**EMERGENCY SERVICES STRATEGIC FOCUS**

By: Chief Bill Jenaway

“What are the fire, EMS and law enforcement objectives for the next five years?. Where will these organizations be in seven years? What are the capital purchasing plans for the next 10 years? What is the “Standard of Response Cover”? Have you heard these questions yet from political officials? If not, be prepared, they aren’t far off; and you need to be prepared to answer them.

Through recent years there have been a number of approaches to improving the performance of both profit and non-profit organizations. While terminology varies from “Transformation” to “Performance Improvement”, development of a “Strategic Focus” is whatever process is used to drive an organization to look toward the future and make the organization successful. Creating and implementing a “Strategic Focus” helps an organization understand the resources, capabilities and needs for their type of organization. To be successful in the creation of a “Strategic Focus”, an appropriate planning model must be used. The ***VFIS Emergency Service Strategic Focus Model*** was created to assist the fire, EMS and law enforcement agencies manage change and organizational performance.

The ***VFIS Emergency Service Strategic Focus Model*** is driven by three components:

1. Organization Resource Assessment
2. Defined Service Expectation
3. Priority Planning to enable resources to meet expectations

**The Planning Process**

The ***VFIS Emergency Service Strategic Focus Model*** uses a derivative of the basic decision making process, employing five basic activities to evaluate these three components. (see Figure 1)

These five activities include:

***Activity 1. Identification and Analysis of Key Issues***

* Mission and Vision
* Standard of Response Cover
* Identification of Roles and Responsibilities
* Goals and Objectives
* Strengths
* Weaknesses
* Opportunities
* Threats
* Strategic Alliances

***Activity 2. Obtain Direction from Key Sources of Input***

* + - * From organizational members
      * From the community leaders
      * From the citizenry
      * From the business community
      * From mutual aid agencies

***Activity 3. Development of a Plan for Implementation over a Defined Time Period***

* Immediate Action Steps to achieve goals and objectives
* Long Term Plan for Implementation

***Activity 4. Implementation of a Plan with responsibilities and time frames involving***

* + - * Finance
      * Personnel
      * Apparatus
      * Equipment
      * Facilities
      * Processes and Procedures

***Activity 5. Design and utilize a monitoring method to assure plan success***

Through the use of the ***VFIS Emergency Service Strategic Focus Model,*** an organization is directly involved in identifying individualized issues and needs to determine the necessary steps to create a plan which turns vision into reality.

**Result**

The result of any strategic focus activity is ***change***. Therefore, any such process must be undertaken by an organization that is ready for change. If the organization is not ready for the change, then conflict can and will exist. As a result, change management practices must be identified and cataloged for reference as the planning process moves forward.

**Benefits**

Similar to a doctor analyzing a patient, step one of the process identifies the symptoms to be evaluated. As the symptoms become more pronounced, multiple symptoms surface, and testing and evaluation prove a specific problem exists, helping identify the necessary prescription (goals and objectives) that can be established to resolve the problem and enable organizational health. However, the underlying causes of the problems must be resolved to manage long term health of the organization or problems will reoccur.

The output of the ***VFIS Emergency Service Strategic Focus Model*** is a set of goals, objectives and action steps dealing with the organizational aspects of:

* Finance
* Personnel
* Facilities
* Apparatus
* Equipment
* Procedural/Process

These are consolidated into planning documents, including identified costs, time frames to complete, and responsibilities for completion. The process then identifies different sets of objectives for organizational action.

### References

The process used to facilitate development of this service is a compilation of several strategic planning organizations and documents, customized to meet the needs of emergency service (non-profit) agencies.

Among the references are:

Center for Simplified Strategic Planning

The Support Center – “What are the steps of a strategic planning process”

Organized Change Consultancy – “Strategic Planning and Organizational

Change”

William F. Jenaway, Ph.D. - Transforming the Volunteer Fire Service

William F. Jenaway, Ph.D. and Daniel B C. Gardiner – Fire Protection in the 21st Century

The Support Center – “What are the key concepts and definitions in strategic

Planning”

Myrna Associates Inc. – “What Strategic Planning Can Do For You”

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Figure 1. The Planning Process

**Activity One:**

**Identification and Analysis of Key Issues Issues**

**Activity Two:**

**Obtain Direction from Key Sources of Input**

**Change Management Actions Required**

**Activity Three:**

**Development of a Plan of Action**

**Activity Four:**

**Implementation of a Plan with Responsibilities and Time Frames**

**Activity Five:**

**Design and Utilize a monitoring method to assure plan success.**