



Strategic Plan 2016-2020

Franklin Borough Fire Department



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Executive Summary

In March 2016, the Franklin Borough Fire Department initiated a strategic planning process to create its first formal Strategic Plan. Strategic planning is a process used by organizations to make decisions about its future, develop the methods to achieve that future, and measure the progress towards that future. A committee of five members met over a period of eight months to develop the plan, which will help guide the department's decision making for the next five years.

The strategic planning process began with an updating of the department's Mission Statement and the development of a Vision Statement and Values. The committee then performed an analysis of the department's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT). Goals and Objectives were developed from the results of the SWOT Analysis, with tasks and timelines identified for implementation. Member input was sought throughout the planning process.

The Strategic Plan identified eight goals:

1. Consolidation/merger with another fire department.
2. Ensure the financial sustainability of the department.
3. Plan for the replacement or upgrading of department facilities.
4. Update governing documents and operating procedures.
5. Maintain and increase the high level of training and certification.
6. Development a plan for the replacement of apparatus and equipment.
7. Establish a recruitment and retention program.
8. Support and expand public outreach opportunities.

The plan has also identified key performance indicators that can be used to evaluate the department's service levels, deployment, and response times, as well as to compare it with other similar organizations and identify opportunities for improvement.

It is our intention that this Strategic Plan will enable the department to continue its proud history of providing emergency services while also growing stronger by building upon its strengths and successes.



Organizational Background

The Franklin Borough Fire Department is an all-volunteer department comprised of approximately 25 volunteer members who strive to provide the best firefighting, technical rescue, hazardous materials mitigation, and emergency medical services using a fleet consisting of a rescue/engine, pumper/ladder truck, and squad. The department also has an ambulance that is operated through Conemaugh Valley Regional EMS, which is a joint venture with the Cover Hill and East Taylor Township Fire Departments.



To provide these services, the department's volunteers spend countless hours maintaining equipment, raising funds, and completing extensive training in all aspects of emergency response, in addition to answering calls at all hours. In fact, the department has been recognized for having over 75% of its active members certified to meet national standards as Firefighters, Rescue Technicians, and in

Hazardous Materials Operations. Many members are also certified as Emergency Medical Technicians or Paramedics. Because of the efforts of the department's dedicated volunteers and through the assistance of the department's automatic and mutual aid partners, Franklin Borough has an Insurance Services Organization (ISO) Public Protection Classification of 4.

The Borough of Franklin, founded in 1868 after being carved out of Conemaugh Township, is located on the northern border of Johnstown, Pennsylvania. Currently, the borough is primarily a small, aging bedroom community of 323 people (per the 2010 U.S. census) living in an area of 0.57 square miles. For many years, the steel industry had a large presence in the borough, most of which has since been demolished. The demise of the steel industry has been a leading cause of the borough becoming a state-designated financially distressed municipality that struggles to provide minimal municipal services and does not have the financial resources to provide funding towards the operation of the fire department.



Mission Statement

To establish, maintain, and operate a firefighting and rescue service for the preservation and protection of life and property from and during such fires, entrapments, hazardous materials events, other emergencies, and disasters as may occur in Franklin Borough, Cambria County, and vicinity, including the training of members and the solicitation of funds and membership in this organization.

Vision Statement

- We will work together as a team to serve the public.
- We will treat the public and each other in a respectful and professional manner.
- We will perform our duties for the betterment of the community and the department.
- We will strive to provide our services as safely, efficiently, and fairly as possible.

Values

Teamwork – We strive to support each member of our team in our various roles as part of the department. We strive to insure an atmosphere of inclusion for all members where each is made a valuable part of our organization. We strive to support each member in their effort to achieve their highest potential.

Service – We strive to provide excellent community service by being responsive to the needs of those around us. We strive to exceed expectations and seek solutions to the problems of those in need. We value relationships with other municipal and mutual aid agencies that can assist us in providing service to our community.

Respect – We recognize that our success depends upon our members and the support of our community. We will respect each member of our team, our partners, the citizens that we serve, and all persons we interact with by recognizing the diversity in each individual and their individual talents, skills, and contributions to our success.

Accountability – We accept our individual and team responsibilities and take responsibility for our performance and actions in all of our decisions.

Integrity – We employ the highest ethical standards, demonstrating honesty and fairness in every action we take and decision we make.



Strategic Planning Process

Strategic planning is a continuous and systematic process where the guiding members of an organization make decisions about its future, develop the necessary procedures and operations to achieve that future, and determine how success is to be measured.

John M. Bryson defines strategic planning as “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.”

Strategic planning answers four basic questions:

1. Where are we now?
2. Where do we want to be?
3. How do we get there?
4. How do we measure our progress?

The development and implementation of a strategic plan helps an organization understand its resources, capabilities, and needs. It creates a process that develops basic decisions and actions that help structure what the organization is, does, and why it does. Essentially, it creates decisions about the organization’s future.



Figure 1. The strategic planning process.

The strategic planning process involves conducting five basic activities:

1. Identification of the organization’s mission, vision, and values.
2. Analysis of the organization’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.
3. Determination of goals and objectives for the organization.
4. Identification of tasks, roles and responsibilities, budgets, and timelines for implementing the goals and objectives.
5. Design and utilization of a method to monitor the implementation and success of the strategic plan.

A **SWOT analysis** is a renowned tool used to determine an organization’s:

- **Strengths** – The advantages of an organization or what it does well.
- **Weaknesses** – Areas to be improved.
- **Opportunities** – External factors that may contribute to the organization or build upon its strengths.



- **Threats** – Potential problems or risks caused by external factors that the organization might face.



Figure 2. The components of the SWOT Analysis.

The **goals and objectives** of this strategic plan were developed upon review of the results of the SWOT analysis. These goals and objectives are focused to address the weaknesses, opportunities, and threats faced by the fire department.

- **Goals** – A long-range outcome towards which an organization strives for.
- **Objectives** – Specific, measurable actions or efforts that support attainment of the associated goal.
- **Tasks** – Specific functions to be performed to accomplish the stated objective.

The objectives essentially define the actions necessary to get from where an organization is currently to where it wants to be (its goals) while the tasks are basically the steps required to accomplish the objective.

Input was sought from key sources, such as organizational members, community leaders, citizens, the business community, and mutual aid agencies. Input was sought during the SWOT analysis and goals and objectives phases of the strategic planning.



SWOT Analysis

The following are the results of the SWOT analysis that was performed.

Strengths

- Level of training, education, and certification of members
- Minimum training standards developed
- Several members are certified instructors, included an accredited Pennsylvania State Fire Academy instructor
- Website and social media accounts maintained for public outreach and events
- Trusted by the community and our mutual aid partners
- Quality of apparatus and equipment
- Organizational pride
- Community support
- Strong mutual aid partners
- Personnel equipped with adequate PPE based on projected risks
- Each riding position equipped with radio communications
- Leadership leads from the front (lead by example)
- Small efficient group of dedicated personnel
- Experience administrative staff
- Conemaugh Valley Regional Ambulance Association

Weaknesses

- Low levels of involvement/participation of members
- Difficulty getting some members to attend/participate in training
- Limited available manpower, especially during weekday daylight hours
- Aging, cramped, and deteriorating facility
- Restricted ability to fundraise at building
- Members must spend significant amounts of time fundraising
- Lack of operations and/or long-term capital budgets
- Not a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization
- IRS nonprofit tax reports not filed
- Outdated Standard Operating Guidelines
- Constitution and bylaws need updated
- Lack of succession planning for leadership roles
- Lack of an organized recruitment/retention program
- No long-term plan for apparatus replacement



- Lack of training and education opportunities for officers and administrative staff
- Lack of minimum training standards for officers
- Limited alternative methods for delivery of training (e.g., hybrid, online, etc.)
- Lack of comprehensive risk management and health & safety programs
- Quality of specific apparatus (i.e., Truck 5) deteriorating
- Lack of a comprehensive records management system
- Lack of adequate financial reserves in place

Opportunities

- Secure the future of the department financially and operationally
- Partner with other agencies and groups to expand public outreach
- Expand use of website and/or social media accounts for public outreach
- Identify and pursue additional sources of revenue through grants and donations
- New fundraising opportunities
- Develop a joint recruitment/retention program with mutual aid partners
- Develop interagency training opportunities, including officer training
- Partner and/or collaborate with neighboring departments to avoid duplication of services and equipment
- Construct new facility with adequate room for current and future apparatus
- Develop and implement a comprehensive pre-incident planning program for target hazards
- Attain PA Association of Non-Profit Organization (PANO) accreditation
- Life members who have moved away continue to offer support

Threats

- Availability and participation of members decreasing
- Training requirements potentially driving volunteers away
- Retirement of senior volunteer members
- Lack of 501(c)(3) nonprofit status
- Penalties for failure to file IRS nonprofit tax reports
- Declining turnout and competence of some mutual aid companies
- Lack of young personnel joining/staying with department
- Municipal budget constraints
- Financially distressed status of municipality
- Possible loss of fire district (first due area)
- May be forced to take on ownership of the municipal building



- Increasing difficulty fundraising
- Decreasing availability of grant funding
- Cost of apparatus and equipment continues to increase
- Continued administration requirements may place additional burdens on administrative staff
- New building construction methods and materials, along with building contents create a more hazardous work environment and increases the risk of long-term health effects for personnel





Goals and Objectives

Goal #1 - Consolidation/Merger with another fire department

Objective 1A - Explore the interest of neighboring fire department(s) in discussing a merger or consolidation.

Timeframe: 3 Months

Tasks:

- Reach out to the neighboring fire department(s) to explore interest in discussing a merger or consolidation.
- Reevaluate and pursue based on preliminary feedback from initial talks.

Objective 1B - Implement steps to carry out the merger and/or consolidation process if there is interest in doing so from the neighboring department(s).

Timeframe: Undetermined

Tasks:

- Establish a committee to explore a merger or consolidation if there is interest in doing so from the neighboring department(s).
- Request local government assistance from the Department of Community & Economic Development (DCED) to support the merger or consolidation process.
- Create subcommittees to address specific functions and/or tasks such as bylaws, finances, apparatus, facilities, etc.
- Develop and present the merger or consolidation plan to the respective departments for approval.
- Implement the merger or consolidation plan if approved.

Goal #2 - Ensure the financial sustainability of the department.

Objective 2A - Develop short-term and long-term budgets.

Timeframe: 1 Month

Tasks:

- Develop an operating budget on an annual basis.
- Collaborate with executive leadership of department to identify capital projects.
- Ensure plans are developed to forecast timelines for capital project completion.
- Identify sources of revenue for capital budgets.
- Develop comprehensive budget for identified capital projects.



Objective 2B – Continue to pursue grants and other sources of outside funding.

Timeframe: Ongoing

Tasks:

- Monitor for new grant opportunities.
- Monitor for new sources of donations.
- Obtain 501(c)(3) non-profit status.
- Pursue (apply for) grant opportunities and sources of donations.

Objective 2C – Continue to explore new avenues of fundraising.

Timeframe: Ongoing

Tasks:

- Continue to monitor for new fundraising opportunities.
- Investigate the feasibility of new fundraising events.
- Consider the possibility of joint fundraising activities with outside groups.
- Evaluate current fundraising activities for continued feasibility.

Objective 2D – Obtain 501(c)(3) non-profit status through IRS.

Timeframe: Completed

Tasks:

- Develop an operating budget on an annual basis.
- Work with Treasurer to complete 501(c)(3) application to obtain nonprofit status.
- Ensure the completion of all required quarterly/annual financial/tax reports.

Goal #3 – Plan for the replacement or upgrading of department facilities.

Objective 3A – Investigate the possibility of upgrading and/or replacing facilities to meet the future needs of the fire department.

Timeframe: 2 Years

Tasks:

- Perform a comprehensive assessment of facility needs.
- Perform a feasibility study to determine optimal general location.
- Perform a cost-benefit analysis to determine the financial impact.
- Develop a plan to upgrade and/or replace facilities.
- Develop a schedule and funding plan to complete facility upgrades and/or replacement.



Objective 3B – Execute the plan for the construction and/or renovation of fire station.

Timeframe: Undetermined

Tasks:

- Acquire land for the construction of a new fire station or addition.
- Obtain architectural and/or engineering services for the construction and/or renovation of the fire station.
- Solicits bids for contractor services for the construction and/or renovation of the fire station.
- Prepare property for construction (e.g., excavation, utility hookups, etc.).
- Execute the construction and/or renovation of the fire station.

Goal #4 – Update governing documents and operating procedures.

Objective 4A – Review and revise (modernize) the Constitution & Bylaws.

Timeframe: 7 Months

Tasks:

- Assemble a committee to review and revise the Constitution & Bylaws.
- Hold committee meetings on a frequent basis to review and revise the Constitution & Bylaws.
- Forward the revised Constitution & Bylaws through the amendment process.
- Distribute copies of the adopted Constitution & Bylaws to all members.

Objective 4B – Develop and implement a set of administrative policies.

Timeframe: 1-3 Months

Tasks:

- Assemble a committee of officers and/or members to develop a set of administrative policies.
- Develop a list of policies and procedures that are needed and/or recommended.
- Hold frequent committee meetings to develop policies and procedures.
- Distribute copies of the completed policies and procedures to all personnel.
- Conduct training sessions to review policies and procedures with all personnel.
- Review policies and procedures at least annually and revise as necessary.



Objective 4C – Develop and implement a comprehensive set of updated standard operating guidelines (SOGs) covering all services provided by the department.

Timeframe: 3-6 Months

Tasks:

- Assemble a committee of officers and/or members to review, revise, and develop a comprehensive set of SOGs.
- Develop a list of SOGs that are needed and/or recommended.
- Hold frequent committee meetings to review, revise, and develop SOGs.
- Distribute copies of the completed SOGs to all operations personnel.
- Conduct training sessions to review SOGs with all personnel.
- Integrate SOGs into department operations and activities.
- Review SOGs on at least an annual basis and revise as necessary.

Objective 4D – Conduct an organizational self-assessment using the Pennsylvania Association of Non-Profit Organizations’ (PANO) Standards for Excellence Program.

Timeframe: 6 Months

Tasks:

- Assemble a committee of officers and/or members to conduct an organizational self-assessment.
- Conduct the organizational self-assessment using the program’s checklist.
- Identify applicable areas of noncompliance.
- Provide recommendations for achieving compliance and/or best practices.



Goal #5 - Maintain and increase high level of training and certification.

Objective 5A - Evaluate and implement a training program that ensures members are provided with the training, competencies, and professional certification necessary to perform the services provided by the department in a safe, efficient, and professional manner.

Timeframe: 3 Months and Ongoing

Tasks:

- Develop a training program and matrix that identifies the professional certifications and training required for each program area of the department.
- Ensure training is specific to the department's mission and services provided.
- Identify training topics with mandated and/or recommended refresher training and schedule the refresher training to meet the mandates and recommendations.
- Provide the necessary training to meet the requirements of the services provided.
- Continue to encourage and support members to attain professional certification.
- Maintain support for outside training that meets department training standards.
- Ensure good communication of upcoming training offerings by developing and distributing quarterly, semi-annual, and/or annual training schedules.
- Continue to improve the quality of training facilities, props, and resources.
- Implement an evaluation system for the training program.
- Utilize typical staffing for crew assignments in training rather than full crew sizes of five to six members.
- Evaluate the possibility of developing a competency evaluation system that identifies required skill sets by department position and establishes performance criteria for the various skill sets.

Objective 5B - Continue to conduct joint training with automatic/mutual aid.

Timeframe: Ongoing

Tasks:

- Seek out opportunities for training with automatic/mutual aid companies.
- Work with other departments and/or agencies to identify any training needs.
- Schedule a minimum of one training session annually with automatic/mutual aid companies, preferably with an emphasis on practical skills evolutions.
- Continue to invite other fire departments and/or agencies to training sessions.



Objective 5C – Explore opportunities for alternate methods of delivering training.

Timeframe: Ongoing

Tasks:

- Evaluate and implement a training program that allows for individualized, flexible training to meet identified needs.
- Offer instructor led company-level training at random times to allow for additional participation outside of the traditional training time.
- Place emphasis on hands-on training as opposed to classroom-based training.
- Incorporate the use of simulations and scenario-based training sessions.
- Emphasize and encourage the use of existing online training resources available through other agencies.
- Develop internet-based training for topics that do not require a hands-on skill practicum.
- Develop hybrid training for topics with lecture and hands-on skill practicum.

Objective 5D – Develop and implement succession planning to ensure that a sufficient number of members are trained in all administrative functions.

Timeframe: 3 Years

Tasks:

- Evaluate the distribution of administrative tasks to make sure more than one individual is competent at any given job task.
- Train/familiarize additional personnel to perform administrative tasks to ensure that a sufficient number of members are trained in all administrative functions.
- Identify critical functions and develop step-by-step procedures to accomplish the critical functions.
- Research, develop, and implement a comprehensive Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) for the department.
- Develop and implement a professional development program to ensure succession of executive leadership positions.



Objective 5E – Provide leadership training and expand leadership opportunities.

Timeframe: 3 Years and Ongoing

Tasks:

- Develop a culture that supports appropriate leadership behavior by defining leadership expectations and department philosophy.
- Expand leadership opportunities at all levels of the organization by continuing to provide members with opportunities for professional growth and increased responsibility on high profile projects.
- Investigate the possibility of implementing a volunteer mentoring program.
- Provide leadership and management training with a focus on team building, volunteer issues, conflict resolution, time management, and project management.
- Identify advanced and officer level courses for training and collaborate with neighboring departments to bring courses and/or certifications to the area.
- Conduct “team building” exercises.
- Review a leadership book or series of journal articles annually as part of training.

Objective 5F – Conduct preplanning to familiarize members and automatic/mutual aid companies with the structures within the fire district.

Timeframe: 1 Year

Tasks:

- Identify target hazards.
- Assign responsibility to do surveys and produce maps.
- Provide training to those assigned to do surveys and produce maps.
- Conduct pre-incident plan surveys.
- Develop pre-incident plans and updated maps.
- Provide training to members on target hazard features.
- Annually review and update (as necessary) map books and pre-incident plans.



Goal #6 – Develop a plan for replacement of apparatus and equipment.

Objective 6A – Conduct a current inventory and assessment of apparatus and equipment.

Timeframe: 1 Year

Tasks:

- Develop a procedure for assessing the condition of equipment.
- Assign company officers to conduct a current inventory and assessment of the equipment carried on apparatus and surplus equipment stored in the station.
- Present completed inventory/assessment to the department and the committees charged with developing plans for apparatus and equipment replacement.

Objective 6B – Develop a plan for future apparatus replacement needs.

Timeframe: Completed

Tasks:

- Assemble a committee of officers and/or members to develop plan.
- Hold committee meetings on a frequent basis to develop and review the plan.
- Evaluate apparatus needs based on current and future department operations.
- Coordinate future apparatus needs with neighboring departments.
- Consult current inventory/assessment of apparatus in developing plan.
- Present completed plan to include in capital budget in subsequent years.

Objective 6C – Develop a plan for the replacement of outdated equipment and the purchase of additional needed equipment.

Timeframe: 1 Year

Tasks:

- Assemble a committee of officers and/or members to develop plan.
- Hold committee meetings on a frequent basis to develop and review the plan.
- Consult current inventory/assessment of equipment in developing plan.
- Monitor for and pursue eligible grant opportunities for equipment replacement.
- Present completed plan to include in capital budget in subsequent years.



Goal #7 – Establish a recruitment and retention program.

Objective 7A – Establish a volunteer recruitment program.

Timeframe: 2 Years

Tasks:

- Review guidance, resources, and best practices from government agencies and other fire departments and associations.
- Partner with mutual aid companies to develop a joint program.
- Develop a working relationship with the school district for the recruitment of junior firefighters.
- Maximize the use of social media and webpage(s) for attracting new members.
- Recruit members (responding and non-responding) who can provide specialized skills to the department (e.g., accounting, mechanics, fire prevention, etc.)
- Continue to educate the community about the department and its volunteer opportunities.
- Continue to cite the advantages of maintaining an all-volunteer fire department.
- Consider implementation of a volunteer mentoring program for new members.
- Investigate the implementation of a revised point system for volunteers to better balance activities (emergency and non-emergency).

Objective 7B – Explore the possibility of developing a retention program.

Timeframe: 3 Years

Tasks:

- Review guidance, resources, and best practices from government agencies and other fire departments and associations.
- Consider partnering with mutual aid companies to develop a joint program.
- Increase recognition of accomplishments and positive involvement of members.
- Increase the number of social events for members and their families.
- Increase the amount of outside training available to provide additional opportunities for professional development and personal growth.
- Investigate the possibility of alternative methods of delivering training.
- Conduct exit interviews for members leaving the department.



Goal #8 – Support and expand public outreach opportunities.

Objective 8A – Increase public awareness of department activities.

Timeframe: Ongoing

Tasks:

- Provide news releases to the media on significant incidents, prevention and safety topics, and department activities.
- Maximize the use of social media and webpage(s).
- Continue to produce a periodic community newsletter.
- Produce an annual report of department activities and accomplishments.

Objective 8B – Increase public education and outreach opportunities.

Timeframe: Ongoing

Tasks:

- Continue to participate in community and public relations events and look for additional opportunities to do so.
- Consider conducting an open house to promote the department.
- Continue to provide fire prevention and safety training to the community.
- Explore the possibility of restarting a “Santa patrol”.
- Continue to give out candy while patrolling during trick or treat.

Objective 8C – Continue and expand the smoke alarm giveaway program.

Timeframe: Ongoing

Tasks:

- Continue to operate the smoke alarm giveaway program.
- Seek sources of outside funding or partnership opportunities to continue and further expand the detector giveaway program, to include the addition of carbon monoxide detectors.



Performance Standards

The Franklin Borough Fire Department is dedicated to responding to and mitigating a wide variety of incidents, including fires, rescue and hazardous materials incidents, and medical emergencies. The following performance measurements have been identified for use to evaluate the department's service levels, deployment, and response times.

These will allow the department to evaluate its performance over time through observation of changes in key performance indicators, to compare it with other similar organizations, and to identify opportunities for improvement. Successfully achieving these performance goals has a direct relationship with saving lives, property, and the environment, and reducing pain and suffering.

It is likely that additional effort in developing performance measures and the methods for tracking the necessary data will be necessary in the future.

Fire Suppression

Provide for the arrival of 10 firefighters within 10 minutes from the time of dispatch, 80 percent of the time.

Upon assembling the necessary resources at the emergency scene, the fire department shall have the capability to safely commence an initial attack within two minutes, 90 percent of the time.

Technical Rescue

Provide for the arrival of four technical rescuers, to provide scene size up and stabilize the incident until additional resources arrive, within 10 minutes from the time of dispatch, 80 percent of the time.

Provide for the extrication of any patient in a vehicle accident or machinery entrapment within 15 minutes from the time of dispatch, 90 percent of the time.

Upon assembling the necessary resources at the emergency scene, the fire department shall have the capability to safely extricate a patient in a low/high angle rescue incident within 20 minutes, 90 percent of the time.

Upon assembling the necessary resources at the emergency scene, the fire department shall have the capability to safely extricate a patient from a confined space within 30 minutes, 90 percent of the time.



Hazardous Materials

Provide for the arrival of four hazardous materials first responders at the operations level, to provide scene size up and mitigate the incident or isolate the area until additional resources arrive [depending on the hazard(s)], within 10 minutes from the time of dispatch, 80 percent of the time.

Emergency Medical

Provide for the arrival of at least one properly equipped emergency medical provider to provide scene size up and basic life support to the scene of an emergency medical incident within 8 minutes from the time of dispatch, 90 percent of the time.

ISO Public Protection Classification

Maintain an ISO Public Protection Classification of Class 4 or better.

Current performance: ISO Class 4

Measuring Plan Success

Successful strategic planning requires a continuous review of accomplishments in comparison with the strategic plan. To determine whether the Strategic Plan is achieving its intended results, a performance measurement process must be implemented to evaluate the plan. One such process, known as “Managing for Results”, is based on the following:

- The identification of strategic goals and objectives.
- The determination of resources necessary to achieve them.
- The analyzing and evaluation of performance data.
- The use of that data to drive continuous improvement in the organization.



