended to use methods transferred intact from the private sector. The application of market based strategic planning routines to a service based non-profit structure often led to confusion, inefficiencies and in some cases, outright failure. (Blackerby, 1994)

In 1993, Gerald D. Gordon published what would become one of the most referenced strategic planning manuals by public sector managers. His book, entitled, Strategic Planning for Local Government, contained one of the earliest public sector planning systems, and although it borrowed heavily from the private sector, Gordon recognizes that there are significant differences between local government and private business, particularly as planning applies to them. In working with strategic planning, numerous communities have found that strategic planning in the public sector is more complicated than in the private sector. Municipal agencies such as fire departments, have broad responsibilities for providing services that range from highly technical disciplines such as EMS provision to humanistic needs like public safety education. The environments in which local government agencies meet these responsibilities are complex and interwoven. Gordon has come to believe that public agencies are much more dynamic than the typical business. Communities change in hundreds of ways every day. The myriad of stakeholders and their interests move and reshape government priorities at lightning speed venture (Gordon, 2002).

Mark Wallace published his seminal work on fire service strategic planning, Fire Department Strategic Planning, in 1998. Like Gordon he borrowed heavily from
traditional planning methods utilized in the business world, although he recognized significant organizational differences between the public and private sector. In the 2006 edition of that same work he states, that a fire department must be proactive and receptive to change if it is to effectively serve its citizens. He further argues that Strategic Planning is essential for a department to be proactive, however he tempers his endorsement with a warning. He observes that too many fire departments struggle with planning methods designed for profit orientated organizations, and they fail to get the results they seek (Wallace, 2006).

Many would argue that “traditional” planning methods not only challenge fire departments, but are generally deficient for most organizations. Many organizations, including fire departments, may be failing at strategic planning and implementations because of inherit flaws in traditional planning methods.

Challenges In Strategic Planning.

In his book entitled, The Rise and Fall of Strategic Planning, Mintzberg (1994) claims that planning almost always fails in most organizations. His belief is that a heavy reliance on traditional or analytic approaches to strategic planning excludes the contribution of intuition, entrepreneurial spirit and innovation. As such, top down strategic initiatives fail under their own weight because they lack the system wide support necessary to make the meaningful culture changes necessary in support of strategic direction change. (Mintzberg, 1994).

In the 2002 edition of Gordon’s book, the author reviewed “Lessons Learned” by municipalities in their endeavors to implement strategic planning. Those lessons included; that planning groups should be more, rather than less inclusive, that successful
strategic planning began with strategic thinking and strategic plans should embrace big ideas not a laundry list of to do’s. A strategic plan must be engaging. (Gordon, 2002).

According to Gordon, many communities have found that if strategic plans to be effectively implemented, they must be clearly understood and embraced by those who will be tasked with making them happen. This is accomplished by providing a clear understanding of the big picture, which greatly improves employee buy-in by and implementation (Gordon, 2002).

While Gordon asserts that the public sector is improving in the area of strategic planning, all do not share his opinion. In her article, Trouble in Paradise, Marie McHugh (1997) expresses the belief that in general; public sector strategic planning and strategic implementation have not lived up to their expectations. She argues that the emphasis placed on the reduction of government waste and the widely accepted belief that it is government’s first responsibility to achieve best values with taxpayer money has had an extremely negative effect on service delivery and the long-term capitalization of infrastructure. An unwillingness to abandon outmoded cultural values and bureaucratic structure coupled with the panic crazed obsession with efficiency generally act as impediments to long-term organizational performance and hence long-term planning (McHugh, 1997).

O’Brien (2002), adds cultural contexts as a reason strategic planning often fails. He found that strategic plan implementation can be hindered because governmental organizations often lack a structure that is conducive for the modification of cultural changes necessary to support strategic initiatives. He argues that for plan implementation to succeed, there must be a connection between strategy, structure and culture. This is especially problematic for local units of government and their entrenched bureaucracies.
As such, traditional strategic planning procedures may be less effective in the public sector than they are in the private sector (O’Brien, 2002).

In *Organizational Change in Large Group Interventions (1996)*, author Martin Leith argues that strategic change efforts fail because of the combined effect of several prevalent conditions found in traditional strategic planning and implementation efforts. One such condition is the absence of the perspective of the work force tasked with implementing strategic initiatives. Change is often imposed from the top down as opposed to developed from the bottom up. Experts in concert with top management typically assume that there will be resistance to change in the strategic re-direction required by organizational transition. As a result, decisions on strategic direction, and implementation are often made in a relative vacuum without sufficient input from those tasked with interfacing with customers. A related issue is that in many strategic change initiatives (including those within the public sector), stakeholder dialog is often too narrow. Typically traditional strategic planning sessions include representatives from each of the major divisions within a corporation or unit of government. Often omitted, are external stakeholders. Leith argues that successful strategic planning and change initiatives tend to be inclusive and that they strive to create a widely shared vision of the future based on the perceptions, suggestions and input of the entire “system” (Leith, 1996).

Leith suggests conditions that are elemental for the successful implementation of strategic redirection. Those suggestions include an organization culture where the change process necessary for strategic implementation is self-determined and self managed. This would imply the use of inclusive methods and representation by the greatest number of stakeholders as possible. The second condition described by Leith, is that stakeholder
representation should be broad and that involvement is meaningful. A third condition
necessary for successful strategic implementation is that there is a prevailing mindset of a
shared future. In general the change model must address culture as well as structure and
that change be based on trust and cooperation. As such, an underlying theme in Leith’s
strategic change conditions is an air of inclusivity.

In March 2007, Dr. Philip Anderson presented a lecture on strategic planning and
implementation to students of Benedictine University. In his presentation, he made the
following points; culture drives every behavior within an organization; that fundamental
changes in strategic direction must be accompanied by requisite changes in culture in
support of those efforts, and a business strategy must be a bottom up exercise involving
significant and varied stakeholder input. He believes that at the core of implementing
strategic redirection must be a plan for leading change efforts. He stated that the most
common failures of strategic planning efforts are a lack of urgency expressed to
stakeholders, improper building of coalition, tepid or insufficient expression of the new
corporate vision and poor communications between the various strata within the
organization (Anderson, 2007). A commonly effective tool to remedy these situations is
the use of *Large Group Interventions* (LGI) as part of the strategic planning process.

**Large Group Intervention Methods**

Like so many management theories LGI methodology was more a product of
evolution than creation. Ron Lippitt at the University of Michigan did some of its earliest
work in the late 1970’s. While doing consulting work he found that “problem solving”
was draining and exhausting in small groups, and nearly impossible in larger ones. He
also found that when groups were tasked with inventing creative futures, the participants
were usually engaged and energized. He first wrote about the possibilities of group planning in a paper entitled, *Choosing the Future You Prefer* (Lippitt R, 1980).

Soon after a student and colleague of Lippitt, Kathie Dannemiller, applied several fundamental LGI principles at a weekend training session with 500 Ford executives. This work became the foundation of the LGI method known as *Real Time Strategic Change*.

Over the next 15 years several pioneers in the organization development field such as David Cooperrider, Harrison Owen, Marvin Weisbord and Fred Emmery all contributed theories and practices relevant to the use of LGI methods in strategic planning and change. Several LGI methods have developed in the last 20 years, including Open Space, Future Search, Whole Scale Change, ICA Strategic Planning Process and Appreciative Inquiry. While each of these methods is unique, they have some universal commonality. They all work under the assumption that effective organization planning and implementation is best achieved when all employee’s and stakeholders participate in building their organization future. Most are based on the assumption that all participants are equals with in the planning process, and that some sort of consensus must be reached on a best future if implementation is to be achieved. (Bunker & Alban 2006)

In a 1991 article entitled “*Capacity to Act*”, authors Shaw and Nadler suggest that in order to meet increasing expectations by both the public and politicians, public sector organizations need to change their bureaucratic management style rooted in rigid control to one which is more flexible and responsive. They further argue that the undesirable and burdensome rules, which are normally associated with bureaucratic forms of management, are counterproductive to management strategies necessary for local government to implement necessary modern management techniques (Shaw and Nadler,
1991). Arguably these factors are present in most fire departments, whose traditional management structure tends to be highly rigid.

Geraldine O’Brien, (2002) states that the adoption of customer service values by a local government often requires nothing short of a fundamental change in public sector organization, structure and culture. This is a lesson that has become apparent to the Quincy Fire Department, as it has strived to become more “customer orientated”. This fundamental change may well require the adoption of managerial values typically found in the discipline of Organization Development. Workers respond most readily when their responsibilities are extended and where they have an open opportunity to provide meaningful contributions to the direction of the organization (O’Brien, 2002).

Employee participation according to O’Brien is one of the most effective tools management can use to gain acceptance of strategic change. While the use of participative management strategies seems elemental to acceptance, there are several conditions that must be present for it to be effective. These include; an honest commitment to participation by upper management. O’Brien states, “People are skeptical about participation just for show without any impact on substance” (O’Brien, 2002).

Mike Bell and Guy Tunncliff wrote an article entitled, Future Search for Stakeholders. They find that organizations must create the future if they are to be successful and this cannot be done this in isolation. “Strategic planning cannot be conducted by a few top executives locked behind closed doors” (Bell, Tunncliff). Current reengineering and strategic planning approaches will not enable organizations to effectively get to their best future. A successful organization must be a place of vision. To get to that vision, organizations must create foresight based on many people’s visions. In their article, they state the belief that building a rich picture of all possibilities derived
from all perspectives will only create organizational excellence. As a result, Bell and Tunncliff suggest the implementation of Future Search conferences. These are large group interventions in which stakeholders from all parts of the organization come together to create a common vision and future.

Large Group Intervention Strategies have been implemented by numerous companies and not for profits as a tool to engage their employee’s in the strategic planning process. There is strong evidence that broad based employee engagement produces more meaningful strategic objectives and the necessary ‘buy-in” to attain implementation. (Cooperider, et al. 2005)

In Summary, it is apparent from the literature review that strategic planning is as necessary in the public sector as it is in the private sector. There are many strategic planning methodologies that have been developed in the private sector and applied in the public sector. They have met with varying degrees of success however, literature in the field indicates that there are significant differences between public sector organizations and the private sector and failure to recognize these fundamental differences can lead to limited or completely unsuccessful strategic planning initiatives.

The literature also indicates that in most organizations [public sector included] strategic planning must be accompanied by fundamental changes in culture, organization structure and values. Failure to recognize and address these issues will likely impede implementation of strategic redirection and in many cases cause it to fail altogether.

Most of the traditional strategic planning methodologies fail to address fundamental culture changes necessary to redesign governmental structures. It is for this reason that some authors are endorsing the use of non-traditional strategic planning methodology, particularly the use of Large Group Interventions. By the inclusion of
various stakeholders who are given an opportunity for significant input in the strategic planning process it is believed that inclusivity will increase buy in by the rank and file who are ultimately responsible for the implementation of strategic plans. The use of large group interventions also adds a significant depth and richness to the creation of new visions by bringing in various perspectives from throughout the organization. It has, however, been recognized by some authors that the flexibility and inclusivity of Organization Development tools, particularly the use of large group interventions may not be entirely compatible with the traditional bureaucratic management styles employed by most local fire departments. It would appear however, that sufficient evidence is present with in current literature to warrant experimentation in the use of Macro Planning Sessions in the fire service setting.

Procedures

The Strategic Planning Process for the Quincy Fire Department began in November 2006. In meetings amongst senior staff of the fire department, it was determined that the department was in need of an updated strategic plan and that the fire department’s organizational structure and culture indicated that a Large Group planning session may be most appropriate. The session would ideally include participants from each level of the department in conjunction with external stakeholders affected by departmental operations. As a result, a strategic planning conference was scheduled for January 2007. The intended goals of the conference were as follows:

1. The identification of appropriate strategic goals for the Quincy Fire Department spanning a time line of five to ten years.
2. The re-evaluation of the department’s Mission and Value Statements in order to determine there continued appropriateness.


4. To increase a sense of community amongst fire department personnel and external stakeholders through an exchange of experience and viewpoints.

5. To build commitment for the Quincy Fire Department’s strategic plan by encouraging participation and access to the planning process by both internal and external stakeholders.

6. To develop action items in support of a new strategic plan.

*Designing The Quincy Planning Conference*

In November and December of 2006, meetings were conducted under the supervision of the Quincy Fire Department Fire Chief for the purpose of planning the content, structure and logistical necessities of a Large Group Strategic Planning Conference in January 2007. The Fire Chief the Deputy Chief of Administration and the Deputy Chief of Operations were involved in the meetings. As a result of those planning and logistic meetings, the Quincy Fire Department Planning Conference was designed and implemented as follows:

- The planning conference for the Quincy Fire Department would be entitled, Future Quest.

- The Future Quest Planning Conference would be held over Three full working days. Day one and day two of the conference would be in January 2007. Day three of the conference would be held in June 2007.
• All Quincy Fire Department personnel would be invited to attend. Participation would be voluntary, however, employees attending during off-duty hours would be compensated for their time.

• Key external stakeholders were also invited to participate in the planning conference. These included the City of Quincy’s Mayor, City Administrator, City Aldermen, members of the Quincy Fire Department Board of Fire & Police Commissioners and members of the Quincy Fire Department’s Citizens Advisory Board.

• Several large group intervention styles were reviewed for appropriateness, including Appreciative Inquiry, Future Seek and Open Space. It was determined by Quincy Fire Department staff that elements of each should be combined in order to create a conference structure that was deemed most appropriate for Quincy Fire Department use.

• The general conference itinerary was based on the four phases, including an Assessment Phase, Assembly Phase, Design Phase and Implementation phase.

• An institutionalization phase was also to be utilized at a later time, but was outside the parameters of the conference.

• The majority of work to be accomplished in the conference was assigned to on small group exercises. Results from small group exercises were then presented to the General Assembly for discussion, followed by voting exercises to finalize the results of the exercises.

• Conference attendees were to be randomly assigned to “table groups”. Each group was comprised of five conference participants and one Table Facilitator.
• The conference designers selected table facilitators based on their familiarity with large group intervention procedures, experience in discussion facilitation and familiarity with the concepts of functional working groups. Facilitator backgrounds included local clergy, students of the Benedictine University Masters in Organization Behavior Program, and Quincy University faculty familiar with strategic planning and group facilitation.

• The planned role of facilitator at each table was to encourage the participation of all the table’s members, to keep discussions on task, to document group efforts and results, to facilitate constructive expression and mediate conflict if necessary.

• The *Conference Moderators* were to be non-participants in the exercises. Their role was to introduce topics, moderate the report out sessions, resolve problems as they arose and provide logistical support when needed. Conference moderators were Fire Chief Scott Walker and Deputy Chief Joseph Henning.

*Conference Methodology*

The Quincy Fire Department Future Quest Conference was convened on January 23, 2007. Day one was initiated with a general session, which reviewed the rules of the conference. (See Table 2):

The conference then initiated the Assessment phase of the process by beginning Exercise One, intended to be an *audit of external services*. The groups were introduced to a general question, which was, “what services does the Quincy Fire Department (QFD) offer which makes it worth taxpayer investment”? Once the topic was introduced and explained the participants retired to their table group to begin deliberation.
The table facilitators were given discussion points that were to be used as samples to initiate conversation and guide conversation. Discussion was not limited to the suggested questions; the discussion points can be reviewed in Appendix A of this document.

Table discussions were limited to 30 minutes for Exercise One. Each table group wrote its responses and impressions of the discussion on flip chart paper and at the completion of the exercise. Each table group then elected a spokes person who displayed the flip chart on the wall and explained the groups’ findings to the rest of the conference attendees. Each of the eleven groups took a turn reporting its findings.

Exercise Two was initiated at the completion of Exercise One. Exercise Two was an internal service audit whose goal was to determine what activities and services are deemed most important and satisfying to QFD employees. Exercise Two was conducted in the same manner as Exercise One. The table groups were allowed 30 minutes to discuss the questions given and report back their findings to the general conference. The discussion in Exercise Two was based on “What activities, as employees, give you the most satisfaction?” As discussion guides, the table facilitators were again given sample questions, which can be reviewed in Appendix A.

As in Exercise One, the results of table discussions were placed on flip charts and a group spokesman was elected to hang the results on the wall and report back to the general conference on their findings.

Following Exercise Two, the group initiated Exercise Three, which was titled “Challenge Analysis”. The goal of Exercise Three was to determine whether or not there were any unmet needs in the community that the fire department was uniquely suited to meet. Exercise three also sought to identify any challenges or internal impediments, which inhibit the departments’ ability to maximize the service provided to tax payers.
Exercise Three was allocated 45 minutes of discussion time at which time two general topics were to be discussed. The first question was, “Are there unmet needs in the community that the Quincy Fire Department is best suited to meet?”

The second question for the table exercise was “What challenges impede us in providing service?”

As with the previous exercises, the results of table discussions were placed on flip chart sheets, which were hung on the wall, and an elected spokesman reported the group’s findings to the conference assembly.

With the conclusion of Exercise Three and its reporting, the conference was adjourned for a working lunch. During lunch, members were encouraged to walk around the room, and become familiar with the material on the flip charts from the previous three exercises. Participants were also encouraged to mingle with other conference attendees and discuss the content on the flip charts.

After lunch, Exercise Four was initiated. Exercise Four was entitled “Putting It Together”. The table groups were tasked with making recommendations for the department’s strategic directions based on the mornings work. Facilitators were given four discussion guides for the 45-minute table discussion period. (See Appendix A for discussion guides)

Each group was asked to place its recommendations on flip charts, and as with other exercises an elected member explained their recommendations to the general assembly. The results of Exercise Four were intended to be general observations on the direction of the department, based on the findings of the previous exercises. These were labeled Statements of Intent. During the reporting session, discussion and inquiry by the general assembly was encouraged.
Exercise Five was a review of the fire departments’ organizational culture. The exercise had three objectives: To identify the values, traits and traditions that are most important to the Quincy Fire Department’s success in providing service to its citizens, to identify any conditions or issues which impede these values and as such need to be eliminated and to discuss steps that the fire department can make to strengthen the positive values identified and to assist the fire department in incorporating those values into their daily activities.

Exercise Five was allotted 40 minutes of table discussion. Appendix A contains the discussion guides for exercise 5.

At the conclusion of discussion, the table groups were to report their findings and to make recommendations on steps that could be taken by the department to strengthen and support its core values and assist the department in incorporating them into daily activities. As with other exercises, the results of the group work were reported out to the assembly by an elected member of the group.

With the completion of Exercise Five, the conference moved into the Assembly Phase. This consisted of a full conference discussion entitled, “Plan Assembly”. Within that discussion, the work of the small groups in the previous five exercises was reviewed and refined so as to format their findings in a manner suitable for potential strategic objectives. An important function of plan assembly was to clarify the intent of each of the exercise results and to reword them so as that intent was clearly expressed and consistently reflected the views of the general assembly. The intended result of the Plan Assembly exercise was to clarify the “statements of intent”. In the Plan Assembly discussions, if individual groups had similar findings that were either worded differently or varied somewhat in form, the general assembly was to synthesize the various group
findings into a singular intent statement, which was acceptable to each and all of the groups.

At the completion of the plan assembly phase, the *intent statements* and supporting explanations were placed on flip chart paper and hung on the walls of the room. The conference attendees were then given 30 minutes to review the intention statements and ask any questions or seek clarification regarding their intent. At the completion of that exercise, the conference then hosted an election entitled, “Dotmacracy”.

The intention of the Dotmacracy Election was to set priorities for each of the potential strategic objectives identified as intention statements. If necessary the list of potential strategic objectives could be reduced based upon election results. The Dotmacracy Exercise utilized the issuance of three stickers or dots given to each participant of the conference. Each member was then instructed to review the statements of intent and place a dot on those that they felt are most important. The participant had the option of placing more than one dot on any given item if they felt it of singular importance. As a result, voters could have placed one dot on three different items or placed all three dots on a single item.

The Dotmacracy Exercise concluded the itinerary of day one of the conference. In a post activity meeting at the conclusion of day one, the conference moderators conducted a debriefing exercise with table facilitators to discuss the positives and negatives of the day one activities. They also synthesized the work done by the conference attendee’s on day one, they cleaned up any wording issues on the report out sheets and prepared a general summary of the results of day one’s work including the election results of the Dotmocracy.
Day two of the conference began by reviewing the Dotmocracy election results. The conference also decided, (based on election results) which intent statements would be kept as strategic objectives to be worked on by the assembly in day two. That decision was based on group consensus as to how many of the intention statements scored well enough so as to reflect the general will of the conference as indicated by voting.

The conference then moved to the Design Phase with the start of Exercise Seven, which was entitled “Moving Forward”. In this exercise the group formed into “planning teams”. Each planning team was tasked with developing one of the proposed strategic objectives identified in the day one Dotmocracy Election. The proposed strategic objective developed by each of the planning teams would be presented to the conference body during Exercise 7, a brainstorming session. The methodology for Exercise Seven is described in Appendix D.

In total, Exercise Seven was allotted 90 minutes. The role of the facilitators during Exercise Seven was to keep work moving forward with the desired end result of creating a strategic goal statement including supportive documentation as to the objectives of that strategic statement. As with previous exercises, the results of the work group exercise were placed on a wall sheet. The entire work group then stood before the conference assembly and presented their strategic statement and its objectives, in a Peer Review Session.

During the one-hour peer review process, the conference assembly critiqued the proposed plans and suggests revisions. Following the review process, the teams reformed and modified or rewrote their plan to reflect the group’s input. After the 30 minute rewriting session, the conference then held a general election. Each group presented their revised proposed plan to the body. The conference body then voted yes or no on the
strategic issue and its objectives. If the vote was successful, the objective was accepted. If not, the group was sent back to rewrite the objective in such a way as to address the objections of the conference body in rejecting it.

With Strategic Objectives approved the conference then moved into the *Implementation Phase*. In the implementation phase, teams were formed to research and develop specific action items in order to implement the individual strategic objectives approved by the conference. Conference attendee’s were asked to volunteer to join an *Implementation Team*. Attendee’s could join as many Implementation teams as they wished.

At this point the Quincy Fire Department Future Quest Conference was recessed for a period of 100 days. Shortly after the recess of the conference, the fire department staff reviewed the implementation teams, added members as they felt appropriate and assigned team leaders. Membership to the teams was also opened to any stakeholder who wished to participate, including non-conference attendee’s.

The implementation teams were then given instructions for work to be done in support of finalizing the strategic objectives during the next 100 days. The objectives of the work teams were to:

1. Refine wording of the strategic objective approved in the election phase of the conference.
2. Identify action items and potential tactics in support of the completion and implementation of strategic objectives.
3. Identify challenges, which would impede the implementation of the strategic objectives.
4. Identify resource needs and sources.
5. The implementation teams were also to review Quincy Fire Department policy procedure and practices and to make eventual recommendations for any policy changes needed in support of the individual strategic objectives.

The implementation teams met throughout the 100-day period. In most cases a senior staff officer attended each of the implementation team’s meetings to function as a resource and assist the teams in their work. The teams however were supervised entirely by the implementation team leader.

In June 2007, the Future Quest conference reconvened. The intention of the third day of the conference was to have each of the implementation teams present their completed strategic plan segment in support of the strategic objectives to which they volunteered in January. Upon presenting the proposed strategic plan, the conference voted yes or no on the proposal. If voted yes, the Quincy Fire Department adopted the strategic plan element and wording as part of its overall strategic plan. If the conference assembly rejected any strategic plan element, it would be returned to the work team for modification or eliminated.

The third conference session held in June represented the end of the Quincy Fire Department Future Quest Conference. From June through October the approved strategic objectives were then compiled into a Strategic Plan Document by the department’s administrative staff and presented to the Mayor for approval. This represented the end of the strategic planning process. (A flow chart of the complete conference itinerary can be found in Appendix B)

**Evaluation Methodology**

A goal of this research project was to evaluate the effectiveness of Large Group Intervention (LGI) methods for strategic planning as applied to the Quincy Fire
Department, and in a more general sense, the usefulness of LGI as a strategic planning method for the Fire Service. In support of that effort two individual surveys were completed. The first, entitled “Strategic Planning Session Critique” (Appendix E), was distributed to conference attendees. It sought to measure the impact of the Future Quest Conference on the participants understanding and support of the department’s strategic plan. As a basis for comparison a survey was also sent to members of other organizations in order to measure their understanding and support of strategic plans created in more traditional methods (Appendix F). The distribution of the second survey was relatively small (less than 100), however it was not intended to present a statistically significant indication of stakeholder opinions on strategic planning. Rather, it was designed to offer a benchmark for comparing Future Quest Conference attendee’s with stakeholders in departments not utilizing participative planning techniques. The survey was distributed via an online provider named Survey Monkey (www.surveymonkey.com), as well as by paper. The survey pool included fire department members scattered through out the United States. Surveys were also completed by part time working students in the Benedictine University Masters in Management and Business Administration Programs.

Project Limitations

This research project was limited by the following factors. First its scope is limited to the experience of one fire department. While this project accurately reflects the experience of using LGI techniques in developing a strategic plan in Quincy, Illinois; the project results do not provide sufficient data to support inferences on the implications for the fire service in general. The survey, which polled organization members who have not participated in LGI planning events, has an insufficient sample size to be statistically significant in determining employee attitudes regarding strategic planning. In general the
Planning Fire Service

A Three-day large group exercise was conducted in Quincy, Illinois with the intent of creating a strategic plan for the Quincy Fire Department. Over 50 members of the Quincy Fire Department as well as citizen stakeholders attended the planning conference entitled Future Quest. Members of the conference participated with a great deal of enthusiasm and intensity. Work accomplished during the three days of the conference was achieved through spirited debate, intense questioning, humor and a palpable sense of community. The results of the conference attendee’s efforts are as follows:

Conference Results

Exercise one was devised to be an external service audit. The core issue discussed was, “what services does the Quincy Fire Department offer which makes it worth taxpayer investment.” Eleven individual work groups expressed the majority opinion that the department services most valued by Quincy citizens was emergency response work, particularly fire suppression and emergency medical services.

Three table groups also reported that there was a high level of citizen appreciation for the department’s public education initiatives, particularly with children. Feedback from the groups especially from external stakeholders tended to support the notion that the community has a high opinion of the Quincy Fire Departments technical ability.

Within the discussions in Exercise One, it was also the expressed belief by the majority of the work groups that the emergency medical services, public education and non-fire customer assistance calls actually have the greatest impact on life quality within the community, and although fire suppression remains the core mission of the fire
department, it has less actual impact on the typical citizens day to day life than do many of the other services provided.

The work groups reported that of all the services provided by the department, the department receives its most positive responses from it’s “value added services”, such as emergency medical response and customer assistance programs, such as “window boards” and the department’s prolific charity work.

Exercise two was an internal service audit aimed at identifying those activities which members of the department find most gratifying and those that they deem are most important to them relative to providing a high level of service to the community. The groups expressed a diverse array of elements, which they felt were uniquely important to department members. These included the general diversity of work assignments associated with fire department activities and the “honor and privilege” of saving lives and protecting property. They also identified the presence of a high degree of teamwork within the work environment and the ability to interact with the public, especially with children, in the public education programs. The groups also expressed value in the frequent opportunity to work autonomously.

When discussing what elements within the department best help them serve the public, the groups identified education, teamwork, the presence of quality equipment and the presence of the “Service Officer Program”.

Exercise Three was an analysis of challenges facing the department. The exercise had two specific goals; first was “the identification of unmet needs in the community that the department would be well suited to provide” and secondly, “to identify challenges or impediments to the department in providing quality service.”
In the area of unmet needs, the groups identified the lack of home inspections, the absence of advance life support on district engine companies, the need to expand the fire prevention and inspection bureau, the need to increase mutual aid agreements with neighboring departments and creation of a more robust program to assist citizens after emergency services have been provided. They further identified the need for an efficient after the fire program to assist citizens in accessing emergency housing, insurance, property restoration and emergency acquisition of basic needs such as clothing. Conference attendee’s also expressed a need for “growing” the departments training division and the role of the Quincy Regional Training Center.

In the discussion on impediments to providing quality service, the groups identified insufficient manpower, a need for increased revenue, particularly in the areas of capital funding for fire trucks and buildings, increased community awareness of potential services provided by the department, intergovernmental politics and inadequate access to live fire training.

In Exercise Four, entitled “Putting it Together”, conference attendees were asked to review all of the results of the previous four exercises and based on those results to identify “Statements of Intent” which could be developed into strategic objectives. The table groups generally produced the Statement of Intents by reviewing the possibility of adding or deleting programs, the removal of impediments to “excellence” and the identification of activities, which support current successful programs.

The groups identified 14 statements of intent, which are listed in Appendix C of this document. Each of these statements represented a potential issue of strategic significance to the department and as such a strategic objective.
In Exercise Five, Conference Attendees participated in a culture assessment. Included in that discussion was an identification of values, traits and traditions, which are important to the success of our organization. The teams identified team work, pride, public trust and a sense of doing “important” work as being particularly rewarding and empowering to organization members. Team Members also identified a prevailing sense of brotherhood within the fire service as being something that they are very proud of. The group also identified a sense of commitment to the public, a high level of public expectations of firefighters and the general good relationship between the Firefighters Union and the Fire Department Administration as being qualities which empower and inspire the members of the organization to perform their best.

Discussions were also held as to what conditions impede the values identified. The table groups identified the presence of some negative people within the organization, a frequent breakdown of communications between fire department administration and line workers, the sometime imposition of excessive checks and balances, unnecessary bureaucracy and a frequent lack of accountability for poor performance. It was the general consensus of the group that each of these conditions undercuts the values, which the department thrives on and efforts should be made to eliminate them.

A final discussion was held on how best to strengthen the values that assist the fire department in providing service and how best to incorporate them into daily activities. The group identified the need for programs that promote unity, the recognition and rewarding of excellence, increased leadership training and a more robust mentoring program.

In the Assembly Phase (Exercise 6), intent statements were formed (see Appendix C) and hung on the walls. An then an election process called a Dotmacracy (Exercise Seven)
was held in which conference members identified those intention statements which were to be included in the eventual strategic plan. The Election Process clearly identified six statements of intent, which the group felt would be most appropriate for inclusion in a strategic plan. Each of the six “winning” statements of intent demonstrated preference by a clear majority of votes when compared to the eight intention statements, which were discarded. Results of the Dotmacracy Exercise can be found in Appendix C of this document.

In Exercise Eight and Nine the teams finalized the statements of intent as described in the procedures section earlier in this document. Generally the goal assembly phase was efficient in the construction of relevant, measurable goal statements. They provided the implementation teams with clear foundations on which to develop their individual Strategic Plan segments.

As described in the procedure section of this document, the strategic objectives were then passed to implementation teams who met over a 100-day period to finalize the individual strategic objectives (This was Exercise 10). The tasks included refining the intent of the strategic objective, as necessary creating action steps for its completion, creating a time line, identifying needed resources and identifying challenges or impediments to the implementation process which should be addressed. The results of the implementation teams works can be found in Appendix F of this document. Note worthy in the June session was the removal of one of the strategic objectives validated on the second day of the conference (January). The objective, which sought to expand the customer service programs of the department, was found by the implementation team to be worthwhile but not “strategic” in scope. As a result the conference attendees voted to exclude it from the final strategic plan.
The results of the implementation teams work were then finally presented to the fire department administration to be compiled into a comprehensive strategic plan.

*Design Results*

One of the research questions investigated in this project was, “What design elements proved effective or detrimental in utilizing LGI methodology in fire department strategic planning?” This section evaluates those results. In that pursuit the moderators and conference designers conferred throughout the planning process to evaluate individual exercise effectiveness. Exercises one through three were intended to assess the department’s current capabilities, strengths, weaknesses and challenges. It was found that these exercises did in fact garner the desired outcomes and the content of the exercises was appropriate for their intent. It was also found that the group discussion method went relatively smoothly. The small table groups and the use of discussion facilitators allowed for all members to be heard and all ideas to be explored while still keeping participants on task. The table exercises were timed at 30 minutes each, this was found to be close to ideal for groups of five or six, as it allowed time for work completion but was short enough to require diligence in keeping to the issue at hand. There was some feedback that exercise one could have been shortened by five or ten minutes and that those minutes could have been added to exercise three. The designers received feedback that the use of trained facilitators during these exercises was particularly useful as it helped to avoid some of the common pitfalls of work group exercises; such as single participant dominance, task confusion and shyness. Facilitators reported that the use of discussion points were very helpful early on as “ice breakers” however, as the table groups became more comfortable with the process the discussions became more self guided.
Of all the activities exercise four seemed to be best received. The table discussion groups were enthusiastic and animated as were the large group presentations. There were numerous suggestions made and debated. The discussion facilitators (all non department members) were highly complimentary of the spirit of the discussions. They reported surprise that the focus of the participants seemed committed to the general well being of the department, and that there was general lack of complaining or promotion of self-serving agendas.

The conference next moved to Exercise Five, which was an assessment of the organizational culture of the department. The results of this exercise are discussed above and it deemed some information deemed useful, however the general consensus of the design team was that this exercise was the least effective of the conference. Participation was tepid, and some of the conferences momentum was lost. Post conference analysis by the design team, discussion facilitators and moderators seemed to question the value of the exercise, at least in its original form. Suggestions were made to shorten the exercise, relocate it to the beginning of the conference and to eliminate it all together.

Exercise Six required the participants to form statements of intent utilizing the results of the previous exercises. In free form and often-spirited discussion the conference members identified 14 possible goals, which they felt, were worthy of consideration with in the strategic plan. (See appendix C). The exercise was found to be effective at pulling together the ideas expressed through out the conference into a few generalized but coherent concepts. Even though this was an open discussion among close to 60 people, it was found that by this point the group had formed a sort of all for one attitude that allowed for free expression and supportive behavior. The membership seemed generally receptive to opinions from through out the room.
The next conference step was the “Dotmocracy” vote. The group found the exercise fun and the room was animated during the 30 minutes it was conducted. Vote results can be seen in Appendix C. This exercise worked well as a closing event as allowed for group interaction and free movement around the room.

The Quincy Fire Department strategic planning process initiated again the next day. Exercises eight and nine both involved the refinement of the strategic intent statements identified as priorities in the Dotmocracy election. The first of the two exercises involved table work, the second involved group presentation. Both exercises were relatively effective in clarifying the strategic intent statements and molding them into formalized strategic objectives.

With the strategic objectives identified and clarified, the conference then moved to the implementation stage, which involved the work groups utilizing a 100-day recess, in order to develop implementation plans for each of the strategic objectives. The results of these exercises were somewhat mixed. The groups struggled with the assignments and often expressed concerns about not fully understanding what was expected of them. The results of their work were orally presented to the third conference session in June 2007.

The oral presentations were inconsistent with each other in both depth of analysis and generalized content. It should be noted however, that sufficient data was presented to the conference body so as to allow conference participates to finalize strategic objective details and turn that data over to senior staff for compilation into a strategic planning document. With the approval of the implementation plans, the Large Group Intervention (LGI) section of the strategic planning process for the Quincy Fire Department concluded.
Challenges and Impediments

In designing and utilizing LGI methodology for strategic planning, the design team identified several challenges, which may hinder other fire departments when implementing the same methodology. Among those challenges were logistical issues, including event location. The design team found that the LGI strategic planning process required a location with very specific accommodations. This included comfortable room with adequate space to allow for “pod” seating of table groups of six people each. This particular room configuration is not an efficient use of space, as such; a very large room is needed. Further requirements included a sound system, audiovisual support and a great deal of free wall space for hanging exercise results. Another requirement found by the design team was that the room must be suitable for the delivery and consumption of food during breaks and lunch hours. A second challenge discovered by the design team was scheduling. In the case of the Quincy Fire Department, over two thirds of the employees participated in the strategic planning process. Selecting a time frame and schedule that could accommodate this many employees, was difficult. Additionally, there were significant numbers of external stakeholders who also had to make scheduling accommodations in order to attend. This problem was aggravated by a requirement imposed by the design team, which made participation as “all or nothing.” This meant that anyone who wished to participate had to participate in the full conference and could not just do one section or another. While this restriction proved necessary, it also tended to limit the number of people who were able to attend. A third challenge discovered by the design team was cost. Costs included: room rental, food and conference supplies. An additional significant cost was that off duty firefighters were compensated for their
participation in order to encourage attendance. Compared with traditional strategic planning modes, large group intervention planning conferences are expensive.

When configuring the large group planning session, the design team assumed that certain challenges would surface during the conference. These included the emergence of dominant personalities attempting to influence the outcome of discussions and/or monopolize discussion time. A second anticipated challenge was that certain individuals would use the conference format to push special interests or personal agendas which may or may not have been supportive of the departments overall mission. A primary concern of the design team was that it would be exceedingly difficult to keep 60 or more participants on point during discussions and on some sort of timeline. Much to the surprise of the design team and the conference facilitators, none of these issues presented themselves to any meaningful extent.

Measuring Outcomes

In an effort to determine the relative effectiveness of the large group methodology in strategic planning as compared to more traditional forms, surveys were completed by both participants of the Future Quest Conference and members of organizations who’s strategic plans were made in more traditionally. (See Appendix G and H for survey results)

The survey data lent itself to the following observations:

There were 48 members of other organizations who responded to the survey. 51% of those responding indicated that they had no input into the strategic planning process, yet 75% of all respondents indicated that they were supportive of the strategic direction of their organization. However, the survey data demonstrated over 36% of those individuals who had no input into the strategic planning process indicated that they did not support
their organizations strategic plan; and an additional 31% of those excluded members indicated that they were relatively neutral on the strategic plan.

The responses from members of the Quincy Fire Department who participated in the strategic planning conference showed that 74% of respondents supported the strategic plan with the remaining 26% indicating that they were at least neutral. There were no respondents who indicated that they were unsupportive of the strategic plan developed by the Future Quest Conference.

In questioning respondents about their understanding of the strategic direction of their organization, 34% of the respondents who had not participated in the strategic planning process of their organization indicated that they did not have a clear understanding of the organizations strategic plan. An additional 31% of respondents indicated that they were relatively neutral. As a result, less than half of the respondents not participating in the strategic planning process indicated positively that they had an understanding of the strategic direction of their organization. By comparison, 78% of the participants of the Future Quest Planning Conference at the Quincy Fire Department indicated that they had a clear understanding of the strategic plan. The remaining 22% indicated they were neutral in reporting their understanding of the department’s strategic plan. There were no respondents who indicated that they did not understand the strategic plan or the new strategic direction proposed in the Future Quest Conference.

When members of other organizations were asked if their organization had done an effective job of communicating its strategic objectives to the rank and file, over 43% indicated that it had not. 30% had indicated they were neutral on the subject and only 25% indicated that they had felt positively that their organization had effectively communicated its strategic objectives throughout the organization. By comparison, 78%
of the members of the Future Quest Conference indicated that the exercise effectively communicated the strategic direction of the department. The remaining 22% were neutral on the conference's ability to communicate strategic direction. There were no respondents who felt that the conference failed to communicate strategic direction effectively.

Also indicated by the survey was a general satisfaction with the conference itinerary. 61% of conference attendees indicated that participation in the conference was a rewarding experience. 39% were neutral on the subject and no respondents indicated that it was unrewarding or a waste of time.

A surprising result from the surveys was the apparent affect that conference participation had on the participant’s views toward the strategic planning process itself. 91% of Quincy conference attendees disagreed with the statement that the strategic planning process should be the responsibility of senior management personnel only. By comparison, in the survey, which polled organization members outside of the Quincy Fire Department who had not participated in their organizations strategic planning, 54% indicated disagreement with that same statement.

Discussion

The stated purpose of this research project was to document and evaluate the design and use of LGI methods for the purpose of strategic planning within the Quincy Fire Department. LGI methods employed to determine if the Quincy Fire Department could successfully engage its members and external stakeholders in the construction of a functional strategic plan.” The results of the Future Quest Planning Conference would indicate that the answer to that question is yes.
Over the span of three days, members of Quincy Fire Department and external stakeholders came together, identified key issues facing the department and analyzed the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges facing the organization. They identified several key areas in which they felt the Fire Department might strategically improve itself. They then compiled that information into six strategic objectives.

A survey of participants indicated that the strategic objectives identified by the conference were meaningful and the conference participants were highly supportive of it. The participation level and the quality of work done at the Future Quest Conference indicated that the conference format captured the attention of its participants. Their enthusiasm was maintained through over the 20 hours of the conference itself as well as countless hours of committee work outside of the conference. It was also apparent by the demeanor and commentary of conference participants that a sense of community was created and fostered during the strategic planning process.

After conference surveys confirmed that the majority of Future Quest Conference attendees found the experience rewarding and beneficial.

A research question investigated by this project was “What Challenges and obstacles, if any, might impede the fire department in the use of an organization wide strategic planning session.” The literature review indicated that the scalar and bureaucratic organization structures found in public sector agencies, (including fire departments) may be problematic for highly participative exercises such as was undertaken at the Future Quest Conference. (O’Brien 2002, Mitzberg, 1994)

The experience in the Quincy Fire Department Planning session did not demonstrate any significant conflict between organizational culture and the exercises undertaken within the conference. In preparing for the conference, the Design Team discussed
concerns that some of the exercises may not be consistent with firehouse culture and that there may be reluctance of the participants to freely communicate their thoughts. There were also concerns by the Design Team that there may be an inclination by conference attendees to promote self-serving agendas within the discussion forum.

None of these negative issues arose during the Future Quest Conference. Participants including both department members and external stakeholders were fully engaged in the planning process. Participation was nearly universal and debate was lively, but productive. The groups remained on task throughout the conference proceedings and participant members demonstrated a genuine concern directed at the strategic well being of the fire department, and the citizens it serves. Furthermore, it was apparent by participant’s demeanor, comments and survey results that participants seem to enjoy and appreciate the opportunity to have input into the strategic planning process. This was verified by survey results, which indicated that 96% of conference attendees found the conference to be a very or somewhat rewarding experience.

A second research question sought to investigate what if any benefits were gained by the use of LGI methodology. The literature review indicated that the presence and participation of external stakeholders would have a likely positive benefit on the strategic planning process (Leith, 1996). The results of this research project tend to reinforce that opinion. The presence of external stakeholders at the Future Quest Conference added depth and richness of perspective. Further, their opinions sometimes moved discussions into areas that would not have been explored in their absence. This observation is also supported by the post conference survey, which indicated that only 9% of the conference attendees felt that the presence of external stakeholders had a negative effect on the
planning process, while the other 91% indicated at least some support for the presence of external stakeholders.

In reviewing the literature it was indicated by several authors (O’Brien, Gordon, Bell, Turncliff) that participative techniques in strategic planning would increase support for the strategic planning process and its results. The results indicated by this project tend to support that proposal. Observations during the Future Quest Planning Conference indicated a high degree of support by participants of the process and the post interview survey indicated that 100% of the attendees supported the new strategic plan at least somewhat with a 74% indicating strong support of the newly formed strategic plan.

The literature further indicated that large group exercises could potentially build a sense of community (Bell, Turncliff, Gordon). This too was observed in the planning exercises conducted in Quincy. Not only was a sense of community demonstrated during the conference, but also almost all participating members continued to assist plan development during the 100-day implementation phase of the planning process. The Planning Teams identified a relatively strong sense of identity and a shared sense of purpose.

Also found in the literature review was the belief that the use of Large Group Methodologies would likely increase understanding of the strategic plan, it’s intents and necessity (Gordon, Leith). 78% of the Future Quest participants reported that they better understood the direction of the department and were supportive of that direction after attending the conference.

In summary, the use of Large Group Conference methodology in creating a strategic plan for the Quincy Fire Department proved generally successful. Conference attendees were able to deliver a functional, strategic plan based on accepted criteria. Use of Large Group
methodology seemed to increase support of the strategic planning process, it built a sense of community and the members seemed to appreciate the strategic planning process, and its needs. While several challenges, and/or obstacles were anticipated, none presented themselves to a degree, which negatively impacted the conference proceedings.

A third area investigated was, which design elements proved effective or detrimental in the utilization of LGI methodology in fire department strategic planning. The Quincy planning conference results indicated that the table groups with an assigned facilitator were the single most successful design element. The presence of the facilitator conjoined with the discussion guides seemed to keep the groups on task and moving forward through the planning and design process. It also seemed apparent that the usage of numerous specific exercises proved more manageable for the groups as opposed to be given a general task and letting them work through process unguided. The key design element, which contributed to the success of the planning conference, was its participative nature. The participation of firefighters throughout the organization combined with the presence of citizen stakeholders created a palpable atmosphere of community. The discussions presented diverse opinions and ideas that could not be expected by a small homogenous group of senior staff officers working alone.

The design element that proved most problematic was the use of “design teams” in the building of implementation plans during the 100-day period between day 2 of the conference and its conclusion in June. The teams struggled with the task and this had a dampening effect on both the enthusiasm and momentum of the project.

The results of this project appear to confirm that several benefits can be obtained through the use of LGI methods. Fire departments can use the conference method to develop strategic plans which are meaningful to the members of the organization; are
supported by its firefighters as well as concerned citizens. Understanding and support of strategic objectives are critical to their implementation and LGI methods may be superior to traditional planning methods in gaining those elements.

Recommendations

The results of the Quincy Fire Department’s Future Quest conference indicated that there is some justification for optimism in the use of Large Group Interventions (LGI) for fire department strategic planning. As such, the author recommends that continued study in the use of LGI methods in the fire service be undertaken.

While the Quincy Fire Department’s results were relatively positive, this field of study would greatly benefit from additional experiences by other communities. As such, the author makes these specific recommendations; first, while literature review did not indicate any instance of another fire department using Large Group Strategic Planning Methodology, the author recognizes the possibility that previous use of LGI methods may have occurred absent documentation. The author also recognizes the value of comparison of those experiences with those of the Quincy Strategic Planning Project. As a result, it is recommended that a nationwide survey be conducted of fire department’s inquiring whether or not any have employed Large Group Strategic Planning Methodology and documenting their successes and failures with it.

Secondly, the author also suggests that the field of study involving public sector and or fire department strategic planning would benefit from the initiation of Large Group Strategic Planning Methods by other fire departments of various sizes, configuration and strategic location. Of particular interest would be a comparison of success rates of Large
Group Strategic Planning initiatives within fire department’s of diverse organizational cultures and operational structures.

A further recommendation is that the Quincy Fire Department Strategic Planning project be revisited in Three to five years to determine whether or not the strategic plan developed using the Large Group Methodology has had a significant impact on implementation success compared to those department’s who have used traditional planning methods.

It is also recommended that an expanded survey be fielded measuring the attitudes and perceptions of firefighters nationwide regarding the strategic planning process and their understanding their departments strategic direction dependent on their level of participation.

This study would have benefited from a “pre-survey” of Quincy Fire Department members in order to document their understanding and support of the Quincy Fire Department strategic direction and process prior to the Future Quest Conference. This data would have been valuable for comparison with the post-conference results. A final recommendation is that future conferences employ a “pre-conference survey”.

References


### Table 1 – Conference Rules

#### USFA 5-Year Operational Objectives

1. Reduce the loss of life from fire-related hazards, particularly among these target audiences:
   - 14 years and younger age group
   - 65 years and older age group
   - Firefighters
2. Help communities develop comprehensive all-hazard risk reduction plans.
3. Appropriately respond in a timely manner to emergent issues.

Re-printed from the United States Fire Administration web page
http://www.usfa.dhs.gov/about/strategic/

### Table 2 - Conference Rules

- For purposes of the conference all individuals in the room are of equal rank and authority.
  
  There are no managers or bosses, just employees.
- Everyone is allowed and encouraged to contribute.
- There are no cell phones
- There are no wrong answers or bad ideas.
- No personal attacks or criticism of individuals were allowed.
- The conference purpose is to build a future, not to complain about the past.
Appendix A

Discussion Guides for Exercises 1 through 4

Exercise 1 Discussion Guides

- What duties or services do residents value most from the fire department?
- What does the fire department do particularly well?
- What services have the greatest impact on life quality within the community?
- What duties do I hear thank-you or well done most often because of?

Exercise 2 Discussion Guides

- As an employee, I feel most efficient or useful when …
- As an employee, I feel most comfortable doing …
- What activities do you believe best serve the public?
- What activities or services are most productive for the department, and/or helps you as a firefighter best serve the public?

Exercise 3 Discussion Guides- Question 1

- Is there something that we (QFD) should or could be doing that we are not?
- Is there something the fire department is doing, but needs more of?

Exercise 3 Discussion Guides- Question 2

- If we (fire department) could only do _______, we’d better serve the public.
- A lack of _________ holds us back.
- I wish we could get rid of _________
Exercise 4 Discussion Guides

- What is the fire department doing now that should be changed?
- What program should be added or dropped?
- What challenges or impediments should be addressed?
- How can the department better serve the public?

Exercise 5 Discussion Guides

- What makes working at the Quincy Fire Department rewarding for you as an individual?
- What makes you as an employee most proud of being a firefighter?
- When did you feel most inspired or empowered to perform your best and what condition caused you to feel that way?
- What current or past conditions, policies or events most frustrated you in your attempts to serve the public efficiently?
- What policies, conditions or practices do you feel are in conflict with the values of our department?
Appendix B

Event Flow Chart

**Evaluation Phase**
- Exercise 1
  - External Service Audit
- Exercise 2
  - Internal Service Audit
- Exercise 3
  - Challenge Analysis
- Exercise 4
  - Putting It Together
- Exercise 5
  - Internal Culture Audit

**Assembly Phase**
- Introduction
  - Goal Assembly
- Exercise 7
  - “Dotmocracy” Election

**Design Phase**
- Exercise 8
  - Work Groups
- Exercise 9
  - Peer Review

**Evaluation Phase**
- Exercise 10
  - Implementation Team Meetings
- Exercise 11
  - Plan Approval
Appendix C

Exercise 6 Results- Statements of Intent and Dotmocracy Results

Increase Public Service awareness -8 votes
Modify recruit testing -8 votes
Create a firefighter Wellness Plan - 8 votes
Expand the Fire Service contracting program- 6 votes
Create A leadership Academy- 3 votes
Commit to 10 year Station relocation plan – 2 votes
Initiate Employye Appreciation program – 1 vote
Increase Funding through Tax Inisative – 0 votes

Dotmocracy Winners
Create A metro Department – 31 votes √
Increase Staffing to Minimum # Man Companies –27 votes √
Expand EMS program – 22 votes √
Create After Fire Program – 14 votes √
Expand training Division / Regional Training Facility – 17 votes √
Increase Fire Prevention program – 18 votes √
Exercise D

Exercise Eight Methodologies

1. Each participant was required to join a planning team.

2. Each strategic issue was to have had at least two team members.

3. Each team was designed to be a democracy and consensus of the team on discussion points and plan development was required.

4. Team members were to work together as a group with the intention of creating appropriate goals, parameters and wording for their proposed Strategic Objective for 30 minutes.

5. At the end of 30 minutes, team members were allowed to float around and give input to other groups working on other strategic objectives. It was required, however that at least one member of the design team remain with the project during the “float period”. This was to allow the team to explain its findings and to make note of any suggested improvements or changes by members who were “floating”.
Appendix E
Quincy Exercise Participant Survey Sample

**Strategic Planning Session Critique**

On each of the following survey questions please select the answer you find best describes your opinion. Selecting a 1 indicates you strongly disagree with the statement, a selection of 5 indicates you strongly agree.

As a result of the Strategic Planning Conference, I better understand and support the strategic direction of the department.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
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The presence of the chief officers lessened my level comfort in expressing myself, it would had been better with out them there.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
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</table>

As a result of participating in the Strategic Planning Conference I better understand the “new” strategic plan as opposed to the old one.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
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</table>

I support the “new” strategic plan. I think the conference attendees built something worth pursuing.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
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Participating in the strategic planning process was a rewarding experience.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
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</table>

I believe that developing a strategic plan is the responsibility of senior staff, I’d prefer they create it and then explain it in detail to us.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
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</table>

The planning conference was interesting, but I believe that too many people were involved for it to be effective.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
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Participating in the conference was a waste of my time.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
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</table>

I believe we should have conferences like this every year or two, so we can hear what the rest of the department thinks about what we are doing.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
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I think conference should not include people who do not work for the department.

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Agree</th>
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</table>
Appendix F

Strategic Planning Survey

On each of the following survey questions please select the answer you find best describes your opinion. Selecting a 1 indicates you strongly disagree with the statement, a selection of 5 indicates you strongly agree.

I have a clear understanding of my department's strategic direction.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Disagree</th>
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I feel the strategic direction of my department is well thought out, achievable and in my best interest.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
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I had meaningful input into the strategic plan.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
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The department has done a good job of communicating its strategic objectives to the rank and file.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
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External stakeholders such as elected officials and citizens groups are aware of my department's future plans.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disagree</th>
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</table>

I believe that developing a strategic plan is the responsibility of senior staff; I'd prefer they create it and then explain it in detail to us.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
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If asked to participate in a strategic planning exercise I would participate.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disagree</th>
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Our department formally reviews its strategic plan at least every year.

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</table>

In my department the strategic planning process is fairly transparent, every one knows its happening and what is discussed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disagree</th>
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Planning Results

Strategic Objective Number 1: Staffing and Apparatus allocation

Objectives:
1. Increase manning levels to a minimum of Three individuals per apparatus.
2. Implement two rescue pumper apparatus to be stationed at 4's and 3's, making the current rescue truck a reserve apparatus.

Rationale:
NFA standards indicate that Three personnel per apparatus should be considered an industry minimum. At present, staffing levels for the Quincy Fire Department are insufficient to maintain that standard when considering the presence of absenteeism from vacation, sickness, and training. The presence of Three individuals per responding unit will increase safety for responders as well as efficiency in fireground operations, particularly in the first few minutes after arrival. The redistribution of rescue apparatus with the retirement of a front-line rescue truck will offset some costs associated with the hiring of personnel.

Action Steps:
1. In the next five years, increase minimum manning per shift to 19.
2. In the next five years, replace Engine Company 4 and Engine Company 5 with rescue pumpers. Specifications for exact trucks to be determined by committee.
3. Modify dispatch protocols to accommodate presence of two rescue apparatus instead of one.

Resource assessment:
1. Hire 9 new firefighters at an estimated cost of $70,000 per individual based on this year's wage analysis.
2. Purchase two new rescue pumpers at an estimated cost of $400,000 each.

Policy Modifications:
1. Update minimum manning policy to reflect the increase of personnel.
2. Dispatch protocols for rescue pumper alarm assignments
3. Evaluate vacation regulations.

Strategic Objective Number 2: Redesign Training program to incorporate presence of Quincy Regional Training Facility.

Objectives:
1. Develop and strengthen Quincy Regional Training Facility and programs
2. Strengthen hands on training and training schedule for Quincy Fire Department
3. Redefine shift training coordinator positions
Rationale:
Effective training is essential to the efficient performance of Fire Department functions. Training is also considered the basis for assuring the safety of firefighters while responding to emergencies. Increased efficiency and reduction of injuries will produce significant reductions in future costs in providing for public safety. The strengthening of the Quincy Regional Training Facility programs in conjunction with future capital development will assure the future of the facility as well as capitalize on previous investments in the facility and its programs. Strengthening of the Quincy Regional Training Facility will have a profound impact on public safety and the cost of its provision, not only for the City of Quincy, but also for the entire region.

Action Steps:
1. Form a steering committee for the development and promotion of the Quincy Regional Training Facility.
2. Develop specialized training in the area of public safety.
3. Market the Quincy Regional Training Facility's educational opportunities in an effort to increase revenue.
4. Create new training props.
5. Create a body of QRTF employees and instructors.
6. Develop basic and advanced skills booklet for training coordinators and officers usage.
7. Develop specific job descriptions for training coordinator positions.
8. Identify funds for compensation of training coordinator positions on each shift.
9. Develop outside resources to help offset cost of Quincy Fire Department and QRTF programs, preferably through corporate sponsorship.
10. Develop membership program for Fire Departments and private industry in West Central Illinois.

Resource Assessment:
Capital investment over the next seven years estimated at $750,000. Salaries for coordinators and QRTF employees estimated at $72,000 per year, including benefits. Available income estimate, including memberships, fee-based training, and cost offsets through the City of Quincy, estimated at $110,000 per year.

Policy Modifications:
1. Development of job description for training coordinators.
2. Development of job description for QRTF instructors and employees.
3. Renegotiation of reimbursement for training activities with firefighters union.
4. Re-address various policy procedures for delivery of training, as well as scheduling and billing procedures.
Strategic Objective Number 3: Extend the Quincy Fire Department's Emergency Services Dual Response program from Basic Life Support to Advanced Life Support.

Strategic Objectives:
1. Upgrade Quincy Fire Department district apparatus from Basic Life Support to Advanced Life Support in the next Three to five years.
2. To add a back-up ambulance to Central Station in the next Three to five years.

Rationale:
The intended outcome of this strategic initiative is to increase the level of care our personnel are able to provide within the EMS dual-response program. The provision of Advanced Life Support can be critical in life-threatening medical emergencies, especially those where the delivery of advance life support techniques within the first 6 minutes of an incident can determine patient mortality. The provision of a backup ambulance at Central Fire Station will provide a significant upgrade to the cities dual-response and first responder programs at those times where available EMS resources are stretched beyond normal staffing levels. This occurs in approximately 45 times per year.

Action Steps:
1. Perform assessment of current apparatus and determine if adequate space exists to complement a full cadre of ALS equipment.
2. Change basic design of future apparatus to accommodate the addition of ALS equipment.
3. Initiate change in hiring requirements for the Quincy Fire Department to require Paramedic certification prior to employment.
4. Initiation of a full time EMS officer responsible for medical education and program management.
5. Secure necessary equipment for program initiation.
7. Make application to Quincy area EMS system and State of Illinois six months prior to program start for ALS status.

Resource Assessment:
1. Modification of pumpers to accommodate ALS program estimated at $1000 per pumper for modification, $350,000 for future apparatus replacement.
2. Training of new personnel estimated at $4280 per new paramedic student.
3. Raising paramedic level from current staffing to 27, estimated at $68,480 based on 2007 collective bargaining agreement, incentive and pay differentials.
4. Acquisition and equipping of back-up ambulance estimated at $320,000.
5. Estimated equipment for each Quincy Fire Department responding unit, $27,000 per unit.

Funding Sources:
Assistance to Firefighter grant, EMS grant through State of Illinois system, access to Foreign Fire Insurance Board's cost share with Adams County Ambulance Service based on 1% emergency responder tax.

Policy Modifications:
1. Change in hiring requirements and probationary firefighter education requirements to accommodate ALS training.
2. Change in dispatch protocols regarding ALS response.
3. Change in dispatch protocols regarding presence of backup ambulance.
4. Modification of monthly training requirements to accommodate ALS continuing education requirements.
5. Addition of internal billing procedures.

**Strategic Objective Number 4:** Reinforce and expand fire prevention efforts including public education and inspection.

Strategic Initiatives:
1. Staff a full-time fire prevention bureau, which will be tasked with occupancy inspections, liquor license inspections, and live entertainment inspections.
2. Develop a joint task force between the Quincy Fire Department inspection personnel and the City of Quincy's building inspection office with the intention of eliminating redundant inspection procedures, more efficiently using resources through shared inspection results and joint inspections.
3. Strengthen our public education program through increased staffing of the public education team.

Rationale: Fire Prevention and public education initiatives are the most cost effective exercises employed by Fire Departments in maintaining public safety. Quincy Fire Department has maxed its ability to conduct inspections and public education programs with current resources. The presence of aggressive fire prevention programs will likely offset future costs of service delivery over the next 10 years.

Action Items:
1. Develop a comprehensive information retrieval system on fire causes and origins.
2. Increase Risk Watch Program contacts to include a fifth grade program.
3. Develop and promote more adult education programs.
4. Provide speaker bureaus for adult and professional engagements.
5. Develop a fire academy for community members.
6. Develop a fire corps of volunteers.
7. Hire and train Three fire prevention bureau employees.
8. Cross-train fire prevention bureau employees and Quincy building inspection employees.
9. Standardize site-plan review process.
10. Add two service officer positions to public education program
11. Utilize Citizen Corps volunteer members to augment public education programs and handle scheduling and logistics.
12. Identify new office space for future fire department bureau and public education bureau.

Resource Assessment:
1. Fire Prevention salary estimation $153,000 per year.
2. Secretary for bureau, $45,000 per year.
3. Bureau facility and operational cost, $30,000 per year.
4. Training cost, $10,000 per year.

Income Availabilities:
1. Inspection and licensing fees estimate, $10,000 per year.
2. Potential salary reduction through volunteer corps as opposed to secretarial position, $45,000 per year.

Policy Modifications:
1. Memorandum of Agreement through Firefighters Local 63 and City regarding fire prevention officer position.
2. Job description for fire prevention officers and public education bureau.
3. A specific job description for bureau secretary as appropriate.

Strategic Objective Number 5: The consolidation of the Quincy Fire Department with the Tri-Township Fire Department within the next 5 to 10 years.

Strategic Objectives.
1. To create an independent fire district covering the City of Quincy as well as the Three townships immediately adjacent to Quincy.
2. To realize cost savings to Quincy tax-payers by eliminating redundancy and public safety operations between the two departments.
3. To increase the level of service, particularly to the residents living just outside the Quincy Fire Department jurisdiction, currently being serviced by the Tri-Township Fire District.

Rationale:
The City of Quincy has a full time fire department protecting 42,000 individuals. The townships immediately surrounding the City of Quincy have an additional 25,000 individuals, who will be protected by the Tri-township Fire District on a volunteer and paid on-call basis. There is significant redundancy in apparatus, buildings, and services caused by the close
proximity of the two departments. Further, a significant portion of the city of Quincy's tax base sits outside of its jurisdiction and those assets are under served in fire protection and other forms of public safety services. The combining of the two departments into one metropolitan department will increase the amount of public safety services extended to affected residents and should realize a significant cost benefit to taxpayers.

Action Steps:
1. Enter into negotiations with the City of Quincy and Adams County with regard to the combination of the two departments.
2. Do a cost benefit analysis to determine whether there is sufficient tax dollars available to support a combined department assuming current Illinois taxing regulations.
3. Identify the logistical steps necessary to combine the two departments, reassign assets, and response requirements.

Resource Assessment:
Current Quincy Fire Department budget is 7.05 million dollars. Current Tri-Township Fire Department is $600,000. Total available tax base, unknown and to be determined. Anticipated cost benefit through reduction of redundant services estimated between $100,000-$300,000 per year.

Policy and/or Structure Modifications:
1. Redraw fire districts
2. Determine types of apparatus to be utilized.
3. Re-evaluate station locations in light of the new response areas.
4. Modify inspection and service lists.
5. Review policy and operating procedures at both departments, and combine them into a single unit.
Appendix H

Traditional Strategic Planning Survey Results

Q 1: I have a clear understanding of my organization's strategic direction.

Q 2: I feel the strategic direction of the organization is well thought out, achievable and in my best interest.

Q 3: I had meaningful input into the strategic planning process of my organization.

Q 4: My organization has done a good job of communicating its strategic objectives to the rank and file.

Q 5: External stakeholders such as elected officials and citizens groups are aware of my department's future plans.
Appendix H

Strategic Planning Survey Results cont.

Q 6: I believe that developing a strategic plan is the responsibility of senior staff, I’d prefer they create it and then explain it in detail to us.

Q 7: If asked to participate in a strategic planning exercise, I would

Q 8: Our organization formally reviews its strategic plan at least every year.

Q 9: In my organization the strategic planning process is fairly transparent, every one knows its happening and what is discussed.

The survey polled members of organizations other than the Quincy Fire Department. The first column represents results from all survey respondents; the second column only reflects those respondents who had not participated in their organizations strategic planning process.
Appendix I

Future Quest Participant Critique Results

Q 1: As a result of the Strategic Planning Conference, I better understand and support the strategic direction of the department.

Q 2: The presence of the chief officers lessened my level comfort in expressing myself, it would had been better with out them there.

Q 3: As a result of participating in the Strategic Planning Conference I better understand the “new” strategic plan as opposed to the old one.

Q 4: I support the “new” strategic plan. I think the conference attendees built something worth pursuing.

Q 5: Participating in the strategic planning process was a rewarding experience.
Appendix I

Future Quest Participant Survey Results cont.

Q 6: I believe that developing a strategic plan is the responsibility of senior staff, I’d prefer they create it and then explain it in detail to us.

Q 7: The planning conference was interesting, but I believe that too many people were involved for it to be effective.

Q 8: Participating in the conference was a waste of my time.

Q 9: I believe we should have conferences like this every year or two, so we can hear what the rest of the department thinks about what we are doing.

Q 10: I think conference should not include people who do not work for the department.