

Ames Fire Department Strategic Plan 2024 – 2029



**AMES FIRE DEPARTMENT STRATEGIC PLAN
2024 - 2029**

Introduction

The Ames Fire Department (AFD) provides fire suppression, emergency medical services, technical rescue, hazardous materials mitigation, fire inspections, fire investigation, public education, and domestic preparedness planning and response to the City of Ames.

The Ames Fire Department has been expanding its duties over the years to meet the changing needs of the Ames community. Due to the increase in medical calls, most of the Department's members have become licensed Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs). The department is trained to the Hazardous Materials Technician level, and is equipped and trained to provide grain bin rescue, ice and water rescue, trench rescue, confined space rescue, extrication and rope rescue.

After swearing in new Fire Chief Rich Higgins, the department set out on the goal to create the department's first-ever strategic plan. The department viewed the strategic planning process as an opportunity to inspire a shared vision throughout the organization by establishing realistic objectives and goals based on the department's purpose, mission, vision and values. The end goal was to bring the department members together, with input from the community, to create one team all working towards the same objectives in providing the community with exceptional service.

Recognizing the cost prohibitive nature of hiring a consultant to facilitate the strategic planning process for the department, the fire department administration seized the opportunity to conduct their own strategic planning process with assistance from Jim Patton, a volunteer with the Ames Economic Development Commission (AEDC). Alongside Mr. Patton from the AEDC, in consultation with other fire departments from around Iowa who have completed the strategic planning process, with respect to the Center for Public Safety Excellence (CPSE) and the Commission on Fire Accreditation International (CFAI), the Ames Fire Department adopted a community-driven strategic planning model and started the process of developing a strategic plan.

The Ames Fire Department utilized the community-driven strategic planning model to go beyond the simple development of a living document. The department focused on soliciting community feedback from external stakeholders to create a list that identifies their priorities as well as their concerns.

The Ames Fire Department's strategic plan, with its foundation based in community and membership input, sets forth a comprehensive purpose, mission, and vision that paves a clear path into the future.

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History

The Ames Fire Department was organized on June 12, 1895, as a volunteer fire department. C.H. Glidden was the first volunteer fire chief, leading eight volunteer firefighters who were known as the Ames Hose Company. They operated with one hose cart, and hand equipment purchased in 1891. The water system at the time consisted of a wooden tower and tank located on city hall grounds. Ames had three fire hydrants on Main Street.

Soon the number of volunteers rose to the mid-twenties, and in 1900 the Ames Hose Company changed its name to the Ames Volunteer Fire Company. Growth and development of the company brought about the need for special duties at fires. By 1907 they had established roles for nozzle "men," hydrant "men," and line handlers. For the first time they wore protective gear, which included rubber coats and "regulation" fire helmets.

The rolling hose cart was finally replaced in 1910 when a horse drawn fire wagon with hose and ladders was purchased. The Ames Fire Company became the Ames Fire Department in 1915. Sleeping quarters were established for the volunteers in the brand-new city hall building. That year, the department's first paid firefighter was hired. 1916 saw the purchase of the first motorized fire engine, and in 1922, L.R. Morris became the first paid fire chief. Chief Morris successfully acquired the City's first ladder truck. With City Council approval, the Ames Fire Department became a fully paid department in 1924.

Fire Station Two was established in west Ames in 1932. The need for protection in the Iowa State University (ISU) campus area facilitated the expansion. ISU furnished quarters under the old Clyde Williams Stadium. In 1966 a new fire station was built at the current site of Welch Avenue and Chamberlain Street.

Excavation work, which was in progress to the north, led to the collapse of part of the station in 1969. The station was repaired, and the property to the north was later named the Cave Inn Lounge.

On October 26, 1980, the City of Ames dedicated Fire Station One and Headquarters, located at the corner of 13th Street and Burnett Avenue.

On October 25th, 2002, Ames dedicated Fire Station Three, located in south Ames at 2400 S. Duff Avenue.

The City's current Chief, Richard Higgins, is the department's eighth paid fire chief since 1922. His predecessors are Shawn Bayouth, Clint Petersen, Mike Childs, Ralph Parks, Kenny Taylor, Sam Long and L.R. Morris.

History

The Ames Fire Department also has strong ties nationally to state sponsored firefighter training programs across the United States and is known as the birthplace of the Iowa Fire Service Training Bureau. In 1923 a group of firefighters came to what was formerly known as Iowa State College and asked for educational assistance to improve their firefighting and fire prevention skills. As a result of that request, the college responded by creating and hosting the first Annual Iowa State Fire School in 1925, known as the “First Short Course for Firemen”. This event marked the beginning of state-level fire service education and training in the United States.

More than a century after its modest beginnings, the Ames Fire Department now consists of seventy-six full-time employees.

From the Fire Chief

I am excited to present the first-ever Ames Fire Department 2024-2029 Strategic Plan, a pivotal cornerstone in the foundation of our department's future and commitment to excellence. This comprehensive document serves as both our roadmap for the future and our guide for identifying priorities as we continue our unwavering commitment to delivering exceptional service to our community.

What makes this Strategic Plan truly special is its foundation: it was built from the ground up with meaningful input from both our dedicated AFD members and the community we are privileged to serve. Together, we have crafted a comprehensive purpose, mission, and vision that illuminates a clear and promising path forward.

When I had the honor of being promoted to Fire Chief in 2018, creating our department's first-ever strategic plan became one of my primary goals. I saw this strategic planning process as a tremendous opportunity to unite our entire organization around a shared vision by establishing realistic objectives and goals rooted in our core purpose, mission, vision, and values. My vision was to bring our department members together, alongside valuable community input, to forge one cohesive team all working toward the same objectives: providing our community with truly exceptional service.

Understanding the financial challenges of hiring an external consultant, our fire department administration embraced the opportunity to lead our own strategic planning process. We were incredibly fortunate to receive guidance from Jim Patton, a dedicated volunteer with the AEDC. Working alongside Mr. Patton and drawing from consultations with other Iowa fire departments who had successfully completed their strategic planning processes, while maintaining respect for standards set by the CPSE and the CFAI, we adopted a community-driven strategic planning model and embarked on this meaningful journey.

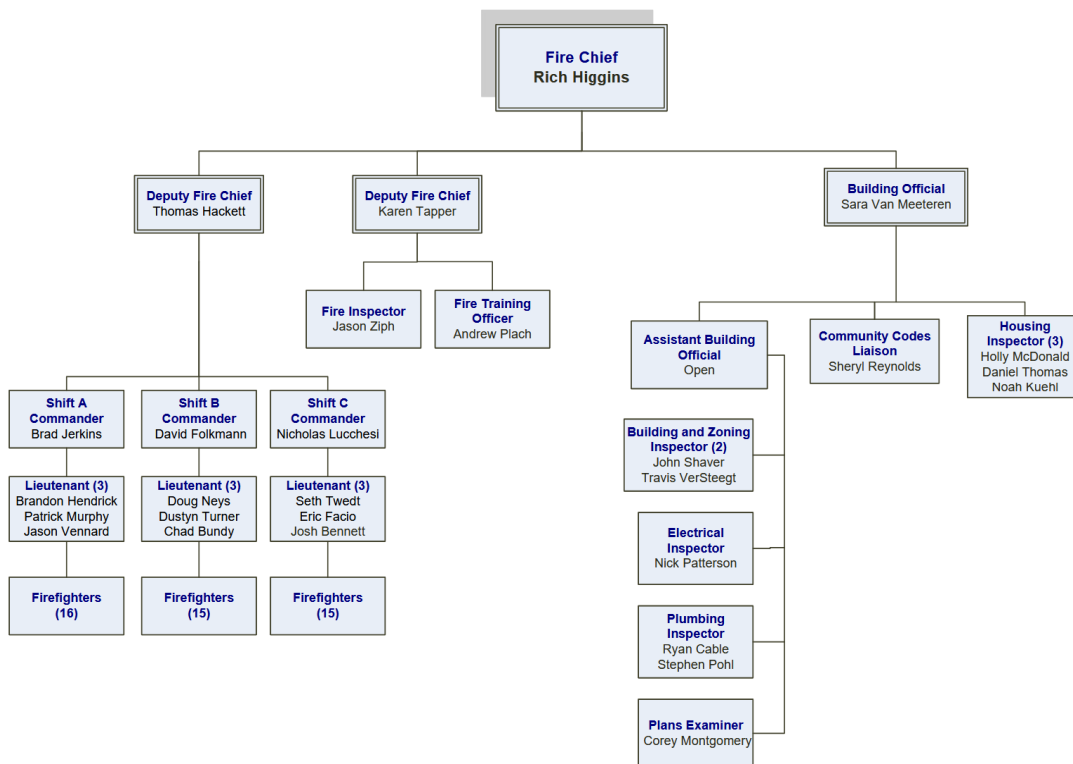
Like many organizations, we navigated the unprecedented challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, which extended our timeline beyond what we initially anticipated. However, this additional time allowed for even more thoughtful consideration and input, ultimately strengthening our final product.

I am deeply grateful to our AFD members and the entire Ames community for their active involvement in this process and their patience throughout our journey. I want to specifically recognize our Command Staff members for their unwavering commitment to developing this plan and thank them for their exceptional dedication. Finally, I extend my heartfelt appreciation to Jim Patton from the AEDC, whose expert guidance and facilitation of feedback sessions during our community and membership outreach events were invaluable to our success.

Organizational Overview

The City of Ames is in Story County, Iowa, and is home to Iowa State University. The City of Ames is served by an elected mayor and six council members, one from each of the four wards and two at large representatives. An ex-officio member from Iowa State University also sits on the council. Day-to-day operations of the city and delivery of services are the responsibility of the Ames city manager and carried out through multiple departments and divisions within the city that are overseen by department heads.

The Ames Fire Department (AFD) is a career fire department, providing two major functions, Fire safety and Building safety. Fire safety is currently provided to the community through three fire stations staffed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week with full-time, paid, members. The 76 members of the AFD are comprised of 47 firefighters, 9 lieutenants, 3 shift commanders, a training officer, a fire inspector, 2 deputy fire chiefs, a fire chief, a building official, an assistant building official, a plans examiner, 2 plumbing inspectors, 3 housing inspectors, 2 building inspectors, an electrical inspector, and a community code liaison. Building safety, which is provided through our Inspection Division, is not specifically included in this plan, but is part of our organization and is located at Ames City Hall.



Organizational Overview

AFD members deliver a wide array of services to the community from three different fire stations strategically located throughout the city. Services provided to the community include fire prevention, fire suppression, emergency medical services (EMS), fire inspections, extrication, water rescue, ice rescue, trench rescue, confined space rescue, hazmat, grain bin rescue and rope rescue. Firefighters, lieutenants, and shift commanders work a 24-hour on-duty/48-hour off-duty schedule, ensuring that City of Ames' customers have 24-hour seven days a week emergency service. The City of Ames is an ISO (Insurance Services Office) 3Y rated community.

The AFD covers a 28.71 square mile area and provides services to 65,152 residents (worldpopulationreview.com, 2025). The City of Ames population continues to grow as more land is annexed, increasing the total square miles AFD covers. Since 2000, the City of Ames' population has increased by over 30% (City-Data.com, 2023). The City of Ames is the largest city in Story County. Of the 99 Iowa counties, Story is the ninth largest county in population with 99,184 (worldpopulationreview.com, 2025). Some of this growth can be attributed to worldwide companies located in Ames, such as 3M, Barilla, Danfoss, and Chevron Renewable Energy Group.

Ames is also home to two of the largest United States Department of Agriculture facilities in the United States - the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service and the Agricultural Research Service's National Animal Disease Center. The Iowa Department of Transportation's central offices are also located in Ames. Perhaps one of the largest contributors to the city's growth and the draw for many, comes from the major university located in Ames - Iowa State University (ISU). ISU has increased enrollment by 12% since 2000 and currently has an enrollment of 30,432 (ISU, 2024).

Community-Driven Strategic Planning

Performance Assessment

Implied within every stage of the planning process is the ability to determine progress made toward the goals or targets set. This assessment ability is a monitoring function that simply tracks activities. It may be as simple as a “To Do List,” or as complicated as a plan of action with milestones and performance measures. Also implied within the planning process is the ability to measure effectiveness of the actions taken in the conduct of the organization's business.

The Community-Driven Strategic Planning Process:

1. Define the services provided to the community.
2. Establish the community's service level priorities.
3. Establish the community's expectations of the organization.
4. Identify any concerns the community may have about the organization and its services.
5. Identify the aspect of the organization and its services the community views positively.
6. Revisit the Mission Statement, giving careful attention to the services and programs currently provided and which logically can be provided in the future.
7. Revisit the Values of the organization's membership.
8. Identify Strengths of the organization.
9. Identify Weaknesses of the organization.
10. Identify areas of Opportunity for the organization.
11. Identify potential Threats to the organization.
12. Identify the organization's critical issues.
13. Identify the organization's service gaps.
14. Determine strategic initiatives for organizational improvement.
15. Establish realistic goals and objectives for the future.
16. Identify implementation tasks for each objective.
17. Develop a vision for the future.
18. Develop organizational and community commitment to the plan.

External Stakeholders

Partnerships

The Ames Fire Department recognizes that achieving its mission extends beyond the boundaries of any single organization. Our partnerships with external stakeholders, including City of Ames departments, law enforcement agencies, emergency medical services, county and regional organizations, academic institutions, labor representatives, and utility providers are critically important to the effectiveness and sustainability of our operations. These relationships enhance our ability to prevent emergencies, respond efficiently, and serve the community at the highest level. By actively engaging external stakeholders in our strategic planning process, we ensure that our goals are informed by diverse perspectives, grounded in shared priorities, and supported by the collective resources and expertise of the broader community. This collaborative approach allows us to identify emerging challenges, align our strategies with regional needs, and build the resilience necessary to protect the people and property of Ames both today and into the future.

Partnerships

City of Ames	
City Manager's Office	Information Technology
Fleet Services	Legal
Public Works	Inspections
Finance	Human Resources
Law Enforcement	
Ames Police	Story County Sherriff's Office
Iowa State University Police	
Emergency & Medical	
Mary Greeley Medical Center Paramedics	Story County Emergency Medical Agencies
Iowa State University Dispatch Center	Ames Emergency 911 Dispatch Center
County & Regional	
Story County Fire Agencies	Story County Emergency Management
Iowa Department of Transportation	Iowa Fire Service Training Bureau
Education	
Iowa State University	Ames Community Schools
Des Moines Area Community College	
Utilities	
Alliant Energy	City of Ames Electric
City of Ames Water & Pollution Control	

Community Outreach Forum Process

Three different community outreach forums were held to reach different external stakeholder groups within the community at different locations. Each forum was emceed by Jim Patton from the AEDC. Jim also functioned as the liaison between community members and the fire department. Questions were asked and comments were shared by community members throughout the forums.

External Stakeholders

There were two major goals during the community outreach forums. 1) Share information with our external stakeholder groups about the Ames Fire Department and how we serve the community. 2) Learn what our external stakeholders expected from us as their service provider.

To achieve goal #1, we provided our stakeholders with a short 20-minute power point, outlining the programs and services the Ames Fire Department provides. We answered questions throughout the presentation and were able to clarify any misconception that some had about costs, services, and staffing.

To achieve goal #2, we asked external stakeholders to rank, 1 through 8 with 1 being the most important and 8 being the least, the 8 main programs that the fire department provides to the community. Additionally, we asked them to identify their three top expectations of the Ames Fire Department and to list them in priority order. We also asked them to identify their three top areas of concern regarding the Ames Fire Department and to list them in priority order.

The first outreach forum was held on May 23, 2019, at the Ames Water Treatment Facility with other City of Ames departments. A total of 7 different departments were represented in the meeting and provided feedback.

The second outreach forum was held on May 23, 2019, with the Ames Economic Development Commission at the Ames Chamber of Commerce. A total of 40 different representatives from businesses throughout Ames were in attendance.

The third and final outreach forum was held May 30, 2019, at the Ames Water Treatment Facility for community leaders and representatives from Iowa State University, Iowa Department of Transportation, Mary Greeley Medical Center, nursing homes, assisted living and independent living homes, Ames Home-builders Association, rental housing community representatives, cooperative living groups, Story County Emergency Management Agency, Iowa Fire Service Training Bureau, United States Department of Agriculture National Veterinary Services Laboratories, and Ames Lab. A total of 21 community representatives attended the meeting and provided input. In total, 68 individuals/representative groups participated in our external stakeholder forums. An online survey tool was sent to all 68 participants following the forums to formally collect feedback and rankings. A total of 32 provided feedback through the online survey tool, for a 47% return rate.

External Stakeholders

Community Outreach Results

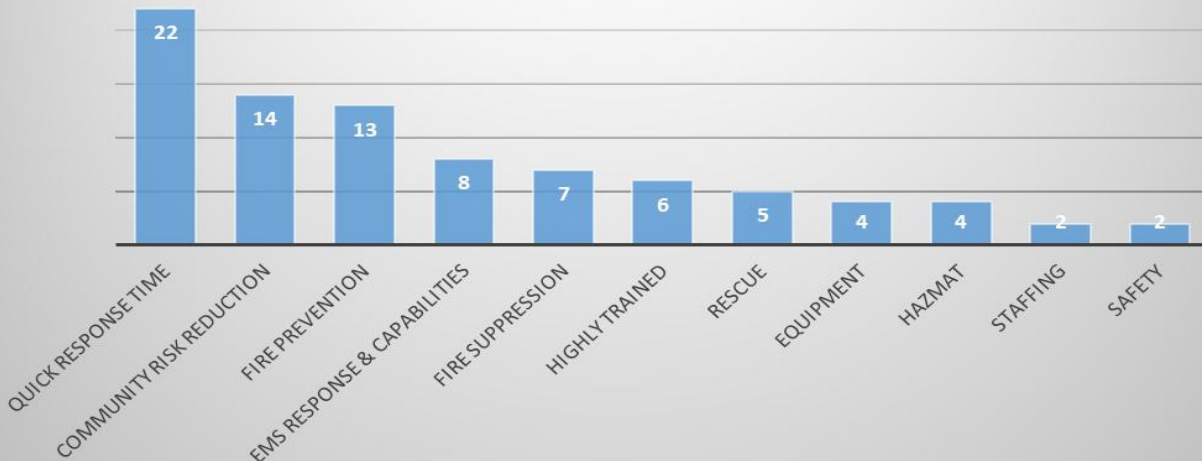
Service Priorities

The rankings of the programs and services, as provided by the 32 community members at the community forums that completed the online survey, are as follows:

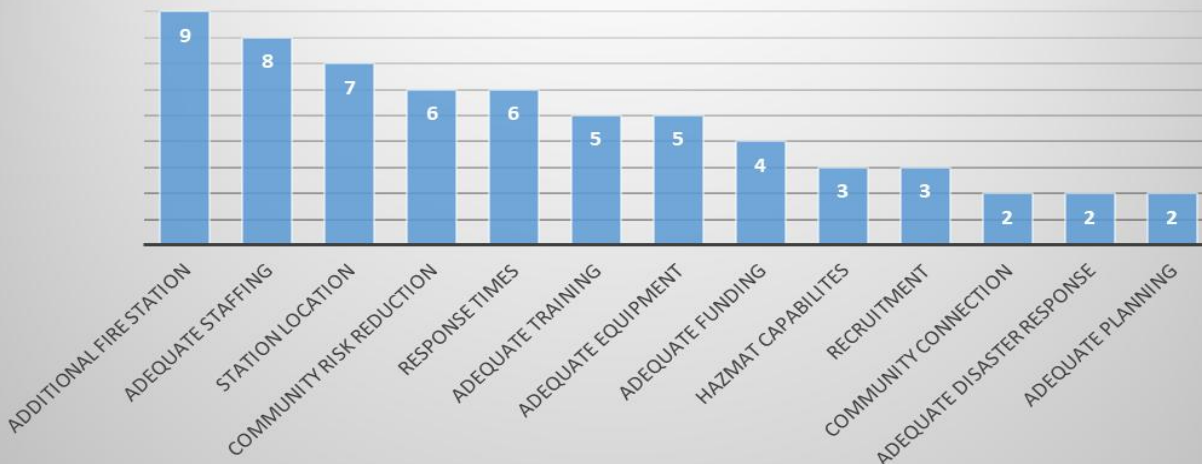
PROGRAMS	RANKING	SCORE
Fire Suppression	1	713
Emergency Medical Services	2	647
Domestic Preparedness Planning & Response	3	456
Technical Rescue	4	456
Hazardous Materials Mitigation	5	425
Community Risk Reduction	6	325
Public Fire & Life Safety Education	7	297
Fire Investigation	8	281

External Stakeholders

1. What are three expectations of your fire department listed in priority order?



2. What are three areas of concern related to your fire department in priority order?



Purpose, Mission, Vision, and Values

Ames Fire Department employees are guided by purpose, mission, vision, and values. Our purpose is the core reason why the Ames Fire Department exists. Our mission is how we serve the community. Our vision is where we strive to be in the future. Our values are the guiding principles for our organization.

Bringing Our Values to Life, is the responsibility of every member. Formal leaders are responsible for Creating a Culture that fosters an environment of excellence and growth for their crews, while maintaining a Total City Perspective. Doing so, will allow members to deliver exceptional customer service at the best price and develop an enjoyable and stimulating work environment from which personal and professional growth can occur.

Our Purpose

The purpose of the Ames Fire Department is to protect life and property.

Our Mission

The mission of the Ames Fire Department is to mitigate threats to the health, safety and property of our residents and visitors alike, through educational community outreach, hazard reduction, and emergency response.

Our Vision

The Ames Fire Department will be recognized as caring people, providing quality programs with exceptional service to a community of progress. We will provide exceptional services through healthy, highly trained, and motivated members that are dedicated to continuous improvement and representative of the community. We will be recognized by our community and our peers as a model of excellence.

Our Values

As an organization, we bring the following values to life:

Accountability: We accept responsibility for our actions or inaction. We own our decisions and value feedback.

Continuous Improvement: Commit to ongoing evaluation of our systems and processes, and implement changes that enhance the achievement of the two ETP goals.

Creativity and Innovation: Enhance the delivery of our services by being creative (build it new) or innovative (borrow it from another source) to improve our systems and processes.

Customer Driven: Challenge ourselves, even when there are competing interests, to exceed customer expectations and maximize their satisfaction. Seek input through open

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Purpose, Mission, Vision, and Values

communication with customers and others who may be affected to understand their point of view.

Data Driven: Collect and analyze relevant factual information to develop unbiased options resulting in effective recommendations/decisions.

Respect and Dignity for One Another: Demonstrate considerate and courteous behavior in all interactions. Recognize and honor the inherent dignity of every person by valuing their unique backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives. Seek to understand differing ideas and opinions with openness and empathy. Foster an environment where all individuals feel safe, respected, and empowered to contribute meaningfully and authentically.

Employee Involvement: Engage those who are closest to the work, or most affected by the outcome, to obtain their input, knowledge, and ideas; and to share decisions or conclusions with those impacted. All employees have a responsibility to provide this input.

Excellence: Commit to going beyond the ordinary and using our abilities and opportunities to their fullest; a sense of striving rather than settling.

Fiscal Stewardship: Procure products and services at the best price without compromising quality. Demonstrate responsible management of our resources entrusted to our care and utilize time wisely.

Honesty and Integrity: Be truthful. Do what is right and seek guidance when the right thing is not clear. Demonstrate the highest ethical standards even when no one will ever know, and policies and laws don't require it.

Leadership: Expect all employees to influence the perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors of others in a positive direction to accomplish City work goals.

Loyalty: Serving the community as an Ames Firefighter is a privilege and an honor. You, your words, and your behaviors on and off-duty are representative of the entire Ames Fire Department and all its members. Guard your speech, and never tarnish the badge. The badge you were given, and the oath you took, represents something much larger than you.

Ownership: See a problem, solve a problem. Don't expect the next shift, the next person to take care of something that can be taken care of today.

Purpose, Mission, Vision, and Values

Positive Attitude: Make a personal choice to emphasize constructive ideas, thoughts, and actions; overcome problems, find the opportunities in every situation, and look on the bright side of your work life.

Safety and Wellness: Uphold a commitment to the physical and emotional well-being of ourselves, our coworkers, and our customers.

Teamwork: Collaborate with others, bringing together different talents, skills, and knowledge to best accomplish our work.

Internal Stakeholder Group Findings

Internal stakeholder input was obtained utilizing six different in-person feedback sessions facilitated by Jim Patton from the AEDC. In-person feedback sessions were conducted at Station #1 and broke down into six different sessions to encourage participation: Command Staff, Lieutenants, Inspections, Shift A Firefighters, Shift B Firefighters, Shift C Firefighters.

In the process of strategic planning, the following are important:

- to review the department's history, culture and evolution
- to identify the current status of the department; and
- to determine where and what the department desires to be in the future.

The internal stakeholders of the Ames Fire Department have identified the core programs offered to the community, along with recognizing the crucial support services provided by external agencies, through our partnerships that empower the department to effectively fulfill its mission.

Core Programs

Administration	Suppression & Emergency Action	Prevention & Safety Education
Professional Development	Fire Suppression	Public Education
Training	Emergency Medical Services	Fire Prevention
Data Collection & Analysis	Technical Rescue Services	Fire Investigation
Community Risk Reduction	Hazardous Materials Mitigation	Code Enforcement
	Equipment Maintenance & Readiness	

S.W.O.T. Analysis

The in-person shift feedback sessions were focused on discussions regarding the agency's perceived strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT Analysis). Flipcharts were used to capture responses during the feedback sessions. Responses were converted to a Word document and word clouds were created to illustrate frequency of responses.

The Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) Analysis is designed to have the organization candidly identify its positive and less-than-desirable attributes. Internal stakeholders participated in this analysis and recognized its strengths and weaknesses, as well as possible opportunities and potential threats.

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Internal Stakeholder Group Findings

Strengths

It is important for any organization to identify its strengths to assure that it is capable of providing the services requested by the community and to ensure that strengths are consistent with the issues facing the organization. Often, identification of organizational strengths leads to the channeling of efforts toward primary community needs that match those strengths. Programs that do not match organizational strengths, or the primary function of the organization, should be seriously reviewed to evaluate the rate of return on staff time. Through a consensus process, the Internal Stakeholders identified the strengths of the AFD as follows:



Performance or lack of performance within an organization depends greatly on the identification of weaknesses and how they are confronted. While it is not unusual for these issues to be at the heart of the organization's overall concerns, it is unusual for organizations to be able to identify and deal with these issues effectively on their own. For any organization to either begin or to continue to move progressively forward, it must not only be able to identify its strengths, but also those areas where it functions poorly or not at all. These areas of needed enhancements are not the same as threats to be identified later in this document, but rather those day-to-day issues and concerns that may slow or inhibit progress. The following items were identified by the internal stakeholders as weaknesses:



Internal Stakeholder Group Findings

Opportunities

The opportunities for an organization depend on the identification of strengths and weaknesses and how they can be enhanced. The focus of opportunities is not solely on existing service, but on expanding and developing new possibilities both inside and beyond the traditional service area. The internal stakeholders identified the following potential opportunities:



Internal Stakeholder Group Findings

Threats

To draw strength and gain full benefit of any opportunity, the threats to the organization, with their new risks and challenges, must also be identified in the strategic planning process. By recognizing possible threats, an organization can greatly reduce the potential for loss. Fundamental to the success of any strategic plan is the understanding that threats are not completely and/or directly controlled by the organization. Some of the current and potential threats identified by the internal stakeholders were as follows:



Initiatives, Strategies and Action Steps

Critical Issues and Service Gaps

After reviewing AFD's core programs and support services, and identifying internal strengths and weaknesses along with external opportunities and threats, the internal stakeholders identified the following as critical issues and service gaps of paramount importance:

Critical Issues

Community Outreach	Operational Preparedness
Fire Prevention & Community Risk Reduction	Human Resources – Recruitment & Retention
Health & Wellness	Resource Management – Apparatus
Human Resources – Leadership	Resource Management – Facilities & Equipment
Human Resources – Training & Education	

Having reviewed AFD's critical issues and service gaps, the following goal statements were identified as the foundation for the development of strategies and action steps:

- Provide innovative outreach programs by cultivating partnerships within the community.
- Proactively identify, address, and mitigate hazards within the Ames community through comprehensive fire prevention and community risk reduction initiatives.
- Implement comprehensive programs and initiatives that promote safety practices, fitness and nutrition, and mental health awareness among firefighters and staff to encourage overall wellness.
- Develop leaders at all levels of the department through a culture that empowers every member to reach their fullest potential.
- Provide comprehensive, innovative training and educational opportunities that empower every member of the Ames Fire Department to excel in their roles and adapt to evolving challenges through continuous learning and application of knowledge.
- Attract, retain, and cultivate a highly skilled workforce drawn from the broadest pool of qualified candidates, reflecting the values of our organization and the full range of the community we serve, ensuring the sustained effectiveness and resilience of our department.

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Initiatives, Strategies and Action Steps

- Maintain a sustainable apparatus fleet capable of responding to hazards, with an appropriate number of responders and equipment to meet the diverse needs of our community, adhere to industry standards, and prioritize safety and reliability.
- Maintain the safety, reliability, and sustainability of facilities and equipment, to maximize lifespan and functionality, as well as support the employee experience.
- Maintain a state of operational readiness that enables the Ames Fire Department to effectively respond to emergencies, mitigate risks, and protect the lives and property of the community.

In order to achieve the mission of the Ames Fire Department, realistic goals, objectives and action steps must be established. The parameters used by the planning team in the development of the goals, strategies and action steps included the requirements that they be:

- Aligned with the mission, vision and values of the department
- Aligned with City values and the Excellence Through People initiative
- Achievable
- Measurable
- Built on consensus

As goals and strategies are management tools, they must be evaluated and updated on an ongoing basis to identify what has been accomplished and to note changes within the community and the organization. The attainment of a performance target should be recognized and celebrated to provide a sense of organizational accomplishment.

The goals and strategies now become the focus of the efforts of the department. Care was taken by the planning team to ensure that the critical needs and areas of needed enhancement previously identified were addressed within the goals and strategies.

By following these goals and strategies carefully, the department can be directed into its desired future. These established goals and strategies should also greatly reduce the number of obstacles and distractions for the department and its members.

The internal stakeholders did not set specific timelines for completion of each action step within each strategy under every goal. Instead, the team focused on outputs that were within the parameters defined by the planning team, recognizing that external factors are often uncontrollable and timelines must remain flexible. The AFD leadership team will continually review progress toward these goals and strategies and adjust as needs and the environment change.

Community Outreach

Goal: Provide innovative outreach programs by cultivating partnerships within the community.

STRATEGY 1:

Participate in community events to increase exposure to the department and build relationships with citizens and community organizations.

Action Steps:

1. Look for participation opportunities with our partners at their outreach events.
2. Utilize the department's fire prevention safety trailer at more community events.
3. Take advantage of High traffic/minimal effort/event targets (Farmers Market).
4. Attend block parties and talk with neighbors.
5. Attend civic group events to learn more about collaboration opportunities.

STRATEGY 2:

Cultivate partnerships with community organizations.

Action Steps:

1. Create a list of organizations within the Ames community.
 - a. Send them an introduction post card with engagement opportunities listed.
2. Reach out to ISU fraternities and sororities to actively partner with them on safety and prevention opportunities.

STRATEGY 3:

Maintain a relevant social media presence to enhance outreach efforts.

Action Steps:

1. Increase permission levels and those with administrative rights for social media.
2. Post monthly department statistics on responses and training to increase community awareness.
3. Post timely and relevant content, such as real time incident information.
4. Continue to build social media presence.
5. Post regular PSAs on Facebook.
6. Link available community resources, such as health & human services, and crisis advocacy on the fire department's webpage.

Fire Prevention & Community Risk Reduction

Goal: Proactively identify, address, and mitigate all hazards within the Ames community through comprehensive fire prevention and community risk reduction initiatives.

STRATEGY 1:

Identify the opinions and priorities of the community, and their awareness and support for current and proposed community risk reduction programs.

Action Steps:

1. Survey businesses and population groups to determine the level of fire safety awareness.
 - a. Include a fire safety survey link in the Cityside monthly flyer and utilize City's website.
2. Reach out to community groups to identify priorities and opinions.
3. Establish a regular risk assessment of the City, utilizing a standard of cover analysis.
4. Complete an annual fire department report, where fire cause data is analyzed and shared with the public, identifying commonalities and fire safety program priorities.

STRATEGY 2:

Empower residents, businesses, and stakeholders to adopt proactive fire safety measures, promote risk reduction strategies, and foster a culture of fire prevention awareness.

Action Steps:

1. Create and distribute a fire extinguisher self-inspection and educational program.
2. Utilize the department's fire prevention safety trailer at more events, including school presentations.
3. Utilize the department's Open House to educate the community on fire and all-hazards safety.
4. Host neighborhood fire safety fairs.
5. Partner with City of Ames Inspection Rental Team to hand out fire safety materials.

STRATEGY 3:

Develop and implement targeted outreach programs, educational campaigns, and collaborative partnerships that address the unique needs and challenges of our community.

Action Steps:

1. Work with educational providers to increase community risk reduction interactions:

Fire Prevention & Community Risk Reduction

- a. ISU Department of Residence to develop an all hazards and fire safety education program for new students.
 - b. Work with local high schools to extend fire extinguisher training to schools.
2. Develop lesson plans and standardized teaching materials that can be shared with others.
3. Develop an advertising campaign for community risk reduction programs.
4. Develop a comprehensive fire and life safety inspection plan to reach all appropriate properties on a specified, regular schedule.
5. Develop a comprehensive plan for review and updates to pre-fire plans to enhance efficient response operations to planned occupancies.
 - a. Evaluate the use of part-time staff or interns to increase the number of occupancies being reviewed.
6. Review all new construction to ensure compliance with applicable building codes.

Safety, Health & Wellness

Goal: Implement comprehensive programs and initiatives that promote safety practices, fitness and nutrition, and mental health awareness among firefighters and staff to encourage overall wellness.

STRATEGY 1:

Implement a comprehensive fitness & nutrition program.

Action Steps:

1. Create a platform that provides all members with mental, health, and wellness education, information, and resources that they can access at any time.
2. Increase participation in City sponsored health promotions.
3. Evaluate the effectiveness of different types of incentives to encourage more participation.
4. Annually evaluate the fitness levels of all department members using the Physical Ability Entrance Test.
 - a. Utilize VO2Max for cardiovascular fitness testing.

STRATEGY 2:

Implement a comprehensive mental health program that builds awareness and encourages overall wellness.

Action Steps:

1. Create a Peer Support Team to provide mental health resources. Provide mental health resources through peer support.
2. Provide mental health and resiliency classes at the onset of employment.
3. Explore the benefits and feasibility of annual mental health check-in with a professional.

STRATEGY 3:

Utilize the department's Safety Team to build upon and reinforce safety practices to reduce the risk and severity of injuries.

Action Steps:

1. Reinvigorate the department's Safety Team:
 - a. Evaluate team charter, specifically meeting frequency and team participation.
 - b. Create programs that reinforce the importance of safety
 - c. Emphasize the importance of injury prevention, such as lifting techniques, stretching, teamwork, and equipment utilization.

Safety, Health & Wellness

2. Annually review and evaluate injury and accident reports to identify trends.
 - a. Create educational and training opportunities to address and reduce those trends.
3. Support employees during injury rehabilitation to help them successfully meet applicable city, state, federal and fire department standards.

Human Resources – Leadership

Goal: Develop leaders at all levels of the department through a culture that empowers every member to reach their fullest potential.

STRATEGY 1:

Develop and implement leadership training programs specifically tailored to the needs of each level within the Ames Fire Department organization.

Action Steps:

1. Develop a succession plan for leadership development and share promotional eligibility requirements as early as possible to ensure employees are prepared for leadership positions.
2. Establish continued education and training past Master Firefighter path for those not seeking formal leadership opportunities.
3. Create an officer development task book.
4. Encourage the use of City of Ames educational resources and classes, while exploring formal leadership classes, such as Power Hours, for those on civil service list.

STRATEGY 2:

Establish formal mentorship and coaching programs where experienced leaders within the department mentor newer firefighters and emerging leaders.

Action Steps:

1. Work with HR to establish a mentorship program.
2. Implement a voluntary leadership rotation program where AFD members can rotate through different leadership positions within the department to gain experience and knowledge about the position.
3. Assign a mentor to all new officers.
4. Work with other City of Ames departments to create cross-organizational mentorship opportunities.

Human Resources – Training & Education

Goal: Provide comprehensive, innovative training and educational opportunities that empower every member of the Ames Fire Department to excel in their roles and adapt to evolving challenges through continuous learning and application of knowledge.

STRATEGY 1:

Establish a robust training framework that encompasses both foundational skills and advanced techniques.

Action Steps:

1. Create training expectations for each service level and payroll step.
 - a. Create an overall annual training plan, with expected hours and topics.
 - b. Establish and maintain a training standard based on hours per year.
 - c. Establish an actual training path to follow to meet goals of working through payroll step advancement to officer development.
 - d. Create and identify training categories and hour requirements.
2. Increase multi-company training evolutions, without service interruption.

STRATEGY 2:

Leverage facilities and state-of-the-art technologies to simulate real-world scenarios.

Action Steps:

1. Proactively identify buildings slated for demolition by working with the Inspection Division's demolition permitting process for training opportunities.
2. Partner with ISU to explore state-of-the-art technology opportunities to simulate real-world training opportunities.
3. Continue to buildout COATS (City of Ames Training Site), while evaluating future needs and adapting training props to meet evolving training needs.

STRATEGY 3:

Foster a culture of continuous learning and professional development tailored to the needs of our members and the services we provide to our community.

Action Steps:

1. Survey department to determine base skills and needs.
2. Utilize the National Fire Academy's Comprehensive Training Pyramid and the Center for Public Safety Excellence's designation criteria to build professional development plans for each level in the organization.
3. Work with HR to create a Fire Officer academy beyond national certification courses.

AMES FIRE DEPARTMENT STRATEGIC PLAN

2024 – 2029

Human Resources – Recruitment & Retention

Goal: Attract, retain, and cultivate a highly skilled workforce drawn from the broadest pool of qualified candidates, reflecting the values of our organization and the full range of the community we serve, ensuring the sustained effectiveness and resilience of our department.

STRATEGY 1:

Promote open communication channels within the organization to create a culture of caring and inclusion.

Action Steps:

1. Implement regular feedback opportunities to ensure members have an opportunity to share ideas, thoughts and concerns.
 - a. Friday visits to the stations by the Chief.
 - b. Scheduled ride along by the Deputy Chiefs.
2. Partner with the Union to co-host an annual family picnic/event, in addition to the department's Family Appreciation Event.

STRATEGY 2:

Foster relationships with educational institutions and community organizations.

Action Steps:

1. Identify and connect with the educational institutions and community organizations in Ames to develop partnerships opportunities to better serve them and the community.
2. Connect with high schools in Story County to explore creating an internship program.

STRATEGY 3:

Create a culture of caring and inclusion for employees that demonstrates their value to the department, city organization, and community.

Action Steps:

1. Provide ongoing training and education on topics such as unconscious bias, cultural competency, inclusive leadership, and communication.
2. Support the differences of others. Recognize differences and foster openness to all cultures.
3. As part of the new firefighter process include questions to help gauge the probationary firefighter's feeling of inclusion as part of the crew, department and city.

Human Resources – Recruitment & Retention

STRATEGY 4:

Ensure fair and unbiased hiring practices, using a variety of outreach methods that widen applicant pools and screen for values in addition to technical skills.

Action Steps:

1. Actively participate in job fairs.
 - a. Recruit high quality candidates through community interactions.
 - b. Produce recruitment materials that reach non-traditional candidates at non-traditional locations.
2. Establish additional communication and participation channels with the Union during hiring and promotional opportunities to ensure fair, unbiased hiring and promotions.

Resource Management – Apparatus

Goal: Maintain a sustainable apparatus fleet capable of responding to all-hazards, with an appropriate number of responders and equipment to meet the diverse needs of our community, adhere to industry standards, and prioritize safety and reliability.

STRATEGY 1:

Implement proactive maintenance schedules, thorough equipment inspections to maximize the lifespan and functionality of our apparatus fleet.

Action Steps:

1. Identify and develop fire department members who have a background and interest in fire service apparatus maintenance and repair and provide them with formal training opportunities.
2. Evaluate apparatus maintenance and repair sources, independent of City of Ames Fleet Services, that specialize in fire service apparatus.
3. Review replacement schedules by evaluating best practices and other career fire department.
4. Evaluate non-time specific replacement schedules from a cost/benefit perspective that takes into account resale value.

STRATEGY 2:

Stay current with technological advancements and industry best practices in apparatus management.

Action Steps:

1. Explore fleet maintenance groups or associations that regularly deal with apparatus management.
2. Explore alternative apparatus that utilize the most efficient and cost-effective technology available, such as battery powered, electric, alternate fuels, hybrids.
3. Explore apparatus leasing options and/or agreements with surrounding fire departments for short term, temporary apparatus needs during times of unforeseen circumstances.

STRATEGY 3:

Create a scope of coverage to define the types and number of existing vehicles needed for response through strategic asset allocation.

Action Steps:

1. Replace R-2 and R-3 with pickup style trucks, used for BLS only responses.
2. Provide grass fire capabilities with slide in unit.

AMES FIRE DEPARTMENT STRATEGIC PLAN

2024 – 2029

Resource Management – Apparatus

3. Reevaluate all apparatus placements.
4. Explore rural capabilities and needs.

Resource Management – Facilities & Equipment

Goal: Maintain the safety, reliability, and sustainability of facilities and equipment, to maximize lifespan and functionality, as well as support the employee experience.

STRATEGY 1:

Develop a quality maintenance plan for fire station facilities to ensure continued reliability and safety.

Action Steps:

1. Conduct department wide inventory to determine the current state of the department and establish replacement cycles.
2. Develop an annual checklist that inspects, and grades station features and conditions.
3. Use the Facilities Team to define maintenance and updating timelines for facilities.

STRATEGY 2:

Establish proactive maintenance schedules, conduct regular inspections to anticipate replacement needs to uphold the highest standards of operational readiness for all station equipment.

Action Steps:

1. Place inspections in the annual calendar; develop procedures to follow for inspections.
2. Develop an annual checklist that inspects/grades equipment.
3. Define maintenance schedules for equipment and track on First Due.

STRATEGY 3:

Develop and continually update long range station location map to optimize strategically placed fire stations within the community to meet the Ames City Council's goal of reaching 85% of the community within 5 minutes of being dispatched to an emergent incident.

Action Steps:

1. Include future station locations into the City's 2040 Plan.
2. Regularly review GIS data to identify and forecast future station needs based on growth and expected call volume.
 - a. Work with GIS to identify locations for a future Fire Station #4.
 - b. Evaluate land purchase opportunities for a future Fire Station #4.

Resource Management – Facilities & Equipment

- c. Place Engine #4 in 5-year CIP.
- 3. Work with ISU to evaluate land for relocating Fire Station #2.
 - a. Create a conceptual design and cost estimate for a new Fire Station 2.

Operational Preparedness

Goal: Maintain a state of operational readiness that enables the Ames Fire Department to effectively respond to emergencies, mitigate risks, and protect the lives and property of the community.

STRATEGY 1:

Continuously assess and enhance our capabilities, procedures, and training protocols to ensure that our personnel are well-prepared and equipped to handle a wide range of emergency situations.

Action Steps:

1. Evaluate the amount and types of Standard Operating Guidelines (SOGs) the department currently utilizes against best practices and develop a road map for making any changes.
2. Further define the department's technical rescue capabilities and provide one technical rescue training per year for each discipline, on a rotating basis, that is provided by external training resource.
3. Create an annual officer training that is focused on officer development.

STRATEGY 2:

Foster a culture of readiness and resilience through regular drills, exercises, and scenario-based training that simulate real-world scenarios and promotes teamwork, adaptability, and effective decision-making.

Action Steps:

1. Complete a comprehensive review of training hours needed to maintain proper readiness to known response capabilities.
2. Create and provide training that utilizes multi-company response scenarios.
3. Create a long-range plan for COATS build-out.

STRATEGY 3:

Collaborate with local agencies, stakeholders, and community partners to coordinate emergency response efforts, share resources, and enhance overall preparedness and coordination.

Action Steps:

1. Develop response plans to create a standard "2nd Alarm" to include mutual aid and call back to the stations.

Operational Preparedness

2. Evaluate WebEOC, the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) communication software utilized by the Story County Emergency Management Agency (EMA) and the State of Iowa Homeland Security, to determine if its use in the City of Ames's Incident Command Center (ICC) would enhance communication and improve efficiency.
3. Evaluate hosting recurring, countywide training with other public safety providers (law enforcement, ISU, Story County EMA, Fire, EMS) within Story County.

STRATEGY 4:

Utilize information technology systems to keep employees aware of current trends in department metrics, such as turnout times, fireground efficiency, training hours, and inspection completion rates to enhance accountability and adjust efforts to maintain preparedness.

Action Steps:

1. Create real-time dashboards/smart walls that show real time response and traffic data at all stations.
2. Utilize response data to adjust training and response needs to meet readiness capabilities, response goals.
3. Utilize the department's records management software, FirstDue, to automate the sharing of data, such as but not limited to turnout times, response times, and training hours with responders.

Plan Implementation

Measuring outputs without timelines can be challenging, so the department will focus on assessing progress toward achieving improved outcomes.

To ensure the strategic plan achieves results, performance measurement data will be integrated throughout implementation. The department will use an integrated process called "Managing for Results," which is based on:

- Identifying goals, strategies and actions
- Determining resources necessary to achieve them
- Analyzing and evaluating performance data
- Using that data to drive continuous improvement

Performance Metrics – The department will use the following "family of measures" to indicate and measure performance:

Inputs – Value of resources used to produce an output

Outputs – Quantity or number of units produced (activity-oriented and measurable).

Efficiency – Inputs used per output (or outputs per input)

Service Quality – The degree to which customers are satisfied with a program, or how accurately and timely a service is provided.

Outcome – Qualitative consequences associated with a program or service; the ultimate benefit to the customer and the reason for providing the service

Plan Success Factors

The success of this strategic plan depends on support from:

- The authority having jurisdiction
- Department membership
- The community at-large

The department developed this plan through community and agency input, utilizing professional guidance and a community-driven strategic planning process.

Implementation and Commitment

This strategic plan creates a platform for organizational transformation. The plan will come to life by being shared, discussed, and implemented within organizational realities.

Plan Implementation

The final step is developing organizational and community commitment. Everyone with a stake in the present and future of the department has a role and responsibility in making this strategic plan succeed.