



STRATEGIC VISION GUIDE

An Action Plan Using the 16 Firefighter Life Safety Initiatives

November 2017



Acknowledgements

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Executive Summary

In 2004, fire service leaders from across the country convened in Tampa for the first Firefighter Life Safety Summit. Out of that meeting sprung the [16 Firefighter Life Safety Initiatives \(Appendix A\)](#). We came together again in Tampa in 2014 to review the previous 10 years and reflect on the next steps. In those 10 years, much work had been done, both by the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation (NFFF) and with our partner organizations; and we agreed in Tampa in 2004 and 2014 that our work is not yet done.

The debate of “culture of safety vs. culture of extinguishment” will continue around firehouse kitchen tables, on fire service blogs, and in the industry trade publications. So, what is next? What needs to be accomplished in the next 10 years to help fire departments embrace a culture that makes the best decisions for the communities they serve and are best for their members’ safety, health and wellness? One answer is institutionalizing community service with firefighter safety using the business practice of working with a strategic vision.

This guide is a template you can use to help bring about change in the clash of cultures in your department. Using the 16 Firefighter Life Safety Initiatives to support these efforts provides a structure that, before now, has been missing. As I visit departments across the country, I hear fire chiefs and firefighters have embraced the concepts of the 16 Firefighter Life Safety Initiatives but they aren’t sure what to do next. This step-by-step guide is the answer to this crossroad.

Much of the work in this guide is modified from two well-recognized books by leaders in the change movement: *Leading Change* by John. P. Kotter and *The Heart of Change Field Guide* by Dan. S. Cohen.

I want to thank the U.S. Department of Homeland Security’s Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program for their support of this project. I also want to thank Chief Jason Catrambone of the Williston (ND) Fire Department, Chief Shane Crutcher of the Rineyville (NY) Fire Department, Chief Tony Dicks of the Barnwell (SC) Fire Department, Everyone Goes Home® Advocate David Harris, Chief Ed Plaughner (Ret.) from the Arlington County (VA) Fire Department, Interim Fire Chief John Tippett from the Charleston (SC) Fire Department and Lieutenant Jonathan (Jack) Wimberly from the Dorchester County (SC) Fire Department.

Sincerely,



Chief Ronald J. Siarnicki

Executive Director

National Fallen Firefighters Foundation



Introduction

In March 2014, the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation (NFFF) commemorated the ten-year anniversary of the 16 Firefighter Life Safety Initiatives with the Tampa2 Summit. The focus of the summit was to evaluate the relevance of the Initiatives and determine if any changes or updates were needed. Attendees determined the Initiatives are still relevant to improving firefighter safety as written and no changes were needed. The attendees did recommend more be done to assist fire departments with incorporating the Initiatives into department culture. The comprehensive materials created to support the Initiatives (i.e., a textbook, tool kits, job aid, resource database, and other supplemental information) were of great value, but a guiding document on how to incorporate the full weight of the materials and concepts was missing.

Firefighter Life Safety Initiative #1 — Define and advocate the need for a cultural change within the fire service relating to safety; incorporating leadership, management, supervision, accountability and personal responsibility.

The *Strategic Vision Guide: An Action Plan Using the 16 Firefighter Life Safety Initiatives* was created to fill the gap. This document provides fire departments with a roadmap to institutionalize the Firefighter Life Safety Initiatives into their existing programs and processes. This guide supports Firefighter Life Safety Initiative #1. This guide can be used as a stand-alone document or it can be incorporated into other departmental guiding documents such as Standard Operating Guides or Procedures.



Figure 1: John P. Kotter’s Leading Change

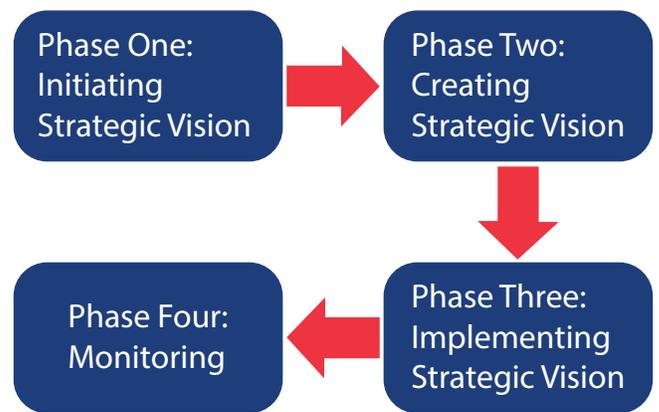


Figure 2: Four phases of the Strategic Vision Process



The foundation of this guide is John P. Kotter's book *Leading Change*. His eight-step process for leading successful change has been modified and translated for use in the fire service by members of the fire service. The basic tenets are the work of Kotter; creating a climate for change, engaging and enabling the organization to make change, and finally implementing and sustaining change. This guide moves Kotter's work from an action plan for business leaders to a four-step process for fire departments, heavily emphasizing the importance of good communication.

This is not a one-size-fits-all plan. It recognizes the vast diversity in the resources (time, money and staffing) available from one fire department to another. However, the guide can be easily tailored for all fire departments to use as a platform to springboard efforts in making their departments better caretakers of their personnel.

Strategic Vision Goal and Purpose

The overarching goal of this Strategic Vision Guide is to provide a roadmap for weaving the 16 Firefighter Life Safety Initiatives into the fabric of a fire department's culture. Memorializing the Initiatives into existing department programs and processes will result in more focused efforts to ensure every firefighter's best chance for returning home safely. Kotter discusses three primary purposes of strategic visions:

1. Strategic visions clarify the general direction for change. The fire service has used the term "cultural change" when referring to safety so frequently that it may have lost some concrete meaning. Questions to ask include: Why do we need cultural change? When do we know we have met the goal of cultural change? What does the end product look like?
2. Strategic visions motivate people to take action...even if the first few steps are painful. How can you motivate people to take action that is out of their comfort zone, work with fewer resources and learn new behaviors and attitudes? People may be uncomfortable, but the outcome of an environment that ensures Everyone Goes Home[®] couldn't be more crucial.
3. Strategic visions help effectively coordinate the actions of many people. The safety culture is often dismissed as the responsibility of the safety officer, chief officers or department chief alone. Holding the critical stakeholders meeting resets the dialogue to instill safety is everyone's responsibility.



Characteristics of Effective Strategic Visions

Kotter states there are six characteristics of a strategic vision that are critical for its success.

1. **Imaginable:** The strategic vision should convey a picture of what the future will look like. For example, it is not enough to say, “need to be safer.” Members of the department must have a mental image of what actions and behaviors constitute a safer work environment.
2. **Desirable:** The strategic vision must be desirable to all stakeholders. The list at left lists possible stakeholders to consider. Your department may include other stakeholders.
3. **Feasible:** The goals in the strategic vision must be realistic and attainable. One key element to success is seeking opportunities for early “small-victories” as building blocks for long term culture shift.
4. **Focused:** The strategic vision should be clear enough to provide guidance in decision making. Verbiage should be direct and unambiguous about goals.
5. **Flexible:** The strategic vision needs to be flexible. Modifications, new initiatives and alternatives may evolve in response to changing resources and conditions in your fire department.
6. **Communicable:** The strategic vision cannot be complicated. It needs to be a document that is easily communicated to stakeholders, easy for stakeholders to understand and easy for stakeholders to discuss and relay to others.

Who are your stakeholders?

- *Current Members*
- *Retirees*
- *Board of Directors*
- *Community Members*
- *Junior Firefighters*
- *Family Support Groups*
- *Commissioners*
- *Others*

Tip: Regional or County Strategic Vision

Consider working on the strategic vision with other fire departments in your region or county.



Using the Strategic Vision Guide

The strategic vision process is divided into four phases: Initiating the Strategic Vision, Creating the Strategic Vision, Implementing the Strategic Vision and Monitoring the Strategic Vision. Each phase is then divided into steps, tasks and action items.

Communication

This is a critical piece in the strategic vision process succeeding. For sustained and early buy-in, two-way communication with stakeholders throughout the entire process is the most important task. Communication may be in the form of e-mail updates and/or updates at monthly meetings or other proven methods that are suitable for the department. Feedback is critical to the

Surveys

Surveys provide a crucial vehicle to gather feedback from stakeholders. Free online survey services (i.e. Survey Monkey®) are available to ensure confidentiality and make it easy for people to participate in the process. There may be a concern about “over-surveying.” One approach to overcoming this obstacle is to include language

This guide is a template. There may be additional steps and action items needed to meet the particular configuration of your department. Before proceeding to the four phases, review the following to promote success.

process staying on track. Two proven methods of gathering input from stakeholders include formal surveys and informal discussions. The last action item in each step of each phase includes communicating the results of that step with the stakeholders and previewing the next step.

with each survey reminding stakeholders that the purpose of the survey is to ensure there is an opportunity for every voice to be heard. It is also important to provide the results of the survey (as appropriate) to stakeholders when communicating about the strategic vision process.

*Supporting documents for this guide can be found
on www.everyonegoeshome.com*

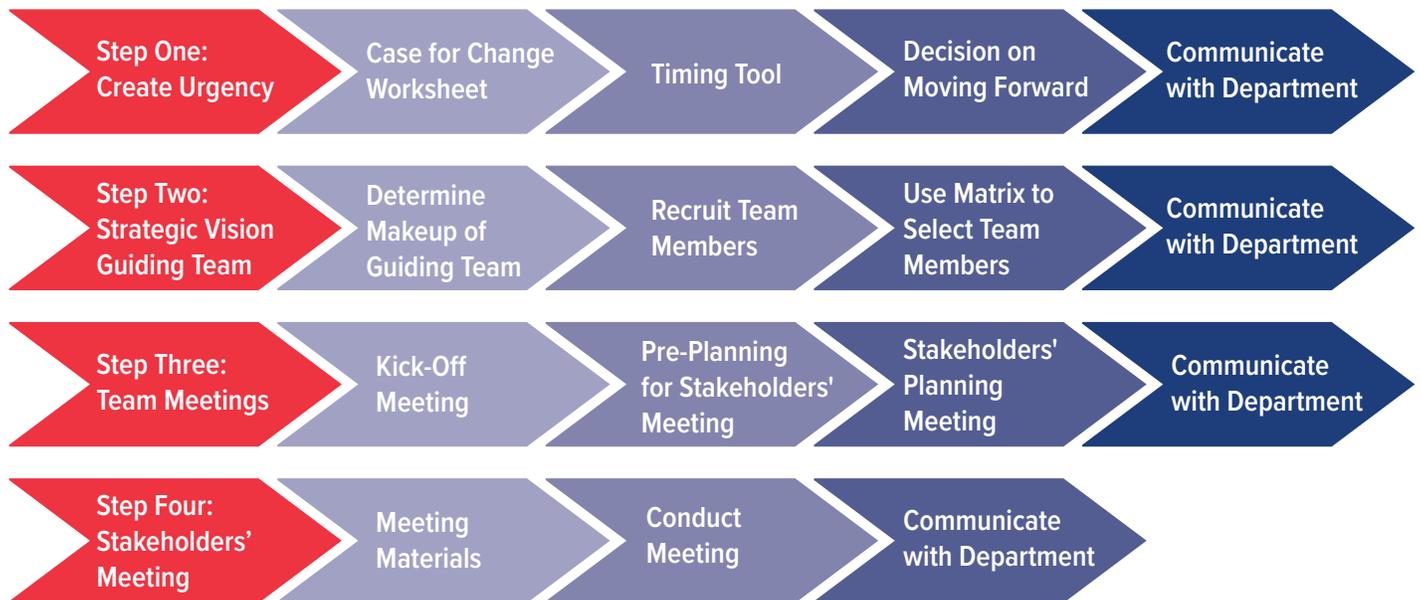


Phase One: Initiating the Strategic Vision

Overview

Phase One begins with determining the readiness for change within the department. It should not be assumed that your department is eager for change, nor should it be assumed that your department is ready for change. The activities in this phase will help determine if this is indeed the right time. Step One should not be overlooked. The questions in the “Timing Tool” should be reviewed and modified as needed for your department.

If the timing is right to move forward with the strategic vision process, Step Two is to create the Strategic Vision Guiding Team. Suggestions are provided on characteristics of individuals to consider when deciding on the makeup of the guiding team. Step Three leads you through the initial planning meetings. Step Four provides guidance on conducting a stakeholders’ meeting to gather information for the writing of the strategic vision.



Step One: Create Urgency

Task A. Case for Change Worksheet

The [“Case for Change Worksheet” in Appendix B](#) will help to determine if this is the right time for the department to work on a strategic vision process. This worksheet can be extracted or printed from this guide for your use. This worksheet should be completed by the fire chief or commission, as

applicable. It will help determine if this is the correct time to undergo a strategic vision process. If multiple fire departments are working on this process together, each fire chief should complete the worksheet independently and then discuss with others before moving forward.

Task B. Timing Tool

The [“Timing Tool” in Appendix C](#) has survey questions with answer ranges from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The results should be tallied after the stakeholders have time to complete the tool. If the results are almost all strongly disagree, then this may not be the time to move forward with this

process. It is recommended that the “Timing Tool” be sent to stakeholders with an introduction similar to below. This format is provided as a template. It can be modified to fit an individual’s tone and leadership style.

Dear Fire Service Stakeholders:

The department is beginning the process of creating a Strategic Vision project that will affect many key areas of our day-to-day ability of our services in our community. The overarching goal of this Strategic Vision will be to ensure that our members’ actions and behaviors are in agreement with our policies and procedures. Your safety is paramount to the decisions I make and this Strategic Vision project will hold us all accountable to ensuring that Everyone Goes Home® is more than just a slogan.

I need your help to get us started in the right direction. Below is a link to an anonymous survey. I will not be able to link the answers to an individual. When the survey is complete, and at the appropriate time, you will be able to see the results of the matrix portion of this survey but not the open-ended questions.

My pledge to you is to communicate with you throughout this process and ensure that your input is heard. This is the first step in evaluating where we are as a department when it comes to our outlook on getting everyone home. I ask you to take your time and thoughtfully answer these questions. If you have any questions about the process, please let me know.

Since we want to evaluate next steps of this project in a timely manner, please complete the survey by next Friday.



If your department works with Commissioners or a Board of Directors, some of the items of these worksheets will help build the case for their endorsement and support of the strategic vision. In

some cases, it may not be appropriate to share these documents with them. However, it will allow you the opportunity to think through answering questions they may have.

Task C. Review the results of the “Timing Tool.”

Survey results will reveal if the timing is right to conduct a strategic vision or if more urgency is needed within the department. Work with department leadership for ideas on creating urgency, if

needed, and determine if there are tasks that need to be completed prior to moving forward with the strategic vision process.

Task D. Communicate

Communicate results of the matrix portion of the “Timing Tool” to stakeholders. Include if the department will be moving forward with the strategic vision process. Provide a list of actionable items to

accomplish if moving forward. Provide stakeholders with information regarding the next step: creating the Strategic Vision Guiding Team, if moving forward.

Step Two: Create the Strategic Vision Guiding Team

Task A. Determine the makeup of the Guiding Team

The number of team members will depend on the size of your department. A good rule of thumb is to have at least five people on the Strategic Vision Guiding Team and no more than 12 people. The team will consist of the Team Leader, Change Leaders and Change Team Members. The roles are described below.

Team Leader: According to Kotter, the Team Leader provides executive-level support and ultimately provides the resources to drive the strategic vision. For most fire departments, this will be the fire chief. However, in some departments it may be a Commissioner, Board of Directors, or member other leadership official. The Guiding Team Leader should be the person who selects the other team members.

Strategic Vision Guiding Team Roles

Team Leader: *Fire Chief or other leadership position*

Change Leaders: *Responsible for specific components of Strategic Vision*

Change Team Members: *Works on specific component of Strategic Vision reporting to Change Leader*



Change Leaders: Change Leaders are responsible for creating the vision for specific components of the strategic vision. For example, a Community Section Change Leader will look at aspects such as how the department interacts with the community, perception of the department within the community, community risk reduction programs, etc. The Change Leaders should be individuals with the ability to influence people (i.e., respected senior members, good leaders on the fireground, in the firehouse, etc.). The team should have diversity in expertise (not all new members and not all senior members). It is not necessary at this point to decide what the components of the strategic vision will be and assign Change Leaders. Selecting

3-4 people to be Change Leaders is a good place to start.

Change Teams: It is most beneficial to the outcomes of the strategic vision to have Change Teams rather than just having the Change Leaders do all the work. You may want to select 5-7 people as team members. But realistically, in some departments this is not possible due to size of the membership or other factors. If necessary, and possible, it is highly recommended to work with neighboring departments or other nearby departments to create Change Teams. As stated earlier, it may be most valuable in some departments to create a strategic vision within a county with several fire departments/companies or within a region.

Task B. Determine if the members will be recruited or if people will apply to be on the Guiding Team.

Depending on the current climate of the department, the fire chief may recruit individuals to be on the Strategic Vision Guiding Team or the fire chief can ask stakeholders to apply to be on the Strategic Vision Guiding Team. If the fire chief decides to ask stakeholders to apply, it may be beneficial to ask interested members to submit answers to some open-ended questions. These questions can be asked in the “Timing Tool” or they can be sent to stakeholders separately. Examples of types of questions that could be asked include:

- What do you think is the greatest challenge to our fire department today?
- What is one strength you will bring to the Strategic Vision Guiding Team?
- What is one thing that you think must be addressed in the strategic vision?

The characteristics of the members of the Strategic Vision Guiding Team are not the clear-cut division of labor and management that fire departments normally divide into. Yes, there should be representatives from all levels within the fire department. But the non-tangible attributes of the members of the Strategic Vision Guiding Team are more important than the number of bugles on their shirt collars. Below is a list of attributes to consider when selecting the right types of members of the guiding team during this critical step.

Leader by Example

Who are the individuals in your department who are already safety conscious? An individual who stopped unsafe behavior, regardless of his/her rank, is someone to consider. Someone who actively reads trade journals and websites to learn



from other fire departments who may have experienced a major injury to a member or a line-of-duty-death. Someone who may question why a decision is made because a safety issue may not have been considered.

Progressive Thinker

Do you want the person who begins almost every sentence with “we used to...” in regard to safety in the firehouse? Do you want someone that cringes every time the word “change” is used around the firehouse kitchen table? Ask members of the fire department who they consider to be the thought leaders in the department. It may be the firefighter with 20+ years’ experience or it may be the 3-year firefighter who came from another department. Don’t be afraid to ask neighboring departments for their opinion on the thought leaders in your department.

Influencers

There are often natural influencers within a department. Individuals who others look to as mentors. Sometimes it is of a positive nature and other times not. A chief’s evaluation of who the key influencers are may not be the same as a new firefighter. So, it’s important to ask members of the department with less than five years in the department, who they view as the key influencers in the department.

Change Resistor

It may be beneficial to include someone who is resistant to change on the Strategic Vision Guiding Team. There are some strategies that can be employed to work to ensuring that the individual doesn’t become toxic to the rest of the members

of the Guiding Team. And the strategies should be clearly stated when talking one-on-one with the change resistor from the onset of the strategic vision process. For example, letting the change resistor know that he/she has to offer a solution with every complaint. Or tasking this individual with surveying best practices from other departments (via the internet) to help illustrate that other departments are progressing in firefighter safety, for example.

Personal Experience

Perhaps the person who is often overlooked for these types of teams is the person who has had a personal experience; something safety-related could have or did result in an injury or a near-miss event. For example, maybe someone didn’t routinely wear his or her seatbelt until hitting the dashboard when the driver came to an immediate and abrupt stop. Maybe someone thought it was “cool” to have a dirty helmet and bunker coat until their fellow firefighter developed cancer. Whatever that light bulb moment was for one firefighter is different for another firefighter. However, most firefighters can pinpoint that one event that was the stimulus needed to understand the importance of their safety and that of their fellow firefighters.

Multi-Generational Representation

Since the strategic vision is a document for the future of the department, it is important to include members that will represent the future of the department. Having the right balance of generational representation on the guiding team is worth considering to ensure that the document is relevant to all levels of the organization.



Time Commitment

As with most organizations, the busiest individuals are usually asked to do the most things. Don't make that mistake with the strategic vision. Even if it means taking some of your leading thought leaders off one project to work on this, the caution is that this needs to be a priority.

Outside the Fire Department

Another characteristic to consider is seeking involvement from someone outside of the fire department who can offer a unique third-party perspective. This could be someone from a neighboring department, a local business leader or a fire department ex-Commissioner. The best perspective may come from someone not directly involved in the fire department or public service.

Step Three: Strategic Vision Guiding Team Initial Meetings

Task A. Kick-Off Meeting

Create ground rules.

Discuss the ground rules of working on the Strategic Vision Guiding Team. Possible topics that should be considered are confidentiality, approaching conflict and difference of opinions respectfully, commitment to attending and participating in the meetings, letting go of the past, etc.

Present the phases of the Strategic Vision and the 16 Firefighter Life Safety Initiatives.

There is a PowerPoint that can be used as a template for this presentation. Modify/edit as needed.

Determine the overarching Strategic Vision categories.

This guide uses the 16 Firefighter Life Safety Initia-

Task C. If people applied to be on the Guiding Team, use a Criteria Matrix to determine who will be on the team.

There is a [sample matrix in Appendix D](#).

Task D. Communicate to department who the members of the Strategic Vision Guiding Team are and provide information on the next step.

Describe the roles of the different team members and stress the confidentiality of the team members. Encourage all stakeholders to play an active role in the process and that there will be opportunities for input and involvement throughout the process.

tives as the basis for the overarching categories of the strategic vision. It is recommended that you consider using these categories for your strategic vision. However, if it is determined that a different set of categories should be used for your department, the template of this guide can still be applied. Firefighter Life Safety Initiative #1 (cultural change) is the overarching goal of creating the Strategic Vision Guide. Each of the 16 Firefighter Life Safety Initiatives listed below is linked with one of the four major components of the Strategic Vision; Personnel (Focus: safety, health and wellness), Operations (Focus: risk management, incident management and exposure management), Community (Focus: community risk reduction), and External (Focus: grant opportunities and research).



Firefighter Life Safety Initiative	Strategic Vision Guide Component
1. Define and advocate the need for a cultural change within the fire service relating to safety; incorporating leadership, management, supervision, accountability and personal responsibility.	Strategic Vision
2. Enhance the personal and organizational accountability for health and safety throughout the fire service.	Personnel
3. Focus greater attention on the integration of risk management with incident management at all levels, including strategic, tactical and planning responsibilities.	Operations
4. All firefighters must be empowered to stop unsafe practices.	Operations
5. Develop and implement national standards for training, qualifications, and certification (including regular recertification) that are equally applicable to all firefighters based on the duties they are expected to perform.	Operations
6. Develop and implement national medical and physical fitness standards that are equally applicable to all firefighters, based on the duties they are expected to perform.	Personnel
7. Create a national research agenda and data collection system that relates to the initiatives.	External
8. Utilize available technology wherever it can produce higher levels of health and safety.	Operations
9. Thoroughly investigate all firefighter fatalities, injuries and near misses.	Operations
10. Grant programs should support the implementation of safe practices and/or mandate safe practices as an eligibility requirement.	External
11. National standards for emergency response policies and procedures should be developed and championed.	Operations
12. National protocols for response to violent incidents should be developed and championed.	Operations
13. Firefighters and their families must have access to counseling and psychological support.	Personnel
14. Public education must receive more resources and be championed as a critical fire and life safety program.	Community
15. Advocacy must be strengthened for the enforcement of codes and the installation of home fire sprinklers.	Community
16. Safety must be a primary consideration in the design of apparatus and equipment.	Operations



Determine the best manner to use surveys.

As stated previously, if possible, it's best to use an online free survey service (such as Survey Monkey®). If that's not possible, then decide on a mechanism for conducting surveys in a confidential manner.

Identify assignments and deadlines.

- Identify the change leaders for each major component of the strategic vision (personnel, operations, community and external).
- Determine if the change leaders will need change team members. It is recommended that there be change team members (at the minimum) for personnel and operations.
- Identify a change leader or team member to be the lead for all surveys.
- Identify a change leader or team member to be the scribe at meetings or decide on rotating scribes.
- Identify a change leader or team member to handle logistics for the stakeholders' meeting.
- Determine the actionable items for the next meeting, make assignments and deadlines.
- Determine date of next meeting.
- Identify the individual to communicate the outcomes of this meeting to the department.
- Communicate to all members of the department the outcome of the kick-off meeting and the next steps.

Task B. Pre-planning for Stakeholders' Meeting

- Review the overarching categories of the strategic vision and decide if they need to be revised for the stakeholders' meeting.
- Discuss potential facilitators, location, date and time for stakeholders' meeting.
- Identify assignments and deadlines.
- Communicate to all members of the department details on the stakeholders' meeting.

Task C. Stakeholders' Meeting Planning

Finalize facilitators, location, date and time for stakeholders' meeting and communicate that information with all potential attendees. Determine if the meeting will be a one-day meeting or a day and a half meeting. Samples of both agendas are in the next section.

Tip: For PowerPoint templates for these meetings, go to:
www.everyonegoeshome.com



Step Four: Strategic Vision Stakeholders' Meeting

Task A. Meeting Materials

1. Agenda

Below are samples of both a one-day stakeholders' meeting and day and a half stakeholders' meeting. Based on your organization's needs and time constraints, select the format that is most beneficial. The longer stakeholders' meeting sample agenda is based on a Friday-night and Saturday stakeholders' meeting. The day and a half meeting specifically orders the breakout session topics with personnel and community on the first night. This sets the tone that the individual members of the department are valuable to the organization as

Tip: If possible, the day and a half stakeholders' meeting is recommended rather than a one-day meeting.

a whole and equally important, if not more important, are the individuals in the community in which you serve. The second day begins with external topics as those shouldn't be as time consuming as operations. Operations has the most discussion points and by going through the SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) exercise three times with the other topics, the attendees should be able to address this topic efficiently.

One-Day Stakeholders' Meeting

8:00 AM	Welcome - Fire Chief
8:15 AM	Meeting Overview - Strategic Vision Team Member(s)
9:00 AM	Breakout Session #1: Personnel
10:00 AM	Break
10:15 AM	Breakout Session #2: Operations
12:30 PM	Lunch (preparation for report-out for Personnel and Operations)
1:30 PM	Breakout Session #3: Community
2:30 PM	Breakout Session #4: External
3:30 PM	Report-Outs of Personnel and Operations <i>Each of the Breakout Sessions will report on what they consider to be the most significant finding during the SWOT exercises.</i>
5:00 PM	Closing Remarks <i>Fire Chief and/or Strategic Vision Team Member</i>



2. Meeting PowerPoint

A template for the meeting PowerPoint is located in the [Strategic Vision Resources](#) page. This PowerPoint can be downloaded and modified for your department. It can also be modified depending on the length of your stakeholders' meeting. The page includes the "Meeting Overview" listed in the agenda samples, giving a brief background on Kotter's strategic visioning process. It is a simplified version, but should give enough information to provide stakeholders on the overarching function of this process.

Task B. Conduct Meeting

As discussed above, the length of the meeting is dependent on what serves your department the best. SWOT exercises can be draining on attendees so provide facilitators with the ability to take breaks as needed rather than on set times. Providing refreshments is also important to maintain individuals' attention level. Be sure to train facilitators and scribes so that useful information is captured during the breakout sessions, rather than general statements.

Task C. Communication

Immediately following the meeting (within a few days), it is valuable to send communication to the attendees to thank them for their time and provide an estimate of when the draft strategic vision will be completed. If that deadline falters for various reasons, be sure to communicate a revised deadline to the stakeholders. Individuals need to understand that their time was of value and that there was a purpose in spending the time to go through this process. Likewise, if there were stakeholders who were unable to attend the meeting, provide them an outlet to provide feedback. For example, have a small meeting with them to brief them on the meeting or encourage them to email the guiding team members their thoughts on the future of the department.



Phase Two: Creating the Strategic Vision

Overview of Phase Two

The creation of the strategic vision will vary from department to department. What follows in this section is a template that can be used and modified as needed. The first Guiding Team meeting

kicks off this phase of the process. Next is the actual writing of the strategic vision, followed by finalizing the strategic vision prior to Phase Three.

Step One: Guiding Team Meeting

Within a week of the stakeholders' meeting, if possible, the Guiding Team should meet while the information related to the meeting is fresh in people's minds.

Task A. After Action Review

Here are some other items to consider during the Guiding Team Meeting which are based on the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation's [After Action Review](#).

1. Did we accomplish our goal of the meeting?
2. What went well?
3. What could have gone better?
4. What might we have done differently?
5. Were there items that came up in the stakeholders' meeting that needed to be addressed immediately?
6. Are we ready to move forward with the strategic vision?

Task B. Review of Report Outs from SWOT Breakout Sessions

Review the report outs from the four breakout sessions to determine if there is sufficient information to begin the writing process of the strategic vision. If a section does not have enough information, determine the next steps. These could include talking to the facilitator and scribe, holding a smaller auxiliary stakeholders' meeting, and/or assigning a Guiding Team member to conduct one-on-one interviews with some of the attendees.

Task C. Assignments and Deadlines

If it has not yet been determined the roles and responsibilities of the Guiding Team members in terms of writing assignments, it is now time to do so. There should be one member who is responsible for the overall management of the creation process of the document. This person will provide updates on deadlines of the process. It is recommended that one person is assigned to each of the four areas (personnel, operations, community and external).



A sample outline is provided in Step Two below. The internet has many samples of strategic vision formats that can be modified for your department.

Step Two-Section 3 includes one version of how the tasks of the strategic vision can be presented. This is just a suggestion and can be used as a foundation to determine what may work best in your department. Some of the tasks may already have been completed in your organization or they may not be a priority. At the very least, these tasks should be discussed to determine their relevance

in your organization. It is based on the tasks found in the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation's [16 Firefighter Life Safety Initiatives Job Aid](#).

The format should be easily usable and modifiable since it is a living document which will be monitored in Phase Four. Once a timeline has been determined, it is important to communicate this to members of the department. If the timeline is modified, it is again important to communicate this to members of the department.

Step Two: Writing the Strategic Vision

Section 1: Executive Summary

This section should include an introductory letter from the leadership of the department. This may be from the department chief, commissioners or the guiding team. It should be an enthusiastic introduction looking toward the future, rather than focusing on issues of the past. Key strategies can be mentioned as examples of the type of information gleaned from the stakeholders' meeting. This summary should be one page at the most.

Section 2: Background

This section should include background on the process used to create the strategic vision, including the formation of the Guiding Team and the comprehensive stakeholders' meeting. This is an important component of the strategic vision for both historical purposes and so that new members of the department have a reference point.

Section 3: Strategic Vision

The topics below are in the order of community, personnel, operations and external as a reminder to stakeholders that serving the community is the number one priority in decision-making in the department. Your department may decide to alter the order of the topics so that it is an order that reflects your department's needs. The 16 Firefighter Life Safety Initiatives are used in the framework of the strategic vision, as an example of how to present the goals of the strategic vision. Specific goals and timelines should be included in this section of the strategic vision and should be based on information gathered at the stakeholders' meeting. Again, the strategies listed below are for illustrative purposes and are based on the tasks found in the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation's [16 Firefighter Life Safety Initiatives Job Aid](#).



Part One: Community

Firefighter Life Safety Initiative #14: Public education must receive more resources and be championed as a critical fire and life safety program.

Vision	Responsibility	Goals and Timelines
Direct resources toward Community Risk Reduction programs.	Fire Chief	
Plan Community Risk Reduction programs and training.	Chief Officers	
Include Community Risk Reduction training in weekly/monthly drills.	Chief Officers	
Participate in Community Risk Reduction programs and training.	Firefighters	

Firefighter Life Safety Initiative #15: Advocacy must be strengthened for the enforcement of codes and the installation of home fire sprinklers.

Vision	Responsibility	Goals and Timelines
Become technically proficient in discussing code enforcement and residential sprinklers.	Fire Chief	
Have the knowledge to lead company inspections.	Chief Officers	
Know how to discuss residential sprinkler systems and smoke alarms.	Chief Officers	
Understand the benefits of residential sprinklers.	Firefighters	



Part Two: Personnel

Firefighter Life Safety Initiative #2: Enhance the personal and organizational accountability for health and safety throughout the fire service.

Vision	Responsibility	Goals and Timelines
Ensure that policies and procedures meet industry standards.	Fire Chief	
Clearly define consequences of not following policies and procedures.	Fire Chief	
Empower members to advocate for safety.	Chief Officers	
Conduct company “stand down” when necessary.	Chief Officers	
Report safety concerns to supervisors.	Company Officers	
Perform After Action Reviews after every call.	Company Officers	
Report safety concerns to supervisors.	Firefighters	



Firefighter Life Safety Initiative #6: Develop and implement national medical and physical fitness standards that are equally applicable to all firefighters based on the duties they are expected to perform

Vision	Responsibility	Goals and Timelines
Make no exceptions to medical and fitness requirements.	Fire Chief	
Participate in regular physical training to lead by example.	Fire Chief	
Seek opportunities for physical activities in support of community. (5K runs, stair climbs, etc.)	Chief Officers	
Providing a mentoring program for fitness activities.	Chief Officers	
Document members' physical fitness.	Chief Officers	
Create a company officer fitness committee to make recommendations to chief officers.	Company Officers	
Set goals with firefighters on physical fitness.	Company Officers	
Maintain equipment and report any issues.	Firefighters	



Firefighter Life Safety Initiative #13: Firefighters and their families must have access to counseling and psychological support

Vision	Responsibility	Goals and Timelines
Ensure there is a policy in place for members who seek behavioral health support for themselves or their family members.	Fire Chief	
Explore developing a peer support team within the department.	Chief Officers	
Monitor members needs and educate all chief and company officers on available resources.	Chief Officers	
Participate in NFFF’s Stress First Aid course available on FireHeroLearningNetwork.com .	Firefighters	



Part Three: Operations

Firefighter Life Safety Initiative #3: Focus greater attention on the integration of risk management with incident management at all levels, including strategic, tactical, and planning responsibilities.

Vision	Responsibility	Goals and Timelines
Monitor risk management items and seek improvements as needed.	Fire Chief	
Review SOPs related to incident management and revise as needed.	Fire Chief	
Follow all risk management and incident management protocols and complete necessary documents.	Chief Officers	
Seek input from subordinates on risk management issues and relay information to Fire Chief.	Chief Officers	
Include risk management in discussions with members.	Company Officers	
Use incident management on every call every time, as required by department's SOPs.	Company Officers	
Report recommendations on risk management issues to superiors.	Firefighters	



Firefighter Life Safety Initiative #4: All firefighters must be empowered to stop unsafe practices.

Vision	Responsibility	Goals and Timelines
Ensure and promote that there is a policy supporting the stoppage of unsafe practices.	Fire Chief	
Explore the use of creating an Incident Safety Officer Program.	Fire Chief	
Mentor subordinates in situational awareness by using nationally developed tools.	Chief Officers	
Support firefighters who stop unsafe practices.	Company Officers	
Include stopping unsafe practices in some drills and After Action Reviews.	Company Officers	
Learn how to stop unsafe practices.	Firefighters	



Firefighter Life Safety Initiative #5: *Develop and implement national standards for training, qualifications, and certification (including regular recertification) that are equally applicable to all firefighters based on duties they are expected to perform.*

Vision	Responsibility	Goals and Timelines
Keep up-to-date on National Standards and ensure subordinates have the resources to reference National Standards.	Fire Chief	
Ensure National Standards are included as referenced in SOPs.	Fire Chief	
Develop training plans for subordinates.	Chief Officers	
Maintain certifications.	Firefighters	

Firefighter Life Safety Initiative #8: *Utilize available technology wherever it can produce higher levels of health and safety.*

Vision	Responsibility	Goals and Timelines
Determine how to do a cost/benefit analysis on technology.	Fire Chief	
Create a technology committee.	Fire Chief	
Ensure new technology is properly trained on in the department.	Chief Officers	
Seek information on emerging technology.	Company Officers	
Provide suggestions on emerging technology to supervisors.	Firefighters	



Firefighter Life Safety Initiative #9: Thoroughly investigate all firefighter fatalities, injuries, and near misses.

Vision	Responsibility	Goals and Timelines
Review NIOSH reports and flag any topics that could be pertinent to the department. Route the NIOSH report to chief officers.	Fire Chief	
Create drills based on investigations of nationally released reports on fatalities, injuries or near misses.	Chief Officers	
Monitor work environment for potential injuries and near misses.	Company Officers	
Report injuries and near misses as appropriate.	Firefighters	

Firefighter Life Safety Initiative #11: National standards for emergency response policies and procedures should be developed and championed.

Vision	Responsibility	Goals and Timelines
Develop response guidelines and SOPs.	Fire Chief	
Clearly state consequences of not following response guidelines and SOPs.	Fire Chief	
Insist on response policy compliance and discipline non-compliance.	Chief Officers	
Follow response policies, without exception.	Firefighters	



Firefighter Life Safety Initiative #12: National protocols for response to violent incidents should be developed and championed.

Vision	Responsibility	Goals and Timelines
Create and enforce SOPs on following response protocols to violent incidents.	Fire Chief	
Work on a joint task force with the police department regarding responses to violent incidents.	Fire Chief	
Develop department-wide training on responding to violent incidents.	Chief Officers	

Firefighter Life Safety Initiative #16: Safety must be a primary consideration in the design of apparatus and equipment.

Vision	Responsibility	Goals and Timelines
Review SOP on purchasing apparatus and equipment to ensure that safety issues are addressed in the SOP.	Fire Chief	
Assist with the criteria development of apparatus and equipment in terms of safety-related issues.	Chief Officers	
Become knowledgeable about safety issues related to apparatus and equipment.	Firefighters	



Part Four: External

Firefighter Life Safety Initiative #7: *Create a national research agenda and data collection system that relates to the initiatives.*

Vision	Responsibility	Goals and Timelines
Ensure compliance of NFIRS reports.	Fire Chief	
Review the NFFF’s National Fire Service Research Agenda to determine if there are areas in which the department could work with a local university or other entity.	Fire Chief	
Ensure compliance of NFIRS reports.	Chief Officers	
Ensure compliance of NFIRS reports.	Company Officers	
Ensure compliance of NFIRS reports.	Firefighters	

Firefighter Life Safety Initiative #10: *Grant programs should support the implementation of safe practices and/or mandate safe practices as an eligibility requirement.*

Vision	Responsibility	Goals and Timelines
Support the department’s grant application process.	Fire Chief	
Work with other departments to determine if a regional grant application is feasible.	Fire Chief	
Assist in grant application process.	Chief Officers	
Seek grant opportunities.	Chief Officers	
Assist in grant application process.	Company Officers	
Assist in grant application process.	Firefighters	



Section 4: Monitoring the Strategic Vision

Step Four of this guide provides information on data points to collect for monitoring the progress of the strategic vision. It is important to include this information in the strategic vision so that stakeholders know ahead of time, what will be measured and what they can expect as outcomes of this process.

Step Three: Finalizing the Strategic Vision

Once the document has been completed, it may be important to have a third-party review the document. By now, the Guiding Team members have been embedded in this document for weeks or months. It is a good idea to provide the completed document to another fire department or a trusted source to review it. The National Fallen Firefighters Foundation has offered to review any completed strategic visions to provide feedback.

Section 5: Conclusion

This section should include next steps for the department, how often information will be communicated to members of the department, how stakeholders should provide feedback, how success stories will be captured and acknowledged, etc.

Section 6: Appendices

1. Participants (List Guiding Team members, attendees of the stakeholders' meeting and other individuals who helped in the process).
2. 16 Firefighter Life Safety Initiatives.

It is also the hope of the Foundation to build a library of strategic visions to provide assistance to other departments going through this process. If you would like for the Foundation to review your department's strategic vision or if you would like to have your department's strategic vision available for other departments, please contact Victor Stagnaro at vstagnaro@firehero.org.



Phase Three: Executing the Strategic Vision

Overview of Phase Three

In this phase of the process, the completed strategic vision will be provided to members of the department. Clear communication is critical in this phase so that the strategic vision is properly introduced to the stakeholders. Every rank from rookie to veteran should be able to see their input in this document to encourage ownership and buy-in.

Task A. Launch the Strategic Vision

By now, there will most likely be two prevailing attitudes regarding the strategic vision in your department. There will be those who are excited about it and those who are not interested in hearing any more about it. This is the most important time for the Guiding Team members to present the strategic vision as the **department's document**, and not just a few people's vision of the future of the department. It is a good time to review the process to remind individuals that the stakeholders' meeting was the foundation of the strategic vision and without members participating in this process, then progress could not be met. If possible, celebrate the launch of the strategic vision to reinvigorate those who may no longer see the value and importance of the process. Stress again that the strategic vision is not just something mandatory for the department, but it is a commitment to the future of the department to help ensure that Everyone Goes Home®.

Task B. Create an Immediate Feedback Opportunity for Members

Within 30-days of the launch of the strategic vision, provide an opportunity for members to provide feedback. This can be an item on the agenda of a weekly/monthly meeting. Or this could be an email to members including a brief survey or just an open-ended question. The importance of buy-in of the strategic vision cannot be understated or underestimated. The best way to reinforce this is to continue to communicate and update members of the department. Momentum will be the greatest immediately after the launch of the strategic vision. It is important to capitalize on this.



Phase Four: Monitoring the Strategic Vision

Overview of Phase Four

Resources need to be allocated to monitor the strategic vision in order to continue to accomplish the tasks and to ensure that future revisions of strategic visions have a strong foundation on which to build. There are several different formats

which can be used to monitor the progress of the strategic vision. The important decision is to commit to monitoring the strategic vision and to communicating the progress with all stakeholders.

Monitoring Formats

The format you select to use should contain the following top-ten performance metrics:

1. **Task definition:** The task should be in abbreviated form to allow for quick review.
2. **Task goal:** The goal from the strategic vision document should be used.
3. **Task status (verbiage):** The current status of the task should be noted and dated.
4. **Task status (graphic):** To allow for quick review, a graphic image should be used. This can be in the form of percentages, red-green-yellow, target drawing, graph, etc.
5. **Frequency:** Not every task garners the need for attention in the same manner. Determine how frequently a task should be monitored. It may be based on time frequency (weekly, monthly, quarterly, etc.) or based on events (major fire event, civilian injury, etc.).
6. **Measurement:** Determination of how the status of the task is defined should be clearly stated to prevent any miscommunication or misunderstanding.
7. **Financial impact:** This parameter may change over time and should be reviewed with the same frequency as the task status.
8. **Primary responsibility:** This will define who the task is assigned to for monitoring purposes, not necessarily who is responsible for completing the task. It may be beneficial to use an individual's name or a position name.
9. **Secondary responsibility:** This will define who has executive oversight of the monitoring of the task to ensure it remains on track.
10. **Modifications:** It is critical to note any modifications to the task. It is common that the needs outlined in a strategic vision change over time due to staffing issues, budget issues, events within the community, etc. It is not necessary to begin the entire strategic vision process over at that point. It is important to note modifications to the strategic vision task by task.



References

Kotter, John P. (1996). *Leading Change*

Cohen, Dan S. (2005). *The Heart of Change Field Guide*

Understanding and Implementing the 16 Firefighter Life Safety Initiatives (IFSTA)

The following National Fallen Firefighters Foundation resources are available online on the Everyone Goes Home® program website:

[The Firefighter Life Safety Initiatives: Adoption and Implementation Guidebook](#)

[Firefighter Life Safety Initiatives Job Aid](#)

[Report from the 2014 Firefighter Life Safety Summit](#)



Appendix A: 16 Firefighter Life Safety Initiatives

1. Define and advocate the need for a cultural change within the fire service relating to safety; incorporating leadership, management, supervision, accountability and personal responsibility.
2. Enhance the personal and organizational accountability for health and safety throughout the fire service.
3. Focus greater attention on the integration of risk management with incident management at all levels, including strategic, tactical and planning responsibilities.
4. All firefighters must be empowered to stop unsafe practices.
5. Develop and implement national standards for training, qualifications, and certification (including regular recertification) that are equally applicable to all firefighters based on the duties they are expected to perform.
6. Develop and implement national medical and physical fitness standards that are equally applicable to all firefighters, based on the duties they are expected to perform.
7. Create a national research agenda and data collection system that relates to the initiatives.
8. Utilize available technology wherever it can produce higher levels of health and safety.
9. Thoroughly investigate all firefighter fatalities, injuries and near misses.
10. Grant programs should support the implementation of safe practices and/or mandate safe practices as an eligibility requirement.
11. National standards for emergency response policies and procedures should be developed and championed.
12. National protocols for response to violent incidents should be developed and championed.
13. Firefighters and their families must have access to counseling and psychological support.
14. Public education must receive more resources and be championed as a critical fire and life safety program.
15. Advocacy must be strengthened for the enforcement of codes and the installation of home fire sprinklers.
16. Safety must be a primary consideration in the design of apparatus and equipment.



Appendix B: Case for Change Worksheet

*Modified from Assessment Tool 1-1 Case for Change Worksheet
from Creating a Climate for Change, Dan S. Cohen*

Performance

Have there been recent gaps in providing service within the community? If so, how were they addressed within the department? (External gap analysis)

Have there been recent internal gaps of performance within the department? For example, morale issues, damaging rumors, problems recruiting and retaining members. If so, how were they addressed within the department? (Internal gap analysis)

Lessons Learned

What events, if any, (i.e. major incident, firefighter injury, near-miss event, etc.) have lessened the department's ability to provide service?

What factors (if any) have harmed the department's ability to embrace change or progress in the past?

What are some of the trends you know that other departments are doing that you would like to see employed in your department?

Temperature Check

What do your stakeholders value? (Both tangible and intangible items)

Are stakeholders complacent or are they seeking change?

What are the 'hot button' issues that have been boiling under the surface?

Are there any immediate safety-related issues that need to be addressed immediately and cannot wait for the strategic vision process? If so, how and when do you plan on addressing them? Do they need to be addressed prior to moving forward with this process?



Appendix C: Timing Tool

Directions

Read each statement and answer it based on the overall environment of the department and not based on a specific incident or person.

The matrix addresses general information about the department. The open-ended questions deal more with the safety culture aspects of the department.

Responses are on a 6-point scale. Selecting “1” indicates you strongly disagree. Selection “6” indicates you strongly agree. Numbers between 1 and 6 should be selected based on the strength of your agreement or disagreement with the statements. There is also a “N/A” column if you are unable to answer the question.

Your answers will remain confidential. The matrix will be added up and the aggregate results will be shared with the department in a future communication. The open-ended questions will not be shared with the department.

The term leadership in these questions refers to the fire chief and/or Commissioners, Board of Directors (whatever is appropriate within your department).

Open-ended questions

1. Do you think there is an urgent need to change the safety culture of this department? Why or why not?
2. What would motivate you to get on board with changing the safety culture of this department?
3. How do you think changes in this department would help improve the department?
4. What obstacles would stand in your way from embracing changes in the department?
5. Is there anything you would like to contribute that may be helpful to the guiding team if we move forward with the strategic visioning process? For example, a recent call that caused you concern, political issues, morale issues, etc.

Tip: Prior to completing the Timing Tool, you may want to provide members with the 16 Firefighter Life Safety Initiatives to provide a context for these questions.



	1	2	3	4	5	6	N/A
Our department must change/progress the way we operate.							
I need to change the way I operate within in my department.							
The leaders of the department seem committed to change.							
Leadership has a role in providing and leading change.							
We cannot continue to operate exactly the way we do.							
Leadership has indicated compelling evidence as to why we need to change.							
Leadership understands my duties well enough to tell me to change the way I operate.							
In the past, our department has done well at change initiatives.							
Changes in this department have had a positive result for members.							
I think there will be positive change in this department moving forward.							
I am familiar with the 16 Firefighter Life Safety Initiatives.							
The department leadership seems committed to the 16 Firefighter Life Safety Initiatives.							

Rating Scale

1= Strongly Disagree; 6= Strongly Agree



Appendix D: Criteria Model for Selecting Strategic Vision Guiding Team Members

Modified from Creating a Climate for Change, Dan S. Cohen

Criteria	Candidate A	Candidate B	Candidate C	Candidate D	Candidate E
Respected by others within the department					
Able to be motivating					
Able to make unpopular difficult decisions					
Able to remove barriers that prevent progress					
Confidential					
Good Communicator					
Other:					
Other:					

Rating Scale

1= Never; 2= Rarely; 3= Sometimes; 4= Usually; 5= Always



Appendix E: Facilitator Guide

Background for the Facilitator

Personality Types

These tips about personality types are modified from a course on facilitation skills conducted by the Department of Defense at the United States Air Force War College. Other tips can be found at: www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/facilitation/4122.htm#6.

The Know-It-All

This person appears as the expert, wants constant attention and often argues with people.

Strategies to harness the Know-It-All include:

- Listen and paraphrase what they say.
- Praise their ability.
- Focus on solutions.
- Ask others in the group to comment on what they heard, redirecting focus away from the Know-It-All.
- Have them summarize their thoughts and write them on the easel paper.

The Sniper

This person attacks and criticizes, usually indirectly, masking their aggression by using humor or saying things under their breath.

Strategies to harness the Sniper include:

- Address the behavior openly, asking them why they said that.
- Ask others if they agree with the criticism.
- Address sniping each time it occurs, until it stops.

The Talker

This person distracts by holding side conversations.

Strategies to harness the Talker include:

- Say, “There are little meetings going on. May we have just one meeting?”
- Ask the person directly to share their thoughts with everyone (use tact and diplomacy).

The Quiet Type

This person is quiet or timid. Their silence is often mistaken for agreement.



Strategies to engage the Quiet Type include:

- Address them by name and ask them to share their thoughts. Focus your attention directly on them to create the time and space they need to answer.
- Commend their participation when it occurs.
- Ask them some safe things early in the session to get them involved.

The Bulldozer

This person will try to run over you and everyone else too! It's their method of stopping progress, because progress scares them. At a facilitated session, bulldozers may leave the room a lot and will have a host of legitimate reasons for doing so.

Strategies for harnessing a Bulldozer include:

- Get them into problem solving mode.
- Protect the space of those they bulldoze by asking the bulldozer to repeat their thought or by asking others in the group how they feel.

Hair-Splitting

This person wants absolute answers and definitions.

Strategies to harness a Hair-Splitter include:

- Acknowledge their need for absolute answers and definitions.

The Interrupter

This person interrupts the person speaking.

Strategies for harnessing an Interrupter include:

- Say, "You interrupted me. Please let me finish my thoughts."
- Whenever they do it, repeat the preceding statement.

The Staller

This person tells irrelevant stories or experiences. They don't focus and instead give off-base types of examples.

Strategies to handle the Staller include:

- Ask them how what they said relates?

The Inarticulate Person

This person has ideas but has problems putting the ideas into words.



Strategies to support the Inarticulate Person include:

- Encourage them to speak.
- Exhibit patience when they speak.
- Ask them for permission to help them phrase or rephrase.

The Ideal Person

This person has good ideas and expresses them freely at appropriate times. They're congenial. They work well with others. They smile and laugh easily, even at themselves.

Strategies to support the Ideal Person include:

- Acknowledge them frequently.
- Always learn from them.

Facilitator Script

Throughout this breakout session, we will be focusing on your fire department as it is today and what it will be in the future. This process will help to identify the areas that are important for current and future leaders to focus on and plan for.

We will not be making future decisions today. We will not be creating a document that is static and unchanging. Instead, the end product of this process will be a document to provide you strategic direction and a path forward.

Some ground rules: I have some ground rules that I would like for us to follow today. If you want to add some, now is the time to do so.

1. Do not hold side conversations.
2. Please excuse yourself from the room if you must check electronics.
3. Additional rules from the pre-stakeholders' meetings.

Now that we have established our ground rules, are there any questions before we jump in?

Let's work on the first SWOT analysis. When we are doing the SWOT analysis we are going to be looking at the characteristics of your department today, short term (defined as in the next 5 years) and long term (defined as the next 5-10 years).



SWOT Analysis Topic #1: Personnel

The first topic we are going to look at is personnel. You can interpret personnel to mean retention and recruitment of volunteers, succession planning, etc. Whatever you want to talk about in terms of the status of personnel today, short term and long term is appropriate. Remember that we are referring to short term as being within the next 5 years and long term as in the next 5-10 years.

Strengths

What are the strengths of your personnel?

Today?

Short Term?

Long Term?

General Questions:

- What advantages do you have regarding personnel in your department today? Short term? Long term?
- What does your fire department do well in regard to personnel today? What would you like to see it do well in the short term? Long term?
- What would you like other departments to see as your strengths in personnel today? Short term? Long term?
- What other strengths do your personnel have today? Short term? Long term?
- Anything else about strengths in personnel before we move forward?

*Facilitator Note:
Although they may come up naturally in the conversation, ask these questions based on today, short term, and long term.*

Weaknesses

Next, we are going to talk about the weaknesses of your personnel today, short term and long term.

- What could your personnel improve on today? Short term? Long term?
- What do you wish your personnel could do better today? Short term? Long term?
- What other weaknesses do your personnel have today? Short term? Long term?
- Anything else about weaknesses in personnel before we move forward?



Opportunities

Next, we are going to talk about opportunities in terms of your personnel.

- What skills and/or resources do your personnel have today that should be further explored? Short term? Long term?
- Look at the strengths that we identified in the first part of the SWOT analysis. Are there personnel strengths that we can turn into opportunities today? Short term? Long term?
- Look at the weaknesses that we identified in the second part of the SWOT analysis. Are there personnel weaknesses that we can turn into opportunities today? Short term? Long term?
- Are there any other personnel opportunities facing your department today? Short term? Long term?
- Anything else about personnel opportunities before we move forward with threats?

Threats

Next, we are going to talk about Threats; things to keep in mind to help prepare for obstacles.

- What obstacles do you face internal to your department when thinking about your personnel today? Short term? Long term?
- What obstacles do you face externally when thinking about your personnel today? Short term? Long term?
- Anything else about threats to personnel before we move forward to some specific questions about personnel as it relates to some of the Firefighter Life Safety Initiatives?

Firefighter Life Safety Initiative Questions

Let's look at **Firefighter Life Safety Initiative #2**: Enhance the personal and organizational accountability for health and safety throughout the fire service. I would like you to classify these related topics as strengths, weaknesses, opportunities or threats. These questions relate to what your opinions are today and what you would like to see in the short-term future (up to 5 years) and long-term future (5-10 years). If you think that any of them should be the priority within this Life Safety Initiative, we will note that.

1. For example, are the current health and safety policies a strength, weakness, opportunity or threat of the department? If there are no policies, then this would be a weakness and a threat. If there are policies but there is room for improvement, then this would be classified as an opportunity. And if the policies are completed, complied and followed, then this would be classified as a strength.
2. Is health and fitness encouraged in the department?
3. Is smoking allowed? Is a smoking cessation program available to members?
4. Is there a healthy station environment (e.g., exhaust system to remove apparatus exhaust gases, regular changing of HVAC filters, automatic dishwasher, separate laundry for uniforms/clothing and apparatus towels, PPE cleaning program)?
5. Are members empowered to stop unsafe practices?
6. Are safety concerns reported in a timely manner and addressed?



7. Is there an “After-Action” type critique activity after every call?

Let’s now look at **Firefighter Life Safety Initiative #6**: Develop and implement national medical and fitness standards for firefighters based on duties expected. Although we don’t have the power within this format to make national changes, this initiative can be modified for our needs in the department.

1. Does the department support healthy and fit firefighters based on the duties they are expected to perform?
2. Does the department provide support for members who are actively trying to be healthy and fit?
3. Does the department celebrate success stories such as weight loss, smoking cessation, etc.?

And finally, let’s look at **Firefighter Life Safety Initiative #13**: Firefighters and their families must have access to counseling and psychological support.

1. Is there a peer-support team or other formal means of supporting firefighters?
2. Is there a family-support team or other formal means of supporting families?
3. Is information about counseling and psychological support (EAP-type programs, suicide prevention, department policy, alcohol cessation programs, etc.) posted in the firehouse?

SWOT Analysis Topic #2: Operations

When we are talking about operations today, let’s focus on at least three management dynamics in operations; risk management, incident management and exposure management to get the discussion started. Feel free to add other operations related topics. We will capture those also.

Strengths

What are the strengths of your operations?

- Today?
- Short Term?
- Long Term?

General Questions:

- What advantages do you have regarding operations in your department today? Short term? Long term?
- What does your fire department do well with regard to operations today? What would you like to see it do well in the short term? Long term?
- What would you like other departments to see as your strengths in operations today? Short term? Long term?
- What other strengths do you have in operations today? Short term? Long term?
- Anything else about strengths in operations before we move forward?

*Facilitator Note:
Although they may come up naturally in the conversation, ask these questions based on today, short term, and long term.*



Weaknesses

Next, we are going to talk about the weaknesses in operations today, short term and long term.

- How could operations improve today? Short term? Long term?
- What do you wish your department could do better regarding operations today? Short term? Long term?
- What other weaknesses does your operations have today? Short term? Long term?
- Anything else about weaknesses in operations before we move forward?

Opportunities

Next, we are going to talk about opportunities in terms of your department's operations.

- What skills or resources does your department currently have that should be used more frequently today? Short term? Long term?
- Look at the strengths that we identified in the first part of the SWOT analysis, are there strengths that we can turn into opportunities today? Short term? Long term?
- Look at the weaknesses that we identified in the second part of the SWOT analysis. Are there weaknesses that we can turn into opportunities today? Short term? Long term?
- Are there any other good opportunities facing your department's operations today? Short term? Long term?
- Anything else about opportunities before we move forward with threats?

Threats

Next, we are going to talk about Threats; things to keep in mind to help prepare for obstacles.

- What obstacles does your department face when dealing with operations today? Short term? Long term?
- What obstacles do you face externally when thinking about your department's operations today? Short term? Long term?
- Anything else about threats to operations before we move forward to some specific questions about operations as it relates to some of the Firefighter Life Safety Initiatives?

Firefighter Life Safety Initiative Questions

There are eight Firefighter Life Safety Initiatives that we have classified under operations. These questions relate to what your opinions are today and what you would like to see in the short-term future (up to 5 years) and long-term future (5-10 years). If you think that any of them should be the priority within this Life Safety Initiative, we will note that.

Let's first look at **Firefighter Life Safety Initiative #3**: Focus greater attention on the integration of risk management with incident management at all levels, including strategic, tactical and planning responsibilities.



1. Are Standard Operating Procedures (or their equivalent) audited, reviewed and adjusted on a scheduled basis?
2. Are fire officers trained in risk management?
3. What does a firefighter do if activities counter risk management policies or intent?
4. Is there a structured system in place for Incident Management?
5. Is training provided on an Incident Management System (IMS)?
6. Is IMS used on every call?
7. Is IMS documented?
8. Are After Action Reviews conducted and used as learning tools?

Firefighter Life Safety Initiative #4: All firefighters must be empowered to stop unsafe practices.

1. Does the fire chief support/mandate the recognition, communication and stoppage of unsafe work conditions and practices?
2. Does the department use an incident safety officer program?
3. Do fire officers enforce policies and procedures?
4. Is situational awareness taught?
5. Are firefighters taught the process on how to stop unsafe acts and alert fire officers?
6. If an unsafe act is stopped, how is the person who stopped the action treated today?

Firefighter Life Safety Initiative #5: Develop and implement national standards for firefighters based on duties expected.

1. Does the fire chief monitor if policies and standards are being followed?
2. Do fire officers document training for team members? Is there a system in place to document training?
3. What types of training activities would you like to see today? Short term? Long term?

Firefighter Life Safety Initiative #8: Utilize available technology wherever it can produce higher levels of health and safety.

1. Is there someone (or many people) in the department who regularly monitors emergent technology that will enhance firefighter safety and health?
2. Are new ideas regarding technology and new fire-science related information embraced in the department?

Firefighter Life Safety Initiative #9: Thoroughly investigate all firefighter fatalities, injuries and near misses.

1. Does the department have SOPs that address capturing and learning from near misses, investigating injuries and investigating fatalities?



2. When an injury or near miss occurs in the department, is there a panel or team that investigates it? If so, are the members of the team from within the organization or are outside fire stakeholders included? What happens to the information found in the investigation? Is it shared with other departments? Is it shared nationally?
3. How do personnel report near miss events?
4. Are NIOSH LODD reports reviewed as a training exercise?
5. Are NIOSH LODD reports used to modify policies and procedures?

Firefighter Life Safety Initiative #11: National standards for emergency response policies and procedures should be developed and championed.

1. Does the fire department have written SOPs for apparatus and personal vehicle response?
2. What is the policy on responding in personal vehicles?
3. Are the SOPs followed?
4. Is there an internal accident review committee or panel?
5. What happens when an accident occurs if the fire department driver is found at fault? (For example: Does the fire department driver have to pay a portion of the cost of repairing the damage?)
6. What does the driver-training program consist of? Is it based on NFPA® 1002, Standard for Fire Apparatus Driver/Operator Professional Qualifications?
7. Is there a written mandatory seatbelt use policy? Is it enforced? Is there anything that can be done today or short term to ensure that everyone wears their seatbelt on every call, if not already being done?

Firefighter Life Safety Initiative #12: National protocols for response to violent incidents should be developed and championed.

1. Does the department have a written SOP that deals with potentially violent situations (e.g., units to stage until law enforcement declares the scene safe)?
2. Is there an SOP specific to dealing with an active shooter situation?
3. Does the fire department hold drills with the police department regarding violent incidents?

Firefighter Life Safety Initiative #16: Safety must be a primary consideration in the design of apparatus and equipment.

1. Is safety a consideration when making procurement decisions on apparatus and equipment?
2. Is the department's safety officer a standing member of the apparatus and purchasing committee?
3. Is safety discussed prior to training on equipment?



SWOT Analysis Topic #3: Community

When we are talking about community, we will focus on community risk reduction efforts including fire safety, fire prevention messages, public education, after-the-fire type programs, etc. In addition, if there are resources in the community (partnerships with companies, etc.), let's capture those too.

Strengths

What are the strengths of your community in terms of community risk reduction efforts?

- Today?
- Short Term?
- Long Term?

General Questions:

- What advantages do you have regarding community in your department today? Short term? Long term?
- What does your fire department do well regarding community risk reduction efforts today? What would you like to see it do well in the short term? Long term?
- What other strengths does your department have in community risk reduction? Short term? Long term?
- Anything else about strengths in personnel before we move forward?

*Facilitator Note:
Although they may come up naturally in the conversation, ask these questions based on today, short term, and long term.*

Weaknesses

Next, we are going to talk about the weaknesses in your community regarding community risk reduction today, short term and long term.

- What could your department do today to help fire prevention and community risk reduction that isn't already being done? Short term? Long term?
- What are the weaknesses in your community risk reduction programs?
- Anything else about weaknesses in community before we move forward?

Opportunities

Next, we are going to talk about opportunities in your community.

- What skills and/or resources are in your community that the fire department could benefit from today? Short term? Long term?
- Look at the strengths that we identified in the first part of the SWOT analysis. Are there strengths that we can turn into opportunities today? Short term? Long term?
- Look at the weaknesses that we identified in the second part of the SWOT analysis. Are there weaknesses that we can turn into opportunities today? Short term? Long term?
- Anything else about community opportunities before we move forward with threats?



Threats

Next, we are going to talk about Threats; things to keep in mind to help prepare for obstacles.

- What obstacles do you face in your department regarding data collection? Short term? Long term?
- What obstacles do you face in your department regarding grant opportunities and other potential financial resources?

Firefighter Life Safety Initiative Questions

Although Firefighter Life Safety Initiative looks at a global approach to a research agenda and data collection, there are concepts that relate to individual fire departments.

Firefighter Life Safety Initiative #7: Create a national research agenda and data collection system that relates to the initiatives.

1. Is data accurately entered in National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS)?
2. What data is not being collected by the fire department that would be beneficial to collect?
3. Are fire reports reviewed for accuracy?

Firefighter Life Safety Initiative #10: Grant programs should support the implementation of safe practices and/or mandate safe practices as an eligibility requirement.

4. Has the department applied for and/or received grant money recently? If so, what is/was it for and who was it from?
5. Are there plans to apply for additional grants in the next five years? If so, what are the plans?
6. Is there a specific member or members of the fire department who are seeking funding opportunities?

Closing Comments by the Facilitator

Thank you all for your feedback as we have gone through these SWOT analyses. This information will be used to create the strategic vision guidance that departments can use to assist in adopting and implementing the 16 Firefighter Life Safety Initiatives.





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Our mission is to honor and remember America's fallen fire heroes, to provide resources to assist their survivors in rebuilding their lives, and to reduce firefighter deaths and injuries.