



AUGUSTA FIRE DEPARTMENT



Strategic Plan 2026-2029

Three Year Department Strategic Plan





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AUGUSTA FIRE DEPARTMENT

Message From The Chief

To the Citizens of Augusta-Richmond County and the Members of the Augusta Fire Department: It is with a profound sense of duty and a clear vision for our collective future that I present the **Augusta Fire Department Strategic Plan for 2026-2029**. This document represents more than a mere administrative requirement; it is a meticulously crafted roadmap designed to ensure our department remains a unified, innovative, and purpose-driven organization. As we navigate an ever-evolving landscape of public safety, this plan serves as our formal commitment to leading Augusta toward a safer tomorrow through integrity and a shared resolve to protect the lives and heritage of our community.

Our department stands upon a thirty-year legacy of significant achievement, defined by our transition to a Class 1 ISO rating, the modernization of our emergency medical capabilities, and a robust expansion of our fire prevention initiatives. However, the hallmark of a premier public safety agency is the refusal to become complacent. By utilizing a "Systems Thinking Approach" and integrating the candid feedback of both our internal members and the external stakeholders we serve, we have identified the critical "gap closers" necessary to elevate our service from excellent to exceptional.

Over the next three years, our strategic focus will be anchored by three primary pillars. First, we will fortify our internal foundations by refining administrative benchmarks, enhancing our recruitment and retention efforts, and pursuing formal **Center for Public Safety Excellence (CPSE) Accreditation** to validate our operational excellence. Second, we are committed to deepening our community integration, transforming traditional outreach into sustainable partnerships that prioritize resident feedback and proactive engagement. Finally, we will continue to invest in the professional lifecycle of our members, ensuring that every professional who arrives at your door is equipped with the highest level of training and supported by comprehensive health and safety programs.

Execution and accountability are the cornerstones of this initiative. We have established quantifiable measures of success-ranging from the preservation of property value to the measurable increase in member job satisfaction-to ensure that our progress is transparent and data-driven. As we embark on this three-year journey, our core values of **Courage, Professionalism, Commitment, and a Customer-Focused** orientation will remain our North Star.

I want to thank the Core Planning Team and our stakeholders for their intensive work in crafting this blueprint. Together, we will not only meet the challenges of the future but will actively shape a safer, more resilient Augusta-Richmond County.

In Service,





Executive Summary



Accountability

The following document outlines the Augusta Fire Department's three-year Strategic Plan.

This plan provides the Department with a blueprint for systematically achieving its desired future and strategic direction, as outlined in its vision and mission to "Lead Augusta toward a safe future with integrity, innovation and a shared commitment to protecting lives and strengthening communities".

It is Augusta Fire Department's intent to ensure the department is unified, organized and purpose-driven to fulfill that commitment, all the while strengthening their community engagement resolve, and supplying skilled and trained professionals who will be able to provide the services and programs to meet key stakeholder needs.



Transparency

The Augusta Fire Department's "customer-focused" orientation has garnered a well-earned positive reputation and the support of the community's residents, businesses and partnerships developed over the years. This plan continues that legacy externally, with a renewed commitment to better the lives and safety of its external stakeholders, as well the members of the department.



Inclusivity

The hallmark of this plan was the Planning Team's engagement with key stakeholders, both external and internal. The team's consideration and inclusion of those inputs helped guide the development of this plan and have meticulously created a "roadmap" for the Department to make decisions to address the current and future needs of the key stakeholders.

The plan reflects months of intensive planning, careful thought, vigorous discussions, key stakeholder input, and an unwavering commitment on the part of the Strategic Planning Team.

This Strategic Plan will serve as the cornerstone of the Department's efforts to pursue Accreditation and continual improvement. Through a commitment to implementation follow-through, not only will this Strategic Plan provide focus, direction, accountability and lead to more effective allocation of resources within the Department, but it will also further Augusta Fire Department's ability to be a value-adding service to Augusta-Richmond County.



AFD Strategic Planning Team



Accountability

Planning and managing change are two of the primary roles of leadership.

Augusta Fire Department immersed its entire Executive Leadership Team and Command Staff in this vital departmental function of Strategic Planning.



Transparency

The members of the Augusta Fire Department 2026 -2029 “Core” Planning Team include:

Deputy Chief of Operations Keith Lively
Deputy Chief of Technical Services Lerone Beasley
Fire Marshal James Perkins
Chief Training Officer Bryant Wolf
Shift Commander Alan Kneece
Shift Commander Nicolas Wright
Shift Commander Anthony Reynolds
Fire Accreditation Data Specialist Sarah Harvey

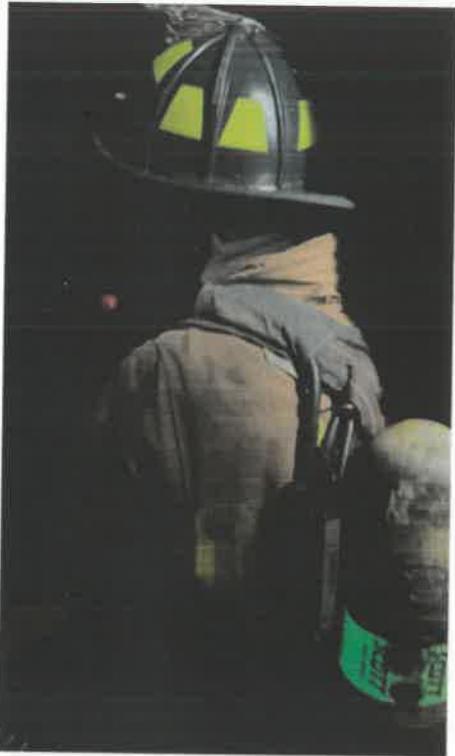


Inclusivity



The Planning Process

A Systems Thinking Approach



A time-tested, easy-to-follow, and replicable “Systems Thinking Approach” was used for the Strategic Planning process. This approach clarifies the strategic direction and focus of the entire department as evidenced by its strategies and success measures. It asks Five Strategic Thinking Questions – in sequence:

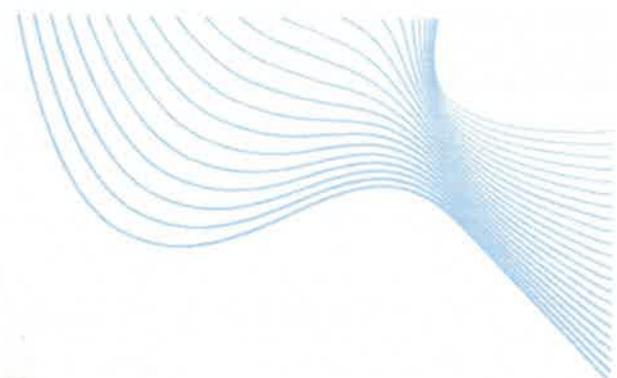
PHASE 1: Where do we want to be?

PHASE 2: How will we know when we get there?

PHASE 3: Where are we now?

PHASE 4: How do we get there?

PHASE 5: What is changing in the environment that we need to take into account?



The Planning Process

A Systems Thinking Approach

Environmental Scan

The first phase begins with a Future Environmental Scan. The purpose of the Environmental Scan is to anticipate, understand and meet or exceed the expectations of internal and external customers. Through continuous “environmental scanning”, trends and the ever-changing needs of stakeholders are observed, gathered, and analyzed to ensure that all customers are satisfied with the programs and services received.

Considering this, the Augusta Fire Department’s Planning Team initiated an Environmental Scan, which involved conducting an in-depth review and discussion of its constantly changing operating environment, both internally and externally. The review highlighted emerging trends and variables that could impact the Strategic Plan’s trajectory and ultimate success.

This Strategic Plan is rooted in the Planning Team’s collective expertise, blending analysis of federal, state, and regional trends with a deep understanding of the department’s internal operations.



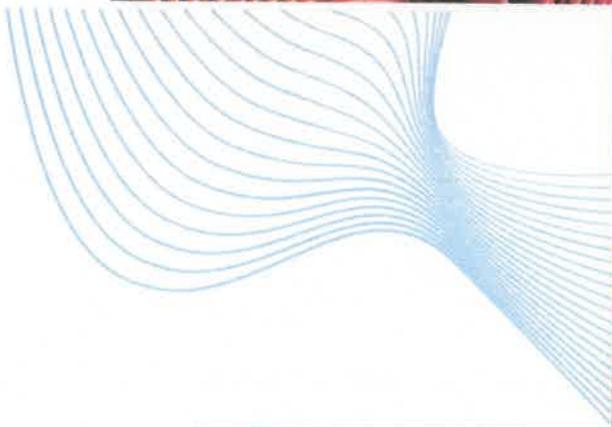


The Planning Process

A Systems Thinking Approach

Community Engagement Survey

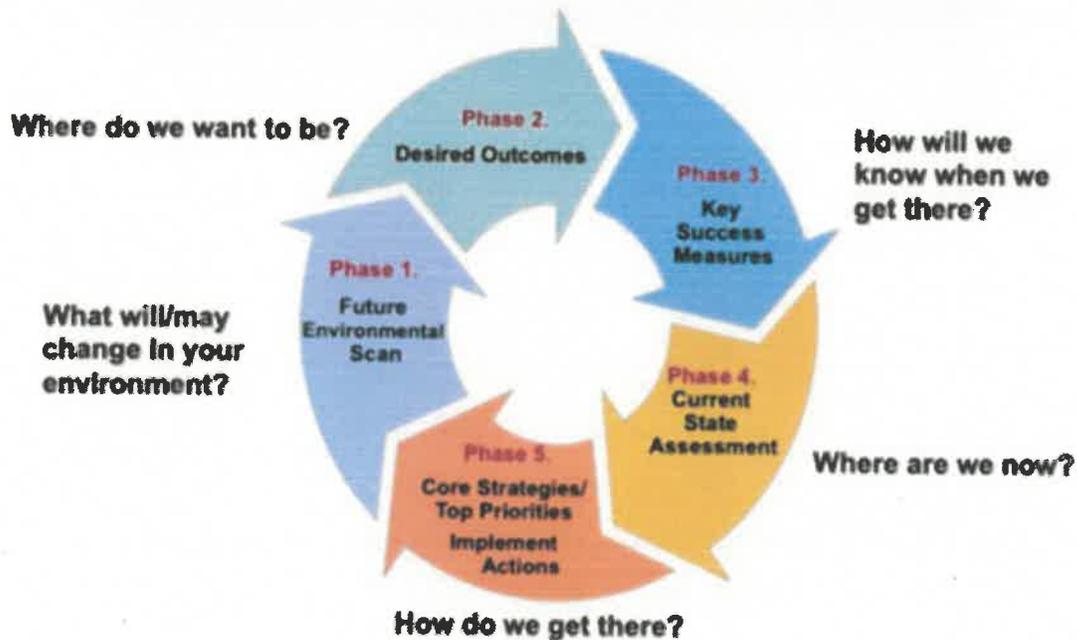
The Augusta Fire Department next sought input from internal and external stakeholders through surveys to inform the development of the Strategic Plan. Specifically, this input served as a foundation for determining the Strategic Direction (Vision, Mission, Values) and the Strategies and Key Success Measures.





The Planning Process System Model

Systems Thinking Approach to Strategic Planning





AFD Strategic Direction

Augusta Fire Department's Strategic Direction for its Ideal Future

Augusta Fire Department's ideal future is thoughtfully expressed through its Vision Statement, which defines its long-term aspirations and serves as an inspiration for both external stakeholders and the department.

The Mission Statement clarifies the department's fundamental purpose and outlines the strategic path it will take over the next three years to realize that vision.

The Core Values are the principles that will guide the department's behavior and ensure accountability as it strives to achieve that ideal future.





Strategic Direction

For this 3-year Strategic Plan (2026-2029), the Augusta Fire Department identified the following key stakeholders as the ones we thought would gain the most from the successful accomplishment of the Strategic Plan and those who would have most to lose should the plan not be successful:

Internal Stakeholders

- Fire department members across all division
- Elected officials



External Stakeholders

- Citizens/residents of Augusta-Richmond County
- Large, medium, and small businesses in Augusta-Richmond County
- Representatives of community organizations or institutions (religious, charitable, social or educational) within Augusta-Richmond County



Vision Statement

**“LEADING AUGUSTA TOWARD
A SAFE FUTURE WITH
INTEGRITY, INNOVATION AND
A SHARED COMMITMENT TO
PROTECTING LIVES AND
STRENGTHENING
COMMUNITIES”.**



Mission Statement

**“TO PROVIDE OUR
COMMUNITY WITH A SAFE
ENVIRONMENT TO LIVE,
WORK AND VISIT THROUGH
THE DELIVERY OF
PROFESSIONAL EMERGENCY
SERVICES AND FIRE SAFETY
EDUCATION”.**



Core Values



- **Customer-Focused** – We place the community at the heart of every decision, delivering compassionate, timely and professional service that protects lives, safeguards property and fosters trust through every interaction.
- **Courage** – We provide community service with valor, bravery and perseverance.
- **Professionalism** – We demonstrate unwavering integrity, accountability, skill and empathy in every interaction with community members and visitors.
- **Professionalism** – We demonstrate unwavering integrity, accountability, skill and empathy in every interaction with community members and visitors.
- **Commitment** – We recognize the inherent demands of our profession and are willing to put the needs of the community before our own, giving of ourselves in an effort to leave this organization better than we found it for those who serve after us.



Accomplishments

- **Greatest Accomplishments (Since 1996) 30 years**



- Increased minimum staffing levels from 2 to 3 personnel per apparatus
- Services offered by the Augusta Fire Department expanded to include Emergency Medical responses that now account for more than half of total call volume
- Celebrated the 125th Anniversary of the incorporation of the Augusta Fire Department
- Provided portable radios for all personnel on an apparatus
- Constructed and renovated facilities
 - Rebuilt or Relocated 10 fire stations
 - Built Administration Building
 - Built Training Center
 - Expanded by one station
- Instituted firefighter awards program to recognize efforts and accomplishments of members



Accomplishments

Continued



- Expanded fire prevention programs to include
 - Smoke Detector installation program
 - After the Fire brochure
 - Adopt-A-School
- Commissioned former reserve apparatus to be used as a funeral Caisson Unit
- Began providing critical incident stress management and debriefing following significant or catastrophic incidents
- Purchased Mobile Command Center and placed in service - MEOC
- Purchased and instituted use of an automated fire station alerting system
- Instituted ASHER (Active Shooter Hostile Event Response) training and response program in conjunction with partner agencies-
#strongaugusta
- Citywide adoption of NFPA 3000, Standard for an Active Shooter/Hostile Event Response



Accomplishments

Continued



- Re-established Honor Guard
- Achieved Class 1 ISO rating
- Expanded the size of the Training Division to implement more effective training programs
- Upgraded Fire Apparatus to ensure the latest standards are met
- Equipped every apparatus with Thermal Imaging Devices
- Began providing formal in-house officer training that meets or exceeds national standards
- Increased salaries of all uniformed members of the department



Accomplishments

Continued



- Advances in health & wellnes
 - Provided mandatory annual physicals that meet NFPA standards to provide early detection of service-related injuries or illness
 - Provided cancer screenings to members, at no cost to them, to address the increased risk of cancer faced by firefighters
 - Provided members with a second set of turnout gear to ensure adequate time to clean and decontaminate personal protective equipment
 - Provided for and required in-house annual SCBA mask fit test to ensure proper fit of equipment over time
 - Implemented PPE hood exchange program to ensure carcinogens are removed from high absorption areas
- Modernized staffing with automated staffing software - Slate
- Began using a web-based program to unify and streamline policies and procedures - Lexipol
- First in Georgia to provide a pathway to an associate's degree through a partnership with Augusta Technical College



Measures of Success

The Strategic Plan Measures of Success

A crucial part of building and managing Strategic Plan success is measuring it correctly.

Key Success Measures transform the vision, mission and core values of the Ideal Future into a practical and manageable reality. They are further converted into quantifiable, verifiable realities during the Implementation of the process.

Key Success Measures, at a strategic level, will indicate whether the Strategic Plan is on track to achieve the desired outcomes for stakeholders. Ideally, they measure results, not activities and efforts.

The Key Success measures identified will allow the Augusta Fire Department Planning Team to determine whether each strategy in the Strategic Plan is ...

- Effective (achieving its stated goals)
- Efficient (making the appropriate resource decisions)
- Having the intended impact



The Augusta Fire Department has identified the following 10 strategic key success measures to gauge the effectiveness of its strategies over the next 3 years. The results we expect are as follows...



Measures of Success

Continued

External Stakeholders Success Measures:

1

Customer satisfaction scores reflect improved satisfaction with services offered

2

Dollar value of property saved

3

Improved fire safety and quality of life through community interactions



Continued

Measures of Success

Member Success Measures

1

End-of-year evaluations and pre-evaluations indicate increased member satisfaction and performance

2

Member survey scores indicate an increase in job satisfaction over time



Continued

Measures of Success

Internal Process Improvement Success Measures

1

Policy benchmarks for administration and operation functions have been developed and adhered to

2

The number of Augusta Fire Department members has increased through recruitment

3

Completion of targeted facility upgrades



Continued

Measures of Success

Financial /Resourcing Success Measures

1

Reduced apparatus/equipment downtime

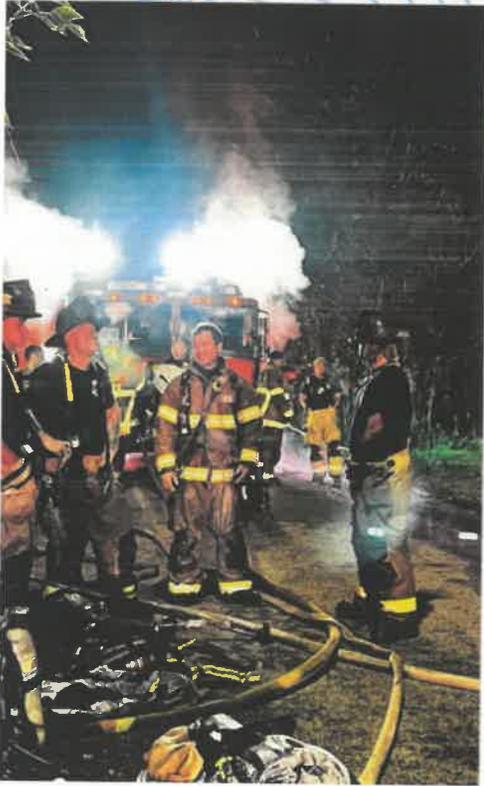
2

Minimized loss associated with premature departures of trained personnel

The calculations of these measures are shown in the Key Success Measure Glossary in the Appendix. They will be further quantified during the Implementation Phase of the process.



Strategic Actions/ Next Three Years



Strategies are the “critical few” things that will bridge the gap between where the organization is today and where it hopes to be in the future. Strategies are the “gap closers”. Strategies improve focus, unify department efforts and drive resourcing decisions. They also make implementation clearer, more executable, and sustainable.

Based upon careful review of stakeholder input and the environmental scan, the three Strategies below have been identified as the critical areas of focus for the 2026-2029 Strategic Plan, moving Augusta Fire Department toward becoming the department we aspire to be in our Vision.

The Strategy Definition explains the meaning of the Strategy as the department views it, and the Strategic Action Items provide the high-level action steps stating how the Strategies will be executed. The “how-tos” of these high-level action steps will be further operationalized using the S.M.A.R.T. (Specific/Measurable/Achievable/Relevant/Time-bound) criteria during the Implementation phase.





Strategic Actions/ Next Three Years

STRATEGY A



The Augusta Fire Department has identified the following three Strategies we believe will “move the needle” towards becoming the department we aspire to be:

Strategy A: Ensure the department is unified, organized, and purpose-driven.

Strategy Definition: Create a resilient and unified department capable of delivering reliable emergency services and adapting to future challenges.

Strategic Action Items:

- Develop a comprehensive recruitment & retention program.
- Complete a comprehensive review of administrative processes to include specific benchmarks for time that address slow processes, including, but not limited to, administrative procedures and discipline.
- Conduct an internal pay analysis every 2-3 years, and present findings to governing authorities.
- Develop a fleet replacement program

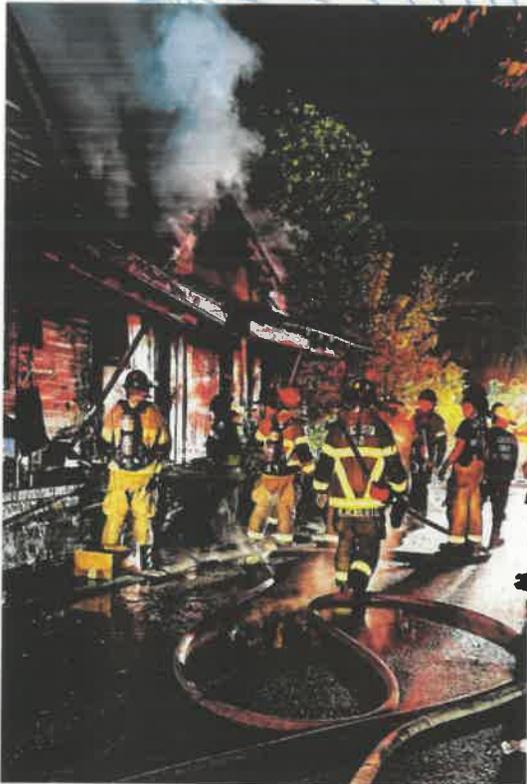




Continued

Strategic Actions/ Next Three Years

STRATEGY A



- Develop a fleet replacement program.
- Determine reporting metrics using data as a point of education for stakeholders.
- Review and improve training facilities. For example:
 - Class A Burn Building
 - Joint Operation Center
- Seek Internal feedback every 18 months regarding strategic plan progress and department direction.
- Achieve and maintain CPSE accreditation.





Strategic Actions/ Next Three Years

STRATEGY B

Strategy B: Strengthening community engagement to achieve long-term, measurable outcomes and positive relationships.

Strategy Definition: Establishing a foundation for sustainable and meaningful partnerships with the community.

Strategic Action Items:

- Use increased inspection fees to hire more fire prevention personnel, thereby increasing prevention activities.
- Provide a platform for community suggestions, post-experience feedback, and valid concerns to improve customer satisfaction.
- Engage the community in their environment by attending association meetings, community centers and hosting community events.
- Develop and implement a comprehensive community engagement plan that clarifies roles that are independent and synchronized with public safety education.





Strategic Actions/ Next Three Years

STRATEGY C



StrategyC: Enhance the quality of life and prevent avoidable life-altering events by providing skilled and trained professionals to all stakeholders.

Strategy Definition: Educate key stakeholders on Fire & Life Safety, through the delivery of professional services.

Strategic Action Items:

- Increase Fire and Life Safety Education.
- Continue health and safety measures, including addressing both physical and mental well-being of department personnel.
- Increase opportunities for classes and certifications.
- Develop education programs on fire prevention, health & safety, and quality of life.

The execution of these Strategic Action Items is prioritized by completion year in the Appendix.





Appendix





Appendix A

Strategic Plan Flow & Definition of terms used in this process

(The Vision through Operational Action Steps)

- **Strategic Direction**

Vision-What the Augusta Fire Department aspires to be in the future, and in broad terms, what will be our legacy?

-Mission-A high-level statement that outlines how the Augusta Fire Department will be working toward its Vision throughout the next 3 years.

-Values-What Augusta Fire Department believes in as an organization / What we stand for / What we will hold ourselves accountable to.

- **Key Success Measures** –Converts the desired outcomes of your ideal future to quantifiable realities. They measure results, not activities and efforts.
- **Strategy** –Defines how an organization will achieve its goals by focusing on key actions that close the gap between its current state and future vision. It aligns efforts, enhances focus, and guides resourcing decisions.
- **Strategic Action Item** -Breaks the strategy into high-level steps or actions to be undertaken, the resources (personnel, capital, equipment, etc.) necessary to produce the outcome, and identifies the priorities, but avoids getting “down into the weeds.”

-**Operational Action Steps**-are the high-level steps or actions that must be accomplished to reach your Strategic Action Items.

Operational Action Steps will be outlined in the Implementation Plan document using the S.M.A.R.T. (Specific/Measurable/Achievable/Relevant/Time-bound) Guidelines.



Appendix B

Key Success Measure Glossary

The “Key Success Measure Glossary” describes how the Key Success Measures are being defined; what the targets or trends will be, if known; how the data is being calculated to determine the measure; and the source from which that data will be drawn.

At a strategic level, the Augusta Fire Department Planning Team has identified ten key success measures, how it will calculate them, and the sources from which these data will be drawn.

During Implementation, the department will identify targets for each Strategic Plan year.



Appendix B

The “Key Success Measure Glossary” describes how the Key Success Measures are being defined; what the targets or trends will be, if known; how the data is being calculated to determine the measure; and the source from which that data will be drawn.

Success Measure	Target	Calculation	Source of Data
External Stakeholder Success Measures			
Customer Satisfaction Survey Scores	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Year 2026 - 2027(1) · Year 2027 - 2028(2) · Year 2028 - 2029(3) 	<p>The total number of citizen survey scores added together, then divided by the total number of citizens who took the survey, resulting in a percentage average score.</p>	<p>Customer Survey Results records (2026)</p>
Dollar value of property saved		<p>Total pre-incident property value minus total post-incident loss value.</p> <p>Assessed value X percentage of loss = Amount of property loss (FEMA Calculation)</p>	<p>Augusta GIS, NERIS incident reports</p>



Appendix B

Continued

<p>Improve fire safety and quality of life through proactive community interactions</p>		<p>Tracking the number of interactions by probable incident types versus actual incident types (decrease in related incidents based on type of interactions)</p>	<p>Number of participants reported, NERIS incident reports</p>
<p>Employee Success Measures</p>			
<p>Member performance success</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Year 2026 - 2027(1) · Year 2027 - 2028(2) · Year 2028 - 2029(3) 	<p>Utilizing individual departmental division scores: Add division evaluation scores and divide by 5 to obtain an overall department score. (Benchmark to be determined after year 1 to establish a baseline.)</p>	<p>Member Evaluations</p>
<p>Member Job Satisfaction Survey</p>		<p>The total of all Member Job Satisfaction survey scores, divided by the total number of members who took the survey, resulting in a percentage average score</p>	<p>Member Pre-evaluation Scores and Member Satisfaction Survey Scores</p>



Appendix B

Continued

Success Measure	Target	Calculation	Source of Data
Internal Process Improvement Success Measures			
Review and develop policy benchmarks for administrative and operational functions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Year 2026 - 2027(1) · Year 2027 - 2028(2) · Year 2028 - 2029(3) 	Maintain compliance of all identified benchmarks at or above 90%.	Policy and procedures manual, Standard operating procedures, and industry-accepted standards and practices.
Increase the number of sworn members through recruitment		Compare the number of applicants recruited, the number of applicants tested, and the number of successful members.	Recruitment contacts, Human Resources, Chief of Training.
Completion of targeted facility upgrades		Compare the percentage of identified tasks completed with the percentage of tasks outstanding.	Compiled list of project-associated tasks.



Appendix B

Continued

Success Measure	Target	Calculation	Source of Data
Financial/Resourcing Success Measures			
<i>Decrease the amount of apparatus/equipment downtime</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Year 2026 - 2027(1) · Year 2027 - 2028(2) · Year 2028 - 2029(3) 	Percentage of apparatus/equipment time out of service versus expected operational time monthly/annually	Service and maintenance records
Minimize the loss associated with premature departures of trained personnel		Value of lost personnel minus the replacement value of personnel (Salary and benefits lost versus salary and benefits of the new member)	Human resources data, Equipment, training and certification cost analysis



Appendix C

Anticipated Completion Dates of Strategic Action Items 2026 - 2029

(based upon perceived criticality, ease of execution, and resourcing)

Year 1

1. Develop a comprehensive recruitment & retention program.
2. Complete a comprehensive review of administrative processes to include specific benchmarks for time that address slow processes, including, but not limited to, administrative procedures and discipline.
3. Develop a fleet replacement program.
4. Provide a platform for community suggestions, post-experience feedback, and valid concerns to improve customer satisfaction.
5. Engage the community in their environment by attending association meetings, community centers and hosting community events.
6. Develop and implement a comprehensive community engagement plan that clarifies roles that are independent of and synchronized with public safety education.



Appendix C

Continued

Year 2

7. Conduct an internal pay analysis every 2-3 years, and present findings to governing authorities.

8. Determine reporting metrics using data as a point of education for stakeholders.

9. Seek Internal feedback every 18 months regarding strategic plan progress and department direction.

10. Use increased inspection fees to hire more fire prevention personnel, thereby increasing prevention activities.

11. Increase Fire and Life Safety Education.

12. Continue health and safety measures, including addressing both physical and mental well-being of department personnel.



Appendix C

Continued

Year 3

13. Achieve and maintain CPSE accreditation.

14. Increase opportunities for classes and certifications.

15. Develop education programs on fire prevention, health & safety, and quality of life.

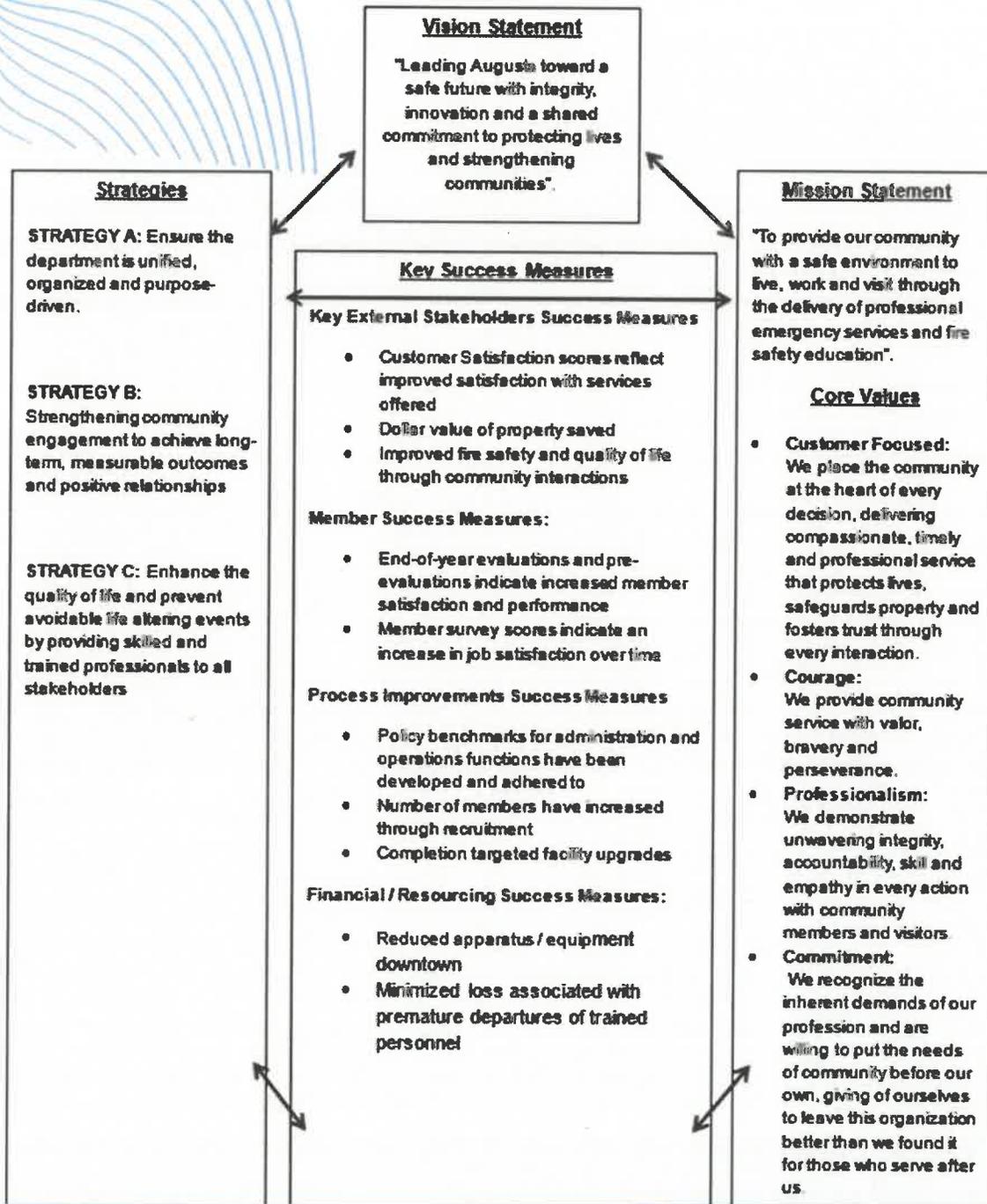
16. Review and improve training facilities. For example:

- Class A Burn Building
- Joint Operation Center



Appendix D

Augusta Fire Department's Strategic Plan Linkage Matrix





“Harnessing the power of We, the power of Unity”

