

RUNNING HEAD: STRATEGIC PLANNING

Strategic Planning

in the Worthington Fire Protection District

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CERTIFICATION STATEMENT

I hereby certify that this paper constitutes my own product, that where the language of others is set forth, quotation marks so indicate, and that appropriate credit is given where I have used the language, ideas, expression, or writings of another.

Signed: _____

Abstract

The problem is the Worthington Fire Protection District has no strategic plan. This leads to being reactionary with resources in an ever tight economy.

The purpose of this research was to identify the elements that would be involved in developing a strategic plan and how a strategic plan would be implemented at the Worthington Fire Protection District. This was a descriptive research project. The research questions were:

1. What are the benefits of strategic planning?
2. How has other fire department implemented strategic planning?
3. Who should be involved in the strategic planning process within our department?
4. How long should our strategic plan target for?
5. What key elements should our strategic plan encompass?

The procedures included a survey of the National Society of Executive Fire Officers, Jefferson County Instructors Association, and members of the Worthington Fire Department. This research project also included discussions with local chief level fire officers.

The research showed varied approaches to strategic planning, different planning models, and that strategic planning need to be customized to the specific agency.

The recommendations, based on this study were:

1. Work with the Fire Chief to put together a proposal to be presented to the Board of Trustees of the Worthington Fire Protection District showing the need for strategic planning.

2. Identify stakeholders of the organization to participate in the planning function.
3. Use the strategic planning model as defined by Mark Wallace in his book *Fire Department Strategic Planning; Creating Future Excellence* (Wallace, 2006) to develop a strategic plan for the department.
4. Once the strategic plans are finalized, the fire chief will present the plans to the Worthington Fire Protection District Board of Trustees for adoption.

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Introduction

The Worthington Fire Protection District (WFD) is a combination fire department with the majority of the fire district being in Metropolitan Louisville, Jefferson County Kentucky. A small portion of the district is in Oldham County Kentucky. The fire department mission is to “safely, efficiently, and economically provide quality and caring service to those who live, work and visit our community, which will minimize the loss of life and destruction of property through education, prevention, and mitigation of hazardous situations with professional, trained and competent personnel” (Worthington Fire Department Annual Report 2009). The mission statement infers that the fire department will provide efficient and economical services to minimize the loss of life.

The problem is the Worthington Fire Protection District has no strategic plan. This leads to being reactionary with resources in an ever tight economy.

The purpose of this research is to identify the elements that would be involved in developing a strategic plan and how a strategic plan would be implemented at the Worthington Fire Protection District. This descriptive research project will include a survey of the National Society of Executive Fire Officers, a survey of the members of the Jefferson County Instructors Association, and a survey of members of the Worthington Fire Department. This research project will also include discussions with local chief level fire officers. Also included in this research is a review of current literature on the topic.

This research project will identify the benefits of strategic planning. It will identify how other fire departments have implemented strategic planning. It will identify who should be involved in strategic planning within the Worthington Fire Department. It

will identify how long should a strategic plan target for, and it will identify what are the key elements should a strategic plan encompass.

Background and Significance

The Worthington Fire Protection District (WFD, or Worthington Fire Department) was formed in 1943 to protect a small rural farming community fifteen miles outside of Louisville, Kentucky. The area has now developed from a rural farming community to a diverse suburban district consisting of a mix of light and heavy industrial factories. The district also consists of warehousing areas, three shopping malls, the Ford Kentucky Truck Plant, numerous railroad lines, a section of Interstate 71 and a section of Interstate 265. The district has large residential areas consisting of housing from the \$100,000 to \$10,000,000 range. The population of the district has swelled to approximately 33,000 residents.

The fire district covers 19 square miles in the northeastern corner of Metropolitan Louisville, Jefferson County, Kentucky and a small southwestern portion of Oldham County, Kentucky. It is a combination department with 24 volunteers, 28 career personnel, and 4 part-time personnel. The Worthington Fire Protection District is a Kentucky Revised Statues Chapter 75 fire protection taxing district and is authorized by law to collect .10 per \$100.00 worth of property assessed value. The taxing level is set by Kentucky at .10 and cannot be raised above that amount without a change in the legislation. (Kentucky Revised Statues Chapter 75.010, 1984) The Worthington Fire Protection District does not receive any revenue from the Louisville Jefferson County

Metropolitan government. The operation of the fire department is solely funded on the property taxes collected within the 19 square mile district boundaries.

Tax revenue of the Worthington Fire Department in 2011 was \$3,619,053.44. This was up from the 2010 rate of \$3,558,937.16. Tax revenue in 2012 is projected to be down to \$3,348,724.18.

Around March of 2009, then Chief of the Worthington Fire Department, Gary Yurt, Sr. determined that it was time to conduct strategic planning. Numerous meetings were held within the department by the fire department Command Staff (Chief, Assistant Chief, and Battalion Chiefs), the fire department Division Staff (Division Chief of Training and Community Risk), the fire department Administrative Assistant and a paid consultant to work through the strategic planning process. The last meeting was held in July of 2009 and the process was never completed. In March of 2010 and January of 2011, the Worthington Fire Department went through an administration change.

Currently the department is working within a budget that was set by the fire department administration and approved by the Worthington Fire Protection District Board of Trustees. The Worthington Fire Department does not currently have any strategic plans to run the fire department. There is nothing to tie the budget, operations and mission of the department together.

This research project is being conducted as a requirement for the Executive Leadership curriculum at the National Fire Academy (NFA) located in Emmitsburg, Maryland. This Applied Research Project (ARP) relates directly with the course goal of “providing a framework of executive level competencies by focusing on personal effectiveness”. Specifically the personal competencies of systemic and political thinking,

negotiation, use of feedback, influence, persuasion, and decision making, all of which is important in strategic planning (NFA, 2011). This ARP also relates to the United States Fire Administration strategic goal of “improving the fire and emergency services’ capability for response to and recovery from all hazards”. The problem of the lack of strategic planning can hamper a department’s ability to respond to the needs of the community they serve. (USFA, 2010).

Literature Review

The research material obtained for this project was obtained from numerous sources. The National Fire Academy’s Learning Resource Center was a source of information including other Executive Fire Officer Applied Research Projects, and periodicals. The Louisville, Kentucky Free Public Library provided sources of information and resources from the World Wide Web were used.

What is strategic planning? Merriam Webster’s Dictionary (2011) defined strategic as “of relating to, or marked by a strategy”. They then go on to define a strategy as “a careful plan or method used toward a goal”. Planning is defined as “the act of carrying out a detailed method of achieving an end” So according to Webster’s definitions strategic planning is a carrying out a detailed plan used toward reaching a goal or end.

John M. Bryson, author of the book Strategic Planning for Public and Nonprofit Organizations, states that strategic planning is “a set of concepts, procedures and tools designed to assist leaders and managers in exercising control, coping with change and developing a basis for decision making” He goes on to say that strategic planning is “organized common sense” (Wallace, 2006, p. 46).

The father of modern management, Peter Drucker, defines strategic planning as “the continuous process of making present entrepreneurial or risk taking decisions systematically and with the greatest knowledge of the futurity; organizing the efforts needed to carry out these decisions; and measuring the results of these decisions against the expectations through organized systematic feedback” (Wallace, 2006, p.46).

Mark Wallace (2006, p 46.) defines strategic planning as involving “identifying the operations that need to be taken today to create an ideal future with a full understanding of the issues you face and the environment you function in”.

Entarga Business Planning defines strategic planning as “the process by which the guiding members of an organization envision its future and develop the necessary ns procedures and operations to achieve that future” (2010). They believe that planning is a circular process where the completion of one step opens up action in the next step; however, they believe that there can be issues that arise in the planning process that forces planners to take a step back to work those issues out. The planning process should be flexible enough that it can be designed to work for that individual planning team (2010).

Diane Schilder (1997) argues that strategic planning should answer the following questions:

1. Where are we?
2. What do we have to work with?
3. Where do we want to be?
4. How do we get there?

Ms. Schilder believes that the first step in the strategic planning process deal with the questions “where are we?” and “what do we have to work with?” The question “where are we?” deals with the examination of the organization’s recent history and is an assessment of the organization’s current position both internal and external. The question “what do we have to work with?” should cover the strengths and weaknesses of the organization and how to get the most out of the strengths.

The second step is to answer the question “where do we want to be?” This step involves gathering the stakeholders to articulate the vision of the group. The vision is then developed into a mission statement. The mission statement is the purpose of the organization. The purpose of the organization is then broken into goals.

The last step is to answer the question “how do we get there?” Once the goals are articulated then there has to be a means of achieving the articulated goals. This is expressed as strategies. During this strategy development the organization should develop strategies that understand the weaknesses of the organization and plays on the strengths of the organization.

The Community Resource Exchange (CRE) in New York City (2011) has devised three phases of nonprofit strategic planning. Phase one is the “Setting a Vision and Identifying Priorities” phase. The planning group conducts an internal assessment that looks at the strengths or assets of the organization, the expertise of the organization, and the weaknesses or challenges of the organization. They then conduct an external assessment that looks at the external opportunities, threats and technology. Produced from the data collected in phase one is the core values statement, a vision statement, and a memo of priorities.

In phase two, the “Defining Goals & Action Steps” phase, the priorities are developed into goals, and then the goals are developed into action steps. Basically it boils down into what we are going to do and how we are going to do it.

The last phase is the “Implementation and Adoption of the Plan”. This phase takes the plan and devises how they are going to implement the plan. It also provides a plan for fundraising if needed.

Henry Cothran and Rodney Clouser in their paper *Strategic Planning for Communities, Non-profit Organization and Public Agencies* (2009) outlines who, what where, why and how of strategic planning. They articulate that most people plan their personal lives daily. People plan what they are going to eat, what they are going to wear, where they are going on vacation, when they are going to mow the grass, and how many kids they are going to have. People put a lot of energy into that process. However, many do not see conducting that same type of planning in the organizations that we serve is important.

Cothran and Clouser (2009) then state that there are many benefits for strategic planning. The organization benefits from the strategic planning process, in that they have a greater understanding of the organizations present standing and its potential future standing. The organization can become efficient and effective resulting in good strategically routed decision making. Strategic planning also allows the organization to be able to articulate their mission, values, and vision to their stakeholders.

Cothran and Clouser (2009) have devised six tasks that need to be accomplished during strategic planning. The first task is to “Get Ready” Getting ready involves:

1. Organizational profile development,

2. Previous planning documents reviewed,
3. Funding history development
4. Internal and external stakeholders that need to be included in the planning process are identified,
5. Customer identification,
6. Any needed outside assistance identified.

The second task is to “Review the Organization’s Values, Mission, and Vision”.

The organization needs to either develop a core values statement. This is a list of the values that the organization hold dear to them. If they already have core values then those need to be reviewed and updated if necessary. Values are how the organization acts toward its stakeholders and customers.

Once the values are created then the organization needs to develop its mission statement. This describes the organization purpose, values, and business. This should be concise and brief. Once the mission statement is completed then the vision statement should be completed. The vision statement defines the purpose of your organization. It should answer the question of what you want to do.

The third task set forth by Cothran and Clouser (2009) is to “Assess the Current Situation”. This is completed through the use of a SWOT analysis. The “S” in a SWOT analysis identifies the internal strength of an organization. The “W” is the internal weaknesses of the organization. The “O” is the external opportunities of the organization, and the “T” is the external threats the organization.

Task four is “Set Goals for the Future”. Goals should be established to be able to achieve the vision and should address the SWOT findings. Goals should be SMART

(Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-bound)(Cothran and Clouser , 2009).

Cothran and Clouser's (2009) fifth task is to "Draft, Revise, and Adopt a Plan". They advise that there is no right way to adopt a plan; however, a plan must be written that is concise and clear so that it will be read and implemented.

The sixth task of Cothran and Clouser's (2009) is to "Implement the Plan". This is accomplished in incremental pieces using an operating plan. The operating plan is generally set up for a definite period, generally a fiscal period. It lists the short-term strategies to implement the various sections of the plan.

The Special Libraries Association (2001) published their *Strategic Planning Handbook* with the realization that they could no longer react to issues when they happened. They needed to anticipate the future and the changes involved. They realized that they had limited resources, human, and monetary, and they needed to prioritize their goals and the resources needed for those goals. In their strategic planning model, they propose a similar model as discussed previously in this paper. Their model includes a mission statement, goals & objectives, and an action (or implementation) plan.

Jan Masaoka (2011) stresses that in these economic crises, a number of organizations cannot work within its strategic plan due to the economy, or made their plan without taking into effect how they were going to pay for it.

The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (1998) implemented a four phase strategic planning process for a national response to HIV/AIDS. The process included:

1. Situation Analysis

2. Response Analysis
3. Strategic Plan Formulation
4. Resource mobilization

The process was similar in scope. They relied on information gathering, goals, objectives, formulation of a plan, and implementation of that plan with an emphasis on resource management.

The National Alliance for Media Art and Culture (NAMAC) (2009) developed their strategic planning model from an adaption that was created by the Alliance for Nonprofit Management. Their model is a five step model that includes sections on getting ready, articulating mission and value, assessing the situation, developing strategies, goals and objectives, and lastly completing the written plan.

Samuel Frank (2008) put a twist into his version of strategic planning when he broke strategic planning into subsections. He termed the planning as integrated planning. The integrated plan is broken down into plans for strategic planning, program planning, business planning, organizational development, identity development, advancement planning, human resource planning, technology planning, and facility planning. In separating these planning efforts, this gives you a more comprehensive plan. Strategic planning covers mission and goals. Program planning covers services provided and resources needed to provide these services. Business planning is crucial to determine how the organization is to be supported and sustained. Organizational development includes recruitment, retention, and succession planning, plus employment development. Identity planning includes brand identity and protecting the name. Advancement planning covers the area of advancing the organization including fundraising. Human resource planning

includes personnel policies and professional development. Technology planning includes keeping up on technology advances within the budget constraints. Facility planning includes planning for the upkeep of current facilities plus the planning of new facilities.

Carter McNamara (2011) claims that there is no one perfect strategic planning model. It depends on the organization, the culture, and the needs of the organization. He has developed six models for planning.

Model one is the vision or goals based strategic planning. This model is the traditional strategic planning. Setting up vision, values, and a mission statement is all covered in this model.

Model two is issues based planning. This model is for organizations that have limited resources, several major current issues, and little to no success in strategic planning. Instead of planning for the organization as a whole as in model one, model two takes on the major issues, provides solutions for those issues, and implements the plans for correcting those issues.

Model three is the alignment model. The purpose of this model is to provide alignment with the organization's mission and resources. This is generally used to tweak an existing plan or fine tune existing strategies.

Model four is scenario planning. This model is used in conjunction with another model and promotes strategic thinking. This model uses designing scenarios to test potential changes in external forces.

Model five is the organic or self organizing model. This model is more values based and every action goes back to an articulated organizational value. This model is

patterned after the Native American life and values based organization (McNamara, 2011).

The final model, model six, covers real time planning. This model uses model one planning to set up the initial plan, but uses real time information to plan for trends, customer changes, economy changes and program changes.

In conducting the literature review, it was determined that there are many variables when it comes to strategic planning. The organization needs to find the process that best works for their organization. The organization needs to plan how they are going to plan.

Procedures

This Applied Research Project began at the National Fire Academy (NFA) in July of 2011 during the Executive Leadership course. The problem and purpose statement development were accomplished during visits to the Learning Resource Center (LRC). The author decided at that time that the descriptive research approach would be best suited for this project.

This paper was formatted based on the *American Psychological Association Publication Manual Fifth Edition* (2001).

The first procedure was to review the historical files of the Worthington Fire Department to determine if any strategic planning had taken place.

The second procedure was to conduct surveys. This researcher conducted three surveys to collect information and determine the potential solutions to the problem. Questions for the surveys were designed to solicit information from the group on how their locality handled the issues of strategic planning.

One survey was distributed to the membership of the National Society of Executive Fire Officers (Appendix A). The National Society of Executive Fire Officers (NSEFO) has 765 members. Seven hundred sixty five surveys were distributed and one hundred forty four, or eighteen percent, were returned for evaluation.

The second survey was delivered to members of the Jefferson County Fire Instructors Association (Appendix B). The Jefferson County Fire Instructors Association has 32 members, representing fire departments in the Jefferson County, KY area. Thirty two surveys were distributed and fifteen, or forty six percent, were returned for evaluation.

The third survey was delivered to members of the Worthington Fire Department (Appendix C). The Worthington Fire Department has 56 members. Fifty six surveys were distributed and sixteen, or twenty eight percent, were returned for evaluation.

Responses to the survey were collected and compiled. The data results were then organized, grouped, and analyzed to answer the survey questions.

The fourth procedure was to conduct personal discussions with chief level officers in the Louisville/Jefferson County area, and the administration of the Worthington Fire Department. They were spoken to about the problems addressed in the problem statement and research questions.

Limitations and Assumptions

Several limitations should be acknowledged in the research and development of this applied research project. The author has limited experience in survey preparation, survey question development, and data compilation. This could lead to different results if the survey was completed and compiled by a researcher with significant experience. The

survey was only completed by eighteen percent of the National Society of Executive Fire Officers, forty six percent of the members of the Jefferson County Fire Instructors Association, and only twenty eight percent of the members of the Worthington Fire Department. The survey results could be different if a larger response was achieved.

An assumption was made that all respondents would understand the survey questions, have the knowledge and ability to answer the survey correctly and honestly, and would complete and return the survey within the time frame given.

Definition of Terms

Strategic Plans. A detailed plan used toward reaching a goal or end.

Operational Plans. Short-term ways of achieving goals and explains how, or what portion of, a strategic plan will be put into operation during a given operational period.

Master Plans. A comprehensive planning document that includes strategic and operational plans. Generally for a long term period (2, 5 or 10 years).

NSEFO. National Society of Executive Fire Officers.

JCFIA. Jefferson County Fire Instructors Association.

WFD. Worthington Fire Department.

Results

The results of the surveys provided the following answers to research question one “What are the benefits of strategic planning”.

Table 1 What do you believe are the benefits of strategic planning? (NSEFO Survey)

Resource allocation to beneficial areas	15
Awareness of needed change	31
Department strengths and weaknesses	15
Available opportunities and potential threats	9
Department growth improved	21
Poor performing areas can be identified, corrected, or eliminated	8
Control operational issues	5
Other	12
Did not answer	40
Totals	144

The members of the NSEFO believe that the awareness of needed change is the main benefit of strategic planning followed by department growth improved. Eight of the persons answering “Other” stated that they would have answered all of the above if they were given that choice. Other answers given were:

1. Align activities
2. Gets people to rally and unify, identifies where the bar is set and how to achieve goals
3. Creates a roadmap for creating and monitoring success
4. Roadmap for the future.

Table 2 What do you believe are the benefits of strategic planning? (JCFIA Survey)

Resource allocation to beneficial areas	1
Awareness of needed change	5
Department strengths and weaknesses	1
Available opportunities and potential threats	0
Department growth improved	2
Poor performing areas can be identified, corrected, or eliminated	0
Control operational issues	1
Other	1
Did not answer	4

Totals 15

The members of the JCFIA believe that the awareness of needed change is the main benefit of strategic planning followed by department growth improved. The one person answering “Other” stated that his department does not have strategic planning and has not gone through the process, so he is not sure what the benefits are.

Table 3 What do you believe are the benefits of strategic planning? (WFD Survey)

Resource allocation to beneficial areas	3
Awareness of needed change	1
Department strengths and weaknesses	6
Available opportunities and potential threats	0
Department growth improved	1
Poor performing areas can be identified, corrected, or eliminated	3
Control operational issues	0
Other	2
Did not answer	0
Totals	16

The members of the WFD believe that determining department strengths and weaknesses is the main benefit of strategic planning followed by a tie between resource allocation to beneficial areas and poor performing areas can be identified, corrected, or eliminated.

However, if you look at all of the surveys combined, the awareness of needed change was determined to be the strongest benefit of strategic planning. However, all answers could be determined to be important.

Table 4 What do you believe are the benefits of strategic planning? (Survey’s Combined)

Resource allocation to beneficial areas	19
Awareness of needed change	37
Department strengths and weaknesses	21
Available opportunities and potential threats	9
Department growth improved	24
Poor performing areas can be identified, corrected, or eliminated	11
Control operational issues	6

The results of the literature review and personal communications provided the following answers to research question two “How have other fire departments implemented strategic planning?”

The Bellevue, Washington Fire Department Strategic Plan (2007) is a five year plan. It is divided into sixteen categories.

1. Fire department vision.
2. Fire and life safety planning.
3. Historical perspective.
4. Performance and accountability.
5. Organizational design.
6. Administration.
7. Financial planning.
8. Information technology.
9. Fire prevention.
10. Emergency preparedness
11. Operations and emergency response.
12. Human resources.
13. Safety and Training
14. Facilities.

15. Apparatus and equipment.

16. Organizational relationships.

Each section has defined general strategies, performance objectives, challenges, and recommendations. The Tri-Data Corporation assisted with the preparation of the plan.

The Prosper, Texas Fire Department Strategic Plan (2008) is a five year plan that was designed by a four person planning team (fire chief and three captains). The strategic plan is divided into the following areas.

1. Values, services, and accountability.
2. Mission and vision statements.
3. Organizational profile and history.
4. Strengths, weaknesses, opportunity, and threat analysis.
5. Assumptions for planning.
6. Benchmarks for performance.
 - a. Section 1- Personnel requirements.
 - b. Section 2- Products/services.
 - c. Section 3- Apparatus, vehicles, and equipment.
 - d. Section 4- Facilities.
 - e. Section 5- Emergency response.
 - f. Section 6- Training.
 - g. Section 7- Health and Safety.
 - h. Section 8- Technology.
 - i. Section 9-Other.

Each benchmark sections have goals articulated. Some of these goals have been broken down into short term, midterm, and long term goals. The benchmark section nine is listed as “Other” however there is nothing currently noted in this section.

The Fire Department of New York City’s (FDNY) Strategic Plan (2009) is a two year plan. In conducting strategic planning, the FDNY has two main groups. The Accountability Group is made up of the Fire Commissioner, two deputy fire commissioners, the fire chief, the chief of EMS command, the chief of operations, the deputy assistant chief of the Planning and Strategy unit, and the director of strategic planning. The second group is the Work Group. It is made up of three deputy fire commissioners, and assistant fire commissioner, and the assistant chief of operations.

The FDNY strategic plan (2009) is the third strategic plan in the history of the FDNY and lists its mission and core values of the department. The plan is then broken into five broad goals.

1. Improve emergency response operations.
2. Enhance the health and safety of FDNY members.
3. Strengthen management and organizational development.
4. Increase diversity.
5. Improve fire prevention and safety education.

Each broad goal section has a definition of the goal, a strategy section for that goal and a list of specific operational tactics (initiatives) to achieve the strategy.

A landmark strategic planning effort came to fruition on March 31, 2006 with the release of the *Strategic Recovery and Reconstitution Planning Process for the City of New Orleans Fire Department Decimated by Hurricane Katrina* (2006). This planning

effort saw the City of New Orleans Fire Department work cooperatively with the United States Fire Administration (USFA) and the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC). The planning process began right after Hurricane Katrina in October of 2005 and was concluded with the release of the document in March 2006.

Four planning cells were identified during this process.

1. Human resources and professional knowledge, skills, and abilities.
2. Emergency response/preparedness and customer service.
3. Prevention/protection and public information/education/relations program.
4. Equipment/facilities/supplies and administration support issues.

Goals and strategies were determined for each planning cell area. Some strategies were short term in nature and some were long term in nature. This plan was developed to assist the City of New Orleans Fire Department to recover from the Hurricane Katrina disaster and provide direction for the department.

In contrast, the Riverside County, California Fire Department Strategic Plan (2009) is a ten year strategic plan. It was developed in conjunction with Management Partners Incorporated. Riverside County is one of the largest regional fire service organizations in California. It is a cooperative effort of the California Department of Forestry and the County of Riverside. It is a unique organization covering urban areas and suburban areas.

The strategic plan (2009) contained the following elements.

1. Organizational mission, vision and values
2. Goals (six)
3. Strategies for the goals

4. Action plan for implementation
5. Organizational and performance audit data.

The six goals noted were:

1. Seeks fiscal sustainability to ensure uninterrupted services.
2. Seeks to have well trained and certified individuals to enable the department to carry out its mission and responsibilities.
3. Seeks efficient and effective performance in operations. It measures its performance and continuously improves its work methods.
4. Seeks to maintain a strong relationship with its partners and providing cost effective services and to maintain high level of customer service.
5. To support the mission of the department with effective and efficient support functions.
6. Enable personnel to perform their jobs safely and efficiently through well maintained facilities, equipment, technology, and apparatus.

Albert Tronzo, Chief of the Worthington Fire Department, and retired Lt. Colonel with the Louisville, Kentucky Division of Fire (personnel communications, January 23, 2012) described the strategic planning process at the Louisville Division of Fire. He recalls each division conducting strategic planning. Each division set their mission, values, and vision, and then conducted a SWOT analysis of their division. Goals and objectives were created with funding needs. All of this information went to the Chief's office. The Chief created the overall plan for the department.

Chris Gosnell, Deputy Chief of the Okolona Fire Department, Louisville Kentucky (personnel communications, January 5, 2012) stated that his department is in

the beginning stages of strategic planning. He believes that the process will be beneficial, but it has been slow and cumbersome.

Dan Clark, Battalion Chief of the Worthington Fire Department (personnel communications, December 21, 2011) believes that department's conducting strategic planning needs to be honest during the process. During the 2009 attempt at strategic planning at the Worthington Fire Department a number of views and issues were dismissed by the then Chief of the department because he didn't believe that they were issues even though the rest of the planning committee believed they were.

Kevin Groody, Battalion Chief of the Worthington Fire Department (personnel communications, December 7, 2011) believes that departments that have little experience should consider the use of an outside facilitator or agency. The outside facilitator that was used in the 2009 attempt at strategic planning at Worthington did keep the group on task even during some heated discussion during the process.

The results of the surveys provided the following answers to research question three "Who should be involved in strategic planning within our department?"

Table 5 Who was involved in your Fire Department's strategic planning process?

Check all that apply. (NSEFO Survey)

Fire Chief	99
Command Officers (Deputy, Assistant, & Battalion Chief's)	92
Division Officers (Division Chief's)	48
Company Officers (Captain's, Lieutenant's)	54
Line Personnel (Uniformed)	54
Line Personnel (Civilian)	27
Board or Governing Body	36
Community Representatives	33
Did not answer	38

The members of the NSEFO believe that the Fire Chief and Command Officers should be involved in the strategic planning process. Out of the one hundred eight people that answered this question, those two answers were chosen the most. Approximately one third to one half of the sample though gave a vote to all choices.

Table 6 Who was involved in your Fire Department's strategic planning process?

Check all that apply. (JCFIA Survey)

Fire Chief	11
Command Officers (Deputy, Assistant, & Battalion Chief's)	10
Division Officers (Division Chief's)	5
Company Officers (Captain's, Lieutenant's)	5
Line Personnel (Uniformed)	3
Line Personnel (Civilian)	0
Board or Governing Body	2
Community Representatives	2
Did not answer	4

The members of the JCFIA were very consistent across the board with the results. Most believed the Fire Chief and his Command Officers should be involved in the planning process, however most of the choices got a vote. The only choice that didn't get a vote was the civilian line personnel. Most departments in Jefferson County do not have civilian line personnel or do not have many of those positions.

The membership of the WFD was given the same question. Their results were similar.

Table 7 Who should be involved in the Worthington Fire Department's strategic planning process? Check all that apply. (WFD Survey)

Fire Chief	14
Command Officers (Deputy, Assistant, & Battalion Chief's)	15
Division Officers (Division Chief's)	14
Company Officers (Captain's, Lieutenant's)	13
Line Personnel (Uniformed)	11
Line Personnel (Civilian)	4
Board or Governing Body	9
Community Representatives	3
Did not answer	0

The results of the surveys provided the following answers to research question four "How long should our strategic plan target for?"

Table 8 How often does your Fire Department review and update its strategic plan?

(NSEFO Survey)

Annually	38
Every 2-4 years	32
Every 5 years	14
Every 6-9 years	8
Every 10 years	14
Did not answer	38

The members of the NSEFO believe that strategic plans should be reviewed or updated annually, with the second choice being between 2-4 years.

The same question was asked of the JCFIA. The results were similar in nature.

Table 9 How often does your Fire Department review and update its strategic plan?

(JCFIA Survey)

Annually	9
Every 2-4 years	1
Every 5 years	0
Every 6-9 years	0
Every 10 years	2

Did not answer 3

Finally, the membership of the WFD was asked a similar question. The question was “How often does the Worthington Fire Department review and update its Strategic Plan?”

Table 10 How often does the Worthington Fire Department review and update its Strategic Plan? (WFD Survey)

Annually	5
Every 2-4 years	0
Every 5 years	1
Every 6-9 years	0
Every 10 years	1
N/A	9

The answer to the survey question showed a flaw in the design of the question. The answer N/A is a correct one in that currently the Worthington Fire Department does not have a comprehensive strategic plan. The Worthington Fire Department does currently have a ten year apparatus replacement plan. This plan is reviewed annually during budget development. I believe that there could have been confusion with this question. A better worded question could have received a different outcome.

The results of the surveys provided the following answers to research question five “What key elements should our strategic plan encompass?”

Table 11 What key elements should our strategic plan encompass? Check all that apply. (NSEFO Survey)

Department Values 87

Department Mission	99
Department Mandates	40
Operational functions	48
SWOT Analysis	73
Strategic Issues	74
Strategic Goals	96
Operational Goals	64
Master Planning	40
Other	9
Did not Answer	38

The NSEFO survey participants believe that the department mission, strategic goals, department values, strategic issues, a SWOT analysis, and operational goals should be in a strategic plan. All received a majority of the votes given. Department mandates, operational functions, and Master planning, though important, received less than fifty percent of the vote.

For this question the “Other” votes included:

1. “It should a document that is a 'compass' that guides the department in the good and bad times and not a 'Christmas list' that assumes continuously growth in resources”.
2. Apparatus replacement.
3. Vision Statement.
4. Tactical goals, budgeting/funding, succession planning.
5. Strategic planning steps.
 - a. Develop a planning team and a planning process.
 - b. Define organizational values.
 - c. Define organizational history.
 - d. Define organizational mandates.

- e. Define organizational mission.
 - f. Define organizational vision.
 - g. Identify the customer/community/stakeholder priorities.
 - h. Identify the customer/community/stakeholder expectations.
 - i. Identify the customer/community/stakeholder concerns.
 - j. Identify a philosophy of operations.
 - k. Conduct a SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, obstacles, threats).
 - l. Identify/analyze strategic issues or problems.
 - m. Identify develop strategic goals.
 - n. Develop SMART objectives or action plans with roles and responsibilities
 - o. Conduct operational planning.
 - p. Develop an implementation process.
 - q. Conduct a performance audit or a gap analysis.
 - r. Develop a contingency plan.
 - s. Develop a monitoring our measurement method.
 - t. Provide periodic implementation reports with modifications.
 - u. Formal presentation of the plan.
6. Department Vision, Objectives and strategies (with timelines).
7. Integration with Budget.
8. Economic Forecasts through the fiscal periods with adjustment plans based on percentage reduction estimates.

9. We do not have a plan so I am not sure what should be in one.

All of the “Other” statements have merit in the overall big picture of strategic planning.

The results of the JCFIA survey varied a little from the NSEFO survey.

Table 12 What key elements should our strategic plan encompass? Check all that apply. (JCFIA Survey)

Department Values	9
Department Mission	10
Department Mandates	2
Operational functions	5
SWOT Analysis	5
Strategic Issues	8
Strategic Goals	10
Operational Goals	6
Master Planning	3
Other	0
Did not Answer	3

The membership of the WFD was given a similar question for response.

Table 13 What key elements should our strategic plan encompass? Check all that apply. (WFD Survey)

Department Values	11
Department Mission	11
Department Mandates	7
Operational functions	9
SWOT Analysis	12
Strategic Issues	13
Strategic Goals	13
Operational Goals	15
Master Planning	11

Other	2
Did not Answer	0

The membership of the WFD that answered the survey generally voted across the board on the choices given. The two “Other” responses included a vote for all of the above, and a possible section for member health and wellness.

On all of the surveys extra questions were asked to get an idea for participant’s feelings and what departments were doing in the realm of strategic planning. Survey question two asked the question “Do you think strategic plan is important for fire department?” One hundred percent of those that were asked answered yes to that question.

Survey Question number asked the participant’s whether their department has a strategic plan. The majority of the participant’s answered yes.

Table 14 Does your Fire Department currently have a strategic plan? (All participants)

<u>Group</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
NSEFO	84	22
JCFIA	9	3
WFD	6	9

Survey question number four asked all participants “Does your fire department have operational plans?” The majority of the participant’s answered yes.

Table 15 Does your Fire Department have operational plans? (All participants)

<u>Group</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
--------------	------------	-----------

NSEFO	91	15
JCFIA	10	2
WFD	12	3

Survey question number five asked all participants “Does your fire department have Master Plans?” The majority of the JCFIA and WFD answered yes, and the NSEFO answered no.

Table 16 Does your Fire Department have master plans? (All participants)

<u>Group</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
NSEFO	40	66
JCFIA	8	4
WFD	12	3

Survey question eleven asked “if you have any additional information that may be important to my research, please list below.” Here are the comments that were received.

1. We are just near completion with our first SP. Most of the answers are based upon the decisions we have made during this planning.
2. Our county has assigned a citizen oversight committee that has directed our strategic plan to cost vs. services and has assisted us in making service delivery decisions.
3. Be sure there is no "rank" in the planning process, and encourage participation.
4. Our strategic plan is being finalized this month.
5. I took over as the first career chief of this department a short time ago. We are working on strategic planning but have only completed the apparatus

replacement program at this point.

6. We don't have a Strategic Plan.
7. Our plan is still in the County Managers office and has been there for five years.
8. These ties directly into Accreditation, which is critical to have beforehand.
9. Any strategic plan needs to embrace change and include all personnel in the development of the same.
 - a) No laundry list of resources
 - b) If yes on (a) – there is an unrealistic expectations for rank and file which can lead to mistrust and the perception of poor leadership.
10. We have not updated our plan in a long while and that fact is evident as we have been in crisis planning mode for several years due to financial hardship. I think focusing on our strategic plan would help give us long range vision instead of the yearly doom and gloom of the budget cycle.
11. Strategic planning must include all the stake holder from the voters to the front line staff to achieve buy in.
12. Components of a strategic plan document may include (this could be the table of contents). Introduction, message from the chief or executive summary, strategic plan process, development team members, ground rules, timeline, overview organizational, background scope of services, major functions statistics, organizational chart personnel listing or

position listing, map external and internal stakeholder information, priorities, concerns, feedback, viewpoints, mission, vision, value and motto, strengths and weaknesses (internal), obstacles (or opportunities) and threats from external sources (from SWOT process with group or gap analysis), goals and objectives issues, priorities, action plan, initiatives, target performance measurements and targets service-level change plan, implementation, budget, glossary, acronyms and abbreviations.

13. Strategic plan is part of the Master Plan.
14. Good approach to creating greater successes in serving the community.
15. Follow it.
16. However we have no strategic plan.

Discussion

Singer and song writer George Harrison sung in his song *Any Road* (1988), “If you don’t know where you’re going any road will take you there”. This study shows that there are many variables in the issue of strategic planning. There have been many Executive Fire Officer Applied Research Projects that have been written on the various components of strategic planning. Francis Lafferty (2008) recommended for the Haddon Heights Fire Department to assemble a core group of individuals within his department and city to plan for and adopt a strategic planning process. He then recommended additional stakeholders subgroups be assembled to review selected areas within the agency.

Jeff Barlow (2005) recommended for the Bloomington Fire Department a short term and long term recommendation for strategic planning. The short term recommendation is to form a committee to discuss conflicts within the department and to remove obstacles for strategic planning. The long term recommendation is to form external representatives in the planning process and to revise policies, regulations, and daily activities to support the planning function.

Robert Phillips (2006) recommended for the White Lake Fire Authority to begin the strategic planning process. His first step was to gain the support of the Board of Directors. He understood that without the support of his governing body that his strategic plan would not have overall success. Once that support is gained, then he recommends that a planning committee should be established. He recommended the committee use the planning process from the 2003 edition of the *Fire Protection Handbook* (NFPA, 2003). Once the plan is developed, he recommended a three year review cycle or as major changes within the department takes place.

Scott Bisson (2009) recommended for the Fairfield Fire Department to begin the strategic planning process. He believes that the strategic planning process will allow his department to overcome many of the organizational operational deficiencies that they have. He suggested having an outside consultant to facilitate the process and to coach the planning committee. This practice is beneficial for departments that are having problems in the planning process or has little experience in the planning field.

David Moody (2010) recommended for the Kings George County Department of Fire, Rescue and Emergency Services to undertake strategic planning. His

recommendation included establishment of a planning committee including the following people.

1. Fire Chief.
2. Chief Officers (Division, EMS, Technical Services).
3. City/County administration representative.
4. Elected official representative.
5. Private industry representatives.
6. Non-Supervisory firefighters.
7. Member from a neighboring fire department.
8. Volunteer fire department representative.
9. EMS representative.

His list of committee members is similar in scope to the survey research member list discussed in the survey. Moody (2010) also recommended using Mark Wallace's planning model as given in Wallace's book *Fire Department Strategic Planning* (Wallace, 2006). Moody (2010) also recommended a five year planning cycle, with an annual budgetary review.

Michael Wallace (2001) and Jack Cooley (2002) both recommended to their agencies to use the Mark Wallace planning model. Both of these recommended the first edition version which was prevalent at the time of their research.

Jack Royer (2007) recommended using the second edition *Fire Department Strategic Planning* (Wallace, 2006) for the whole strategic planning process. He believes that the book steps the planner through the process from beginning to end.

Randall Parr (2006) strongly recommended the use of an outside facilitator to help with their strategic planning process. He understood the limitations of the experience level for his organization conducting strategic planning. Parr also places an emphasis on planning to plan.

Todd Wright (2007) recommends using Wallace's planning model (Wallace, 2006), at the Morrisville Fire Department, but he recommends an annual review during budgetary time along with a four year review based on the local election process.

Timothy Pope (2009) determined it was in the best interest of the Nashville, North Carolina Fire Department to use the strategic planning model developed by the Center for Public Safety Excellence. The strategic plan once written and approved would be reviewed annually.

Rondall Early (2009) recommended that the Wake Forest Fire Department use the John Buckman (2006) eight step planning process. This plan would be reviewed annually and reworked every five years.

Francis Fraitzl III (2009) determined that since his department, Milford Fire Department, believed that in their first attempt at strategic planning it would be more useful to tackle only a portion of the organization as to not get bogged down and get lost in the process. Fraitzl recommended looking at management, education/training, and equipment/apparatus in their first strategic plan. He goes on to recommend that the plan would be reviewed annually and overhauled in 3-5 years.

John Vanlandingham (2005) states that his research revealed that "strategic planning is an important process for every organization". The results of the research for this paper confirm that statement. He also states that "there does not appear to be a right

or wrong way to perform the process”. The results of the research for this paper also confirm that statement.

While many resources were found in the topic of strategic planning, the majority of the sources determined that while there were many models that can be used that the strategic planning process must fit the organization and that the models are just that, models, and should be used as an outline for the overall process. An organization has to know where it wants to go, before it determines how to get there.

Strategic planning takes people to get accomplished. These stakeholders need to be committed to the process. Without buy in, your plan is doomed to failure or to sit on a shelf and not be implemented or useful. Choose the right people for the process, and be wary of posturing for power or having the Chief driving the bus. The plan should be realistic.

How much time should a plan be good for? That also depends on the organization. Most agree that a good plan is realistic about the funding available and should be reviewed annually around budget time. Other than that, it depends on the organization and the plan. Most plans should be of short duration, five years or under, however some operational plans could be designated as 10-15 year plans (such as equipment replacement plans).

Recommendations

Benjamin Frankin is credited for the quote “by failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail”. The problem statement for this research project was that the Worthington Fire Protection District has no strategic plan. This leads to being reactionary with resources in an ever tight economy. Based upon that problem, the purpose of this

research project was to identify the elements that would be involved in developing a strategic plan and how a strategic plan would be implemented at the Worthington Fire Protection District. The following recommendations will assist the Worthington Fire Protection District in producing a quality strategic plan, one that will assist the Worthington Fire Protection District in making sound financial decisions in an ever tight economy.

The author recommends that the following steps be used for developing a strategic plan for the Worthington Fire Protection District.

Step 1: Work with the Fire Chief to put together a proposal to be presented to the Board of Trustees of the Worthington Fire Protection District to show the need for strategic planning for the department. The Board of Trustees is a seven member Board that oversees the administration and operation of the fire department.

Step 2: Identify stakeholders of the organization to participate in the planning function. In the 2009 attempt at strategic planning the following stakeholders were invited to participate.

1. Fire Chiefs
2. Assistant Chief
3. Battalion Chiefs (4)
4. Division Chiefs (2)
5. Administrative Assistant

The Administrative Assistant's position is currently vacant and does not appear that it will be filled in the immediate future. The recommendation for the core group

would be the above list adding a representative from the Board of Trustees and deleting the position of Administrative Assistant.

Step 3: Using the strategic planning model as defined by Mark Wallace in his book *Fire Department Strategic Planning; Creating Future Excellence* (Wallace 2006).

This includes using the ten step model including:

1. Understanding and applying the values of the department.
2. Identifying the department's mandates.
3. Developing the mission of the department.
4. Understanding and defining the philosophy of operation.
5. Assessing the challenges and opportunities of the external environment.
6. Assessing the weaknesses and strengths of the internal environment.
7. Identifying the strategic issues faced by the department.
8. Creating strategic goals for the strategic issues
9. Creating the department's ideal future through proactive futuring.
10. Operational planning from a strategic perspective.

Step 4: Once the strategic plans are finalized, the fire chief will present the plans to the Worthington Fire Protection District Board of Trustees for adoption.

The recommended review cycle of the plan will be annually or whenever a major change occurs at the department. The plan will be scheduled for overhaul every five years. Some portions of the plan can have a longer life such as equipment replacement and facilities plans. However, these plans will still be reviewed annually and revamped at the five year mark.

It is recommended that future readers of this applied research project use this research as a tool, but to evaluate the ever changing philosophy of strategic planning. As more and more fire departments see the need for strategic planning, more and more research will be accomplished.

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Appendix A

National Society of Executive Fire Officers

Survey

This survey is for use in an Applied Research Project for the Executive Leadership class as part of the Executive Fire Officer Program at the National Fire Academy. Your participation is greatly appreciated. Please return completed surveys to the attention of Division Chief Kevin Jump.

1. Please provide the following Demographical Information.
 - Name
 - Department

2. Do you think a Strategic Plan is important for Fire Departments?
 - Yes
 - No

3. Does your Fire Department currently have a strategic plan?
 - Yes
 - No

4. Does your Fire Department have operational plans?
 - Yes
 - No

5. Does your Fire Department have master plans?
 - Yes
 - No

6. How often does your fire department review and update its strategic plan (choose all that apply).
 - Annually
 - Every 2-4 years
 - Every 5 years
 - Every 6-9 years

- Every 10 years
7. Who was involved in your fire department's strategic planning process? (choose all that apply)
- Fire Chief
 - Command Officers (Deputy Chief's, Assistant Chief's Battalion Chief's)
 - Division Officers (Division Chief's)
 - Company Officers (Captain's, Lieutenants)
 - Line Personnel (Uniformed)
 - Line Personnel (Civilian)
 - Board or Governing Body
 - Community Representatives
8. What are the key elements that a strategic plan should encompass? (Choose all that apply)
- Department values
 - Department mission
 - Department mandates
 - Operational functions
 - SWOT (Department strengths, department weaknesses, external opportunity, and external threats)
 - Strategic issues
 - Strategic goals
 - Operational Goals
 - Master Planning
 - Other (please specify)
9. What do you believe are the benefits of strategic planning?
- Resource allocation to beneficial areas
 - Awareness of needed changes
 - Department strengths and weaknesses
 - Available opportunities and potential threats
 - Department growth improved
 - Poor performing areas can be identified, corrected or eliminated
 - Control operational issues
 - Other (please specify)
10. If your fire department's strategic plan is available for download, please list the URL (link) below.

- _____

11. If you have any additional information that may be important to my research, please add it here.

- _____

I appreciate your help in this matter.

Appendix B

Jefferson County Fire Instructors

Survey

This survey is for use in an Applied Research Project for the Executive Leadership class as part of the Executive Fire Officer Program at the National Fire Academy. Your participation is greatly appreciated. Please return completed surveys to the attention of Division Chief Kevin Jump.

1. Please provide the following Demographical Information.
 - Name
 - Department

2. Do you think a Strategic Plan is important for Fire Departments?
 - Yes
 - No

3. Does your Fire Department currently have a strategic plan?
 - Yes
 - No

4. Does your Fire Department have operational plans?
 - Yes
 - No

5. Does your Fire Department have master plans?
 - Yes
 - No

6. How often does your fire department review and update its strategic plan (choose all that apply).
 - Annually
 - Every 2-4 years
 - Every 5 years
 - Every 6-9 years

- Every 10 years
7. Who was involved in your fire department's strategic planning process? (choose all that apply)
- Fire Chief
 - Command Officers (Deputy Chief's, Assistant Chief's Battalion Chief's)
 - Division Officers (Division Chief's)
 - Company Officers (Captain's, Lieutenants)
 - Line Personnel (Uniformed)
 - Line Personnel (Civilian)
 - Board or Governing Body
 - Community Representatives
8. What are the key elements that a strategic plan should encompass? (Choose all that apply)
- Department values
 - Department mission
 - Department mandates
 - Operational functions
 - SWOT (Department strengths, department weaknesses, external opportunity, and external threats)
 - Strategic issues
 - Strategic goals
 - Operational Goals
 - Master Planning
 - Other (please specify)
9. What do you believe are the benefits of strategic planning?
- Resource allocation to beneficial areas
 - Awareness of needed changes
 - Department strengths and weaknesses
 - Available opportunities and potential threats
 - Department growth improved
 - Poor performing areas can be identified, corrected or eliminated
 - Control operational issues
 - Other (please specify)
10. If your fire department's strategic plan is available for download, please list the URL (link) below.

- _____

11. If you have any additional information that may be important to my research, please add it here.

- _____

I appreciate your help in this matter.

Appendix C

Worthington Fire Department Members

Survey

This survey is for use in an Applied Research Project for the Executive Leadership class as part of the Executive Fire Officer Program at the National Fire Academy. Your participation is greatly appreciated. Please return completed surveys to the attention of Division Chief Kevin Jump.

1. Do you think a Strategic Plan is important for Fire Departments?
 - Yes
 - No

2. Does the Worthington Fire Department currently have a strategic plan?
 - Yes
 - No

3. Does the Worthington Fire Department have operational plans?
 - Yes
 - No

4. Does the Worthington Fire Department have master plans?
 - Yes
 - No

5. How often does the Worthington Fire department review and update its strategic plan (choose all that apply).
 - Annually
 - Every 2-4 years
 - Every 5 years
 - Every 6-9 years
 - Every 10 years
 - N/A
 - Other (please specify)

6. Who should be involved in the Worthington Fire Department's strategic planning process? (choose all that apply)
- Fire Chief
 - Command Officers (Assistant Chief's Battalion Chief's)
 - Division Officers (Division Chief's)
 - Company Officers (Captain's, Lieutenants)
 - Line Personnel (Uniformed)
 - Line Personnel (Civilian)
 - Board or Governing Body
 - Community Representatives
7. What are the key elements that a strategic plan should encompass? (Choose all that apply)
- Department values
 - Department mission
 - Department mandates
 - Operational functions
 - SWOT (Department strengths, department weaknesses, external opportunity, and external threats)
 - Strategic issues
 - Strategic goals
 - Operational Goals
 - Master Planning
 - Other (please specify)
8. What do you believe are the benefits of strategic planning?
- Resource allocation to beneficial areas
 - Awareness of needed changes
 - Department strengths and weaknesses
 - Available opportunities and potential threats
 - Department growth improved
 - Poor performing areas can be identified, corrected or eliminated
 - Control operational issues
 - Other (please specify)
9. If you have any additional information that may be important to my research, please add it here.
- _____

I appreciate your help in this matter.