



DRAFT

MINNESOTA STATE FIRE CHIEFS ASSOCIATION STRATEGIC PLAN 2016



MSFCA MISSION STATEMENT

*To create a stronger, more effective Minnesota fire service
by engaging leaders with the
best training, education and professional development opportunities available.*

INTRODUCTION:

The following plan originated at the March 2015 Minnesota State Fire Chief Association Board Retreat in Alexandria, Minnesota.

Although initiatives have historically been created at the Annual Retreats with the incoming president there had not previously been a Strategic Plan. The plan was to be a “working plan” which would continue from year to year and be reviewed at the Annual Board Retreat.

For the purposes of clarification this is a “Strategic Plan” as compared to a “Long Range Plan”. The key definition equates to a “working plan” to be reviewed on a regular basis, assumes some control over future and sets goals and priorities.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The Minnesota State Fire Chiefs Association (MSFCA) delivers high quality, widely accepted educational programs, service and information to the fire officers of Minnesota. MSFCA is professional fire officer organization that is dedicated to furthering the professionalism of the Fire Service of Minnesota.

As the fire and emergency services field continues to change and evolve, MSFCA must adapt to industry trends in order to deliver high-quality services that have value for its membership. To maintain its presence as a leader in Minnesota, MSFCA must periodically review and evaluate its strategic initiatives and take decisive action when operational modifications are needed. The planning process should occur at regular intervals and should include a review of the established goals and objectives and consideration toward future trends and the progression of revisions needs. This strategic plan is one of many resources the MSFCA can use to identify initiatives.

The intent of this original plan is to establish and guide MFSCA's initiatives for the future. It is designed to align with the organizations purpose and mission. MSFCA strives to provide high quality education, information and leadership to current and future fire leaders in Minnesota while recognizing the autonomy and diversity among its members. As well as partnering with likeminded organizations to further the professionalism of the fire service in Minnesota. And at all times maintaining high standards for the safety of our firefighters and their constituents. Although the number of fire incidents and fire calls are down in Minnesota many more could be avoided through public education – an additional initiative of this organization.

One of the strengths of the MSFCA is its working committees. The role they play is essential in fulfilling the objectives of this plan. The plan includes how these committees need to interact with the Board and constituents to insure the overall effectiveness of the organization. Also to put in place a process by which to take advantage of the synergies among the committees.

In the writing of this document, it was very apparent that although the "value" of the organization is well established it is not recognized across the state and once adopted, a Marketing Plan is essential to sell the value this organization delivers.

ORGANIZATION:

The MSFCA Organization includes:

President - elected by the members for a 2 year term

President Elect – elected by the members for a 2 year term

Executive Committee - consists of a the President, Vice President and 3 Board Members selected by the President and ratified by the Board of Directors)

Board of Directors - consists of representatives from each of the 15 Regions, the State Fire Marshall, representatives from each of the First Class Cities, IAFC Great Lakes representative , Magazine Editor, DNR representative, HSEM representative and Parliamentarian.

Committees: (See appendix for mission statements)

- By-Laws
- Code
- Communications and Policy
- Conference
- Education
- Emergency Management
- Emergency Medical Services
- Finance
- Fire Office School
- Legislative
- Marketing
- Public Education
- Safety and Health

STATE OF THE STATE

Following the plan is report which summarizes the data and information utilized in the original conception session. The “Key Findings” from this research included:

- Applicant pool is shrinking and Minnesota is at a higher risk due to migration out of the state
- Recruitment/Retention of Volunteers and Paid on Call is exceedingly difficult
- Training requirements are increasing
- There is a need for additional well trained officers as the baby boomers retire
- “Protecting Our Own” with regards to Health Issues, Safety of firefighters
- The number of different “Types of Departments” translates to not depending on a “one solution fits all”
- The role of the fire departments is changing – more medical responses and prevention programs
- The Fire Service in General in Minnesota enjoys a Great Reputation and High Integrity
- Recognized National Industry Standards
- High level of cooperation between key Minnesota Fire Organizations

These key findings are both issues and opportunities for MSFCA. These are not new revelations, but it is critical to note these findings for future reference and to agree on the key components.

MSFCA CURRENT STATUS

The Minnesota State Fire Chiefs Association (MSFCA) has enjoyed years of continued growth, reputation and delivery of services not just for the Fire Chiefs of Minnesota but the Fire Service and the citizens of Minnesota.

The organization is seen as forward looking, respected, embraces growth/change, governance is well defined, public focus, financially secure, professional and is seen as the public communication spokes group. It offers networking opportunities, conferences, education.....

The following was the consensus of the attendees at the March 2015 Board Meeting with regards to the highlights of the organization.

- Conferences offering exceptional Education Offerings, Vendor Exhibits
- Committee Structure works very well. The committees are engaged, experienced and well run.
- MSFCA is well recognized.
- Strong focus on Legislative Initiatives

Along with these highlights are these opportunities...

- New website/database based on 2013 Belmont Report Findings
- Marketing the organization – selling the “value”*
- Connections/Communications between Committees and between Committees and the Board
- Fiscal Security

*It can be argued the “value” of any organization, service or product is only as good as the “Perceived Value”.

BOARD SWOT ANALYSIS

(See Appendix for additional input)

- **Strengths:**
 1. Great Reputation – Forward Looking, Respected
 2. Communication – Magazine, Website, E-Newsletter
 3. Legislative Input
 4. Educational Offerings
 5. Partnerships with likeminded Organizations
 6. Committee Structure
- **Weaknesses:**
 1. Diversity
 2. Mentoring new members
 3. Marketing
 4. Additional outstate input needed
 5. “Chiefs Only” reputation
- **Opportunities:**
 1. Revitalize Committees
 2. Inclusive
 3. Additional Officer Development Courses
 4. Communication - Electronic
 5. Partner with Private Industries/Businesses
 6. Secure additional support for all firefighters
- **Threats:**
 1. Lack of trained new officers
 2. Loss of membership
 3. FSC funding
 4. Negative legislation
 5. Organization Structure
 6. Additional mandates for training etc...

The **Top Opportunities** that MSFCA will execute upon in include:

1. Incorporation of Sections to drive membership growth
2. Create Committee Strategic Plans to enhance role of Committees
3. Additional Training for Upcoming Leaders
 - – Plan additional Fire Officer School for 2018
4. Marketing Plan to sell the “Value” of the Organization
 - Emphasis on Membership Drive
 - Vendor

GENERAL BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The following are the **key performance indicators** (KPIs) that we will measure and include in our dashboard:

- Additional Membership
- Conference/FOS attendance
Members and Vendors
- Customer Satisfaction

Our **target customers** are:

- Fire Chiefs – previous members
- Fire Chiefs – not members
- Additional Staff on existing Departments
- Additional Vendors

The key **customer needs** we solve include:

- Resource for Current Fire Service Information
- Networking/Experience
- Leadership Training
- Recognition

Our **market size** is:

- 784 Departments or 3136 Officers
- Subscribers – 21,000

Key **market trends** include:

- Decline in Boots on the Street
- Lack of Qualified Officers
- More Stringent Training – Demand on time
- Recognition of “Protecting our Own”
- Diversity of Department Organization

(See Appendix for additional information.)

Our **key competitors** include:

- Time
- Other Fire Organizations both Statewide and Nationally
- National Conferences

Areas in which we have **competitive advantage** include:

- Known Leadership
- Professional Magazine
- Reputation for Quality Conferences
- Reach – within the State of MN

Our key **products/services** and their **unique selling propositions** are:

- Legislative Advocacy
- Network of Chiefs and Chief Officers
- Educational Conferences
- Magazine – E-Newsletter
- FAST

Our current key **promotional tactics** include:

- Committee Reach / Appointee Reach
- Conferences
- Magazines
- Regional Meetings / Chiefs Meetings
- Website

We do/will do the following to **maximize the lifetime value** of our customers:

- Deliver “Extra ordinary Customer” Service
- Maintain informational value of our Magazine / E- Newsletter / Website
- More accessible and superior Educational Programs

We have or will forge **partnerships** with the following organizations:

- North Stars
- FITOAM
- MNIAAI
- MSFDA
- MPFF

The following are the key members of our **team** and their key skill sets:

- Board and Executive Committee
- Committee Chairs
- Staff
- Network of Instructors

STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

Create/Implement a Technology Plan

Strategy: *Launch new YM website/database interface and create a technology system that is secure and redundant for all records. Test Conference App.*

Re: Belmont Report, Constituent Survey and Board Discussion revealed a strong need for a more professional, user friendly and interactive website.

Outcomes: Launch YM Website/database. Complete operations 2016.
Conference registration online for member convenience.
Membership registration online for member convenience.
Easy to access and navigate organization communications for members.
Website reflects a 2016 professional organization.
Back-up server, duplicate desktop, back-up tapes (on-site and off-site) and enhanced firewall. Complete 2016.
To create secure/redundant databases.
Launch Conference Application. Complete October 2016.
Easier for attendees to navigate between classes and at tradeshow.
Opportunity for vendors to launch communications to attendees and for collecting data.

Costs: YM - \$6500/year subscription plus \$20000 for webpage development
Conference App. - \$9000 plus – per conference cost. (Costs trending down.)

Expand Professional Development Offerings

Strategy: 1). *Duplicate the Fire Officer School format. Launch 2017.*
2). *Seek out possible other locations for the MSFCA Annual Conference. 2018*

Re: Professional Development programs have been defined as a key organizational goal and need. The Fire Officer School has sold out the last 2 years and there is no more classroom or hotel space at the Arrowwood. The Family Friendly weekend format is very popular.

The Annual Conference which rotates between Rochester, St Cloud and Duluth is too large for the facilities. Exhibit halls are not large enough in Rochester and Duluth and not enough classrooms in St Cloud. With a defined need to delivering great educational programs space has become critical.

Outcomes: Offer a second Fire Officer School that will offer another alternative to Alexandria while maintaining quality educational programs for new officers as well as family friendly.

Add an additional conference to the rotation the offers more room for vendors and classes. Launch 2018.

Costs: The Fire Officer School – no additional costs but first year income over expenses is unknown.
New Conference – Goal is at a minimum maintain same value and revenue as current conferences.

Review Policies with Technical, Operational and Strategic Perspective

Strategy: Review policies and update. Annual.

Re: As MSFCA changes initiatives, adds programs, sections, changes leadership there is a need to maintain clear and specific governance guidelines.

Outcomes: Clear definitions of guidelines for both the members and the leadership team.
Initial updates in 2016/2017: Lifetime members, Executive Committee , Regional Representative Roles.

Costs: Time.

Build on Strong Internal Committee Structure

Strategy:

- 1). Create Strategic Plans for each of the Committees. 2016-2018*
Include:
Program(s) which value and emphasize communication/synergies between committees where appropriate.
Organized/Planned communication with Board.
- 2). Create Operational Plan for Incorporating Sections. 2016/2018*

Re: These are volunteer committees and most of the focus is on near term.
With the right tools can plan longer term and bring some continuity.

Outcomes: Determines a consensus on the committees' "focus".
Measure and record progress of committee.
Re-commitment if they are part of the process.
A single voice.
A means to communicate with the Board.
A means to communicate and collaborate with other committees.

Costs: Time. Modest travel expenses.

Launch Marketing/Membership Drive

Strategy: Implement a stepped membership drive that encompasses recruiting:

- Current members,*
- Additional members from current member departments,*
- Previous members and*
- New organizations.*

2017 Drive

Provide materials/data to board for personal contacts in their perspective areas.

2017 Drive

Sell "delivered value" *2017 Drive*

Leverage new sections to gain new members. *2018 Drive*

Develop "professional" membership form/packets. *2017 Drive*

Market/Brand at our events, magazine, etc. *2016 (Ongoing)*

Deliver exceptional customer service *(Ongoing)*

Re: Previously were not reaching all potential members as invoices went only to existing members. Start with current as they are least expensive. It has been documented that in these times, especially for professional organizations that the personal invitation is the most successful thus the packets for board members. There are ample opportunities in the MN Fire Chief Magazine, our own events, etc. to market MSFCA events. Due to the "Professional Association" stigma only exceptional timely customer service will win!

Special Notes: Unlike a "For Profit" business, a "Non-Profit" VALUE EQUATION is dependent on "Member Engagement." The more engaged the more higher the influence value.

Outcomes: Retain current membership and measure satisfaction.
Grow membership to extend our leverage at the Legislative Negotiating Table
Increase the "Perceived Value" of MSFCA to further enhance our growth.

Costs: Membership Drive - \$1000 (Additional Mailing and Printing) plus substantive time
Advertising - \$1000 (Copying)
New Booth – (Marketing Budget)
Membership Folders (Folders On Hand) \$1000 (Copying)
– Direct correlation to increased membership.

Pricing Strategy

Strategy: 1.) *Establish and implement initial vendor sponsorship programs. 2016*
 2.) *Determine a 3-5 year pricing strategy to include membership fees, Fire Officer School rates, Conference rates and vendor programs. 2017*

Re: 1.) Simplify vendor decision/packages and give organization advance input on revenues.
 2.) Simplify membership dues structure for customers as well as capturing information in the database. Determine revenue structures in order to make decisions regarding expenditures.

Outcomes: 1.) Service satisfaction by vendor increases.
 2.) Ease of doing business with! Higher customer satisfaction.
 Reduced costs for processing.

Costs: Time – may be equal to time saved.

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As part of our Operations Plan, we will work on the following **key projects** within the next 12 months:

- Committee Long Range Plans
- Membership Drive – 4 Parts
- New Section Incorporation
- Additional Fire Officer School
- Alternate Conference Site

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Notes for Future Plans: Confirm Mission Statement – Incorporate Key Goals
 Additional Sections
 “ONE” database
 Additional Professional Development offerings
 More Engagement with MN Legislative and Executive Branches
 Governance structure that welcomes all members to serve

T. Zikmund
10-2016 Rev.