



SOUTH KING FIRE

For Board Adoption

Strategic Bridge Plan 2023-2024

Background

In December 2022, South King Fire & Rescue conducted a planning process to develop a Strategic “Bridge” Plan defining the District's key strategies and objectives for the next two years. The District’s prior strategic plan was ratified in 2017 and reached its five-year conclusion. While there have been profound changes in the District since 2017, two top priorities motivated the 2022 planning process.

The first is funding. The District’s current maintenance and operations levy is set to expire at the end of 2024. Therefore, determining the best means of raising funds from several options, seeking community support, and gaining voter approval is critical. The second priority is continuing the Organizational Transformation and further integrating findings from the Organizational Health Assessment (OHA) into action— especially in accountability, leadership, and internal communications.

Purpose

The two-year Strategic Bridge Plan places the District on a path to financial viability for 2025 and beyond; and improves the organization. With the successful completion of this two-year plan, South King Fire & Rescue will become a regional leader in how it serves the public and be a better place to work for all employees.

Implementation

Once adopted by the Board (targeted for January 2023), the District will begin executing the Strategic Bridge Plan. Under the direction of the Fire Chief, identified owners will be responsible for implementing specific strategies and achieving plan-defined objectives. The Fire Chief and the Director of Enterprise services will provide a Strategic Bridge Plan implementation progress report to the Board on a quarterly basis beginning in Q2-2023.

Strategic Bridge Plan 2023-2024

Summary of Plan Scope

Pillar	Strategies
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Assess and determine funding mechanisms▪ Gain alignment and Board approval▪ Develop education and outreach plans, messages and materials▪ Bolster public affairs and community relations▪ Conduct public affairs, community relations, education and outreach activities
Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Conduct District-wide evaluations▪ Evaluate ratio of supervisors to Fire Fighters, implement recommended changes based upon evaluation▪ Improve Officer and Crew oversight▪ Increase hands-on training to meet standards▪ Implement business operations process improvements
Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Define leadership competencies and expectations▪ Identify training resources and enable leadership training▪ Implement and deploy transparent and objective promotion practices▪ Implement and deploy a District-wide organizational depth and sustainable planning process▪ Implement a District-wide business and operations planning function▪ Establish communication and engagement practices
Internal Communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Define and establish a communications governance model for inter-departmental communications▪ Define and deploy a project management capability▪ Define and implement field testing and acceptance practices▪ Establish an inter-departmental communication function that drives adherence to best practice and guidelines

Funding

Strategic Bridge Plan 2023-2024

Funding

Vision

Voters overwhelmingly approve a 2024 ballot initiative that funds the District for stability and growth for 2025 and beyond.

Current State

- Current funding, the Maintenance and Operation levy and lid lifts, expires on 12/31/2024.

Future State

- The District assesses viable funding options and conducts a SWOT analysis comparing the (i) service benefit charge, (ii) maintenance and operation levy with multi-year lid lifts, (iii) bond issuance, (iv) leveraging the King County EMS levy, and (v) alternate funding methods available under state law.
- The District's assessment analyzes:
 - Performance during the economic downturn
 - Stability amid swings in property values
 - Tax-payer affordability
 - Mechanisms used by peer agencies and the city of Renton
 - Tax law and tax exemptions currently in place by the municipalities within the District
- All constituents (employees, public partners, municipalities, community members) understand the need for funding and can articulate the benefits of the funding mechanism the District pursues.
- The District develops robust community education and outreach activities that:
 - Are attuned to the political climate and potential opposition
 - Assess the impact of other initiatives on the August and November 2024 ballot
 - Boost support in precincts with historically low support and/or low turnout for prior measures
 - Provide voters with a tool they can use to calculate the costs they will incur and educate voters who are not subject to property taxes about new fees
 - Communicate to voters which aspects of the funding mechanism are fixed and permanent and which require future ballot approval

Funding Objectives & Strategies

#	OBJECTIVE	BY WHEN	DESCRIPTION
1	Conduct and complete a funding mechanism assessment	Q1-23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Research peer agencies, including the city of Renton ▪ Research tax law and tax exemption practices currently in place by the municipalities within the District ▪ Assess options: FBC, M&O Levy with Lid Lifts, Bonds, EMS Levy, and others sanctioned by state law, conduct a SWOT analysis ▪ Model performance during an economic downturn and model tax-payer affordability
2	Align around the determined funding mechanism	Q2-23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop recommendations and identify resources required to pursue the recommended funding mechanism ▪ Develop contingency if voters fail to approve a ballot measure on the first attempt ▪ Administration meets with Board and labor leadership to confirm the direction
3	Gain Board approval	Q3-23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop and present Board recommendation ▪ Gain Board approval for the funding mechanism
4	Design and develop education and outreach plans, data and materials	H2-23*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Gather and prepare underlying data to support anticipated inquiries by the public ▪ Assess constituencies, identify key messages and identify influential surrogates ▪ Assess voting patterns, identify strategies to boost support and turnout ▪ Develop a contact database of surrogates and key audience constituents ▪ Develop digital/social, web and newsletter campaign materials ▪ Develop a tax estimator tool for use by the public ▪ Develop specific messages about affordability and max annual cost increases

*"H" indicates either the 1st or 2nd half a given year

Funding Objectives & Strategies

#	OBJECTIVE	BY WHEN	DESCRIPTION
5	Conduct education and outreach	H1-24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ File ballot measure with King County ▪ Monitor initiative and referendum landscape for the August and November ballots ▪ Monitor for possible opposition and prepare a counter-campaign if necessary ▪ Deploy surrogates to target constituencies ▪ Deploy digital/social, web, and newsletter content and advertising
6	Community Affairs and Public Relations Planning	Q1-23 & Q1-24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop Community Affairs and Public Relations plans to support outreach and education: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Audience segmentation ▪ Channel strategies across broadcast, print, digital/social, web and newsletter ▪ Enlisting on-duty Fire Fighters as messengers and outreach advocates ▪ Story telling, e.g., incident reporting, “your tax dollars at work,” capital investment and operating expense allocations, community public safety improvements, new equipment rollouts. ▪ Celebrate wins to build awareness for how the District serves the public ▪ Design a measurement strategy and identify key metrics ▪ Align 2024 Community Affairs and Public Relations plans with outreach and education activities.
7	Community Affairs and Public Relations Execution	On-Going	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Deploy and measure ▪ Communicate activity and impact

*"H" indicates either the 1st or 2nd half a given year

Accountability

Strategic Bridge Plan 2023-2024

Accountability

Vision

South King Fire & Rescue seeks to create a culture of accountability where District employees in all divisions and roles are held to a consistent high standard of job performance and integrity. The District seeks to invest in training and development programs to increase competencies and promote growth opportunities for employees; while building user-friendly tools to consistently measure and monitor progress, performance, and success. We seek to create an atmosphere of trust and inclusiveness where employees feel free to share ideas and thrive.

Current State

- Standards of performance are more consistently defined for operations than for business and administrative roles
- Limited Battalion Chief capacity hinders their ability to have day-to-day oversight for Officers and companies
- Recurring feedback and structured performance evaluations have not occurred within the District for several years
- Officer development is neglected
- Officers do not meet with peer Officers
- Battalion Chiefs do not meet with the Operations Chief or Administrative Chiefs

Future State

- Clear expectations are established for all roles
- Skill and competency development occurs
- There is a predictable and consistent application of standards
- Evaluations occur at all levels of the District
- Training and support plans are in place to develop skills and competencies
- Officers meet with one another
- Battalion Chiefs have the capacity to meet with and manage their Officers
- Company-wide SWOT assessments occur with regular frequency

Accountability Objectives & Strategies

#	OBJECTIVE	BY WHEN	DESCRIPTION
1	Deploy Evaluations District-wide	Q4-23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluations are deployed and conducted for all roles in the District by year-end 2023 and then occur going forward on an annual basis Managers are trained in how to conduct evaluations and provide feedback Managers are integral to the evaluation process and review results with each of their employees, highlighting strengths and development opportunities
2	Evaluate and align the supervisory ratio of Fire Fighters	Q4-23 & Q4-24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluate the ratio of supervisors to Firefighters throughout the District (by Q4-23) Share findings and recommendations with all Operations employees (by Q4-23) Implement recommended changes (no later than Q4-24)
3	Improve Officer and Crew oversight	Q2-23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Battalion Chiefs engage, meet with, and provide oversight on a frequent and consistent recurring basis with their Officers and crews
4	Increase hands-on training to meet standards	Q4-24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confirm required training to meet standards Develop clear expectations for 'per shift' and 'per rotation' training Meet a minimum of 80% training compliance for all Zone standards
5	Business operations process improvements	Q4-23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement business operations process improvements and technology that increases speed of access for employees to needed information and services Improve the quality of communication and employee participation in the areas of hiring, promotion, shift alignment, retirement, and other areas of Human Resources

Leadership

Strategic Bridge Plan 2023-2024

Leadership

Vision

South King Fire & Rescue strengthens leadership to build trust, create cohesion across all divisions of the District, communicate and engage with employees, public partners, and the people we serve in the community with mission focus and integrity.

Current State

- Low degree of trust between labor and management
- Low morale (that became worse during the pandemic)
- Insufficient and inconsistent communication and engagement between leaders, management, and employees
- A “we’ve always done it this way” mentality

Future State

Leaders are committed to building trust through:

- Consistent communication and engagement
- Adhering to expectations and standards of performance
- Transparent promotion practices
- Helping people advance through ongoing succession planning
- Embracing and guiding people through change
- Forward planning: conducted with bottom-up input, and implemented from the middle of the organization, not just from the top down
- Measuring what matters and striving to improve what is measured
- Fostering empowerment by listening, advocating, and advancing good ideas heard from anywhere

Leadership Objectives & Strategies

#	OBJECTIVE	BY WHEN	DESCRIPTION
1	Define leadership competencies and expectations	Q3-23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Define leadership competencies, expectations, job performance requirements and communication responsibilities for all roles, including leader and managerial roles
2	Identify training resources and begin training	Q4-23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify leadership training resources and venues, within the District, the Consortium and beyond, that support the development of competencies and expectations Develop and implement a leadership training plan and budget that prioritizes providing training based upon greatest need by role Begin providing training for highest priority roles
3	Implement and deploy transparent and objective promotion practices	Q4-23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Define the framework and criteria used to evaluate promotion readiness Train all managers and leaders on how to evaluate promotion readiness Establish and rollout consistent, transparent and objective promotion practices that articulate the expectations and competencies candidates must meet Consistently demonstrate how chosen candidates are qualified for leadership promotion

Leadership Objectives & Strategies

#	OBJECTIVE	BY WHEN	DESCRIPTION
4	Implement a District-wide organizational depth and sustainability planning process	Q4-24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To support the operation and advance careers, implement a depth and sustainability process for all management and leadership roles in the District ▪ Train managers and leaders on how to conduct depth and sustainability planning ▪ Align organizational depth and sustainability planning with the evaluation process and conduct it annually
5	Implement a District-wide business and operations planning function	Q1-24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Implement a planning and coordination function responsible for gathering the needs and developing bottom-up District-wide plans that align across operations and business to support the demands of the District ▪ Hold leaders and managers accountable for communicating and executing plans ▪ Measure milestones, objectives, and continually monitor plan execution
6	Establish communication and engagement practices	Q3-23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identify the communication and engagement practices specific leaders and managers must conduct ▪ Develop training and support for leaders and managers so they begin communicating consistent messages and engaging with their teams on a frequent basis

Internal Communications

Strategic Bridge Plan 2023-2024

Internal Communications

Vision

Communications within the District are mission focused to support firefighters, fellow support staff, and the public. By improving our communication methods, we aim to create visibility and clarity, stay informed, reduce ambiguity and rework, and strive to improve the job.

Future State

- Accountability and governance occur for what is communicated across all functions and divisions of the District
- Established protocols guide communication between Administration and all employees
- Communications are:
 - Easy to access, easy to understand, and enable everyone to be informed
 - In tune with how firefighters work and how the administration works to support firefighters
 - Complete and provide current information for the organization, accountabilities, and projects
 - Streamlined, automated (where applicable), and interoperable across systems
 - Tightened between South King Fire & Rescue and the South King County Training Consortium
- Communications use:
 - The optimal channel for the audience and the nature of the message
 - Branded visual signals and formats that are easy to recognize and quick to comprehend
 - Informatic standards and guidelines for consistency to enhance the overall end-user experience
 - Video more often for brief, broad-reaching messages
- Communications provide:
 - Effective two-way articulation of needs and support between operations and administration
 - Relied upon news and timely information to operations and business
 - Improved onboarding so people know where to go as they start in new positions
 - A centralized portal (one-stop-shop)
- Every email stands on its own; overall, email traffic is reduced and is more effective

Internal Communications Objectives & Strategies

#	OBJECTIVE	BY WHEN	DESCRIPTION
1	Define and establish a communications governance model for inter-departmental communications	Q3-23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Convene a standing communications governance committee ▪ Determine the communication governance model by audience and function ▪ Develop a communications framework by workflow and channel ▪ Define vision and user interface guidelines ▪ Define repository and system requirements ▪ Establish protocols for audience communications, i.e., out to stations and to the rank and file
2	Define and deploy a project management capability	Q2-23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Establish governance and accountabilities by division and function ▪ Provide visibility and support for R-n-D, large capital, change, and organizational initiatives
3	Define and implement field testing and acceptance practices	Q2-23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Define the field test model by division and function ▪ Deploy field testing for go forward communications
4	Establish an inter-departmental communication function that drives adherence to best practices and guidelines	Q1-24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identify communication ambassadors by division and function ▪ Align communications ambassadors with functional and division leadership ▪ Engage communication ambassadors in ongoing onboarding and field-testing activities