

Acknowledgements

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Executive Summary

Emergency Services Consulting International (ESCI) was retained by the City of Kirkland, Washington, to conduct an organizational evaluation, future planning and feasibility of cooperative service delivery study, and an organizational strategic plan for the Kirkland Fire & Building Department (KF&BD).

Initiated in January 2012, the project involved a review of a substantial amount of background



information and data supplied by the City of Kirkland and KF&BD staff. ESCI's associates spent four days on-site conducting stakeholder interviews with personnel from all levels of the City and the fire and building department. ESCI's methodologies included a detailed analysis of collected data. This information was combined with interviews of key staff members and the affected stakeholders, as well as direct

observation of facilities and apparatus, and became the foundation for the in-depth study of all aspects of the administrative, operational, and support services of the KF&BD's current service delivery.

Scope, Purpose, and Report Conventions

The purpose of the study was to provide a third party independent organizational evaluation, a plan for the future, an assessment of the feasibility of cooperative efforts, and facilitation of the development of an organizational strategic plan for the KF&BD (Kirkland Fire & Building Department). Officials desired to understand how well the fire and EMS (emergency medical services) system is working and whether the fire department can provide services more efficiently. Specifically, the scope of services requested by the City of Kirkland included:

- A comprehensive review of the current conditions of the KF&BD, including a baseline assessment and current service delivery performance analysis
- A focused, objective analysis of overall fire department emergency response operations
- Development of an inventory of opportunities under which the KF&BD (Kirkland Fire & Building Department) and its neighboring emergency response agencies can work more closely together to increase efficiency and effectiveness.

- Identification and analysis of the feasibility of strategies
- Based on the identified cooperative service delivery options:
 - Findings and the feasibility of each option
 - Identification of the preferred option or options
 - Description of governing body actions and necessary policy action
 - Implementation timelines and recommendations
 - Process issues including legal considerations, management and governance, and funding
- Facilitate the development of a KF&BD strategic plan document involving:
 - A local planning team (12 to 20 persons) including representatives of city management and various levels of the agency itself
 - A two-day strategic planning retreat
 - An analysis of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities for, and threats to the organization
 - Identification of critical issues
 - Development of a vision, mission, and values statements
 - Establishment of goals and objectives
 - Establishment of performance measures

Report Layout

The organizational evaluation, assessment of current conditions, findings, feasibility of cooperative efforts, and strategic planning is catalogued into the following subject areas:

- Organizational and Community Overview
 - Kirkland Community Description and Demographics
 - City of Kirkland Organization Description
 - Fire and Building Department
- Fire and Building Department Findings and Recommendations
 - Summary of Stakeholder Input
 - Department Mission and Values
 - Management Components
 - Emergency Management (Disaster Preparedness)
 - Fire Prevention Bureau
 - Fire and Emergency Medical Services (Emergency Response)
 - Accountability and Reporting
- Strategic Plan Recommendations and Priorities

- Major Findings and Recommended Priority Goals
- Strategic Goals
- Appendices

Each section in the report provides the reader with general information about that element, as well as observations and analysis of any significant issues or conditions. ESCI's observations are supported by data collected as part of the document review and interview process. Specific recommendations are included to address identified issues and opportunities for service improvement, efficiencies, and future cost avoidance.

The purpose of this review and evaluation is twofold: First, it provides the KF&BD and City with a valuable assessment of the organization, its assets, and service delivery methods. Secondly, the review equips ESCI staff with a detailed and comprehensive understanding of the KF&BD, which is essential to the strategic planning process and determining potential cooperative service delivery efforts with other emergency service providers.

General Assessment

It is the professional opinion of ESCI that the Kirkland Fire and Building Department is a high-quality organization with the potential to become a great organization. The staffs are dedicated and skilled professionals committed to providing the City of Kirkland's citizens and visitors with the highest possible level of service. Elected officials for the City of Kirkland all recognize the high degree of importance of these services in ensuring the public safety of their community. Citizens and visitors can be assured that the members of the KF&BD are professional in the delivery of fire and emergency medical services. The level at which service is delivered is commensurate with other fire departments in the region.

An operational tension has developed between the KF&BD and other City departments. While there is no single reason for the division, the divisive relationship is hampering the Finance and Administration Department, Human Resources and Performance Management Department, City Manager's Office, and the Fire & Building Department from operating as efficiently as possible. To a lesser degree the rapport is challenged with other departments. During the time of this study the City administration has initiated corrective actions to improve relations. The process of improving working relationships will take time and effort but is necessary for the City departments to operate effectively.

ESCI found other areas of concern that impede the efficient operation of the KF&BD, primarily in the administration and support level. Work efforts of the two deputy fire chiefs should be directed at the highest level of administration and oversight of the fire department. Presently a large percentage of time is dedicated to work unrelated to administration. Updating job descriptions and affirming the expectations of administration and support staff is required.

It is our opinion that the number of KF&BD support staff is inadequate to meet the needs of the fire department and the expectations of the City. While it is possible to assign a staff person responsibility to work directly with the fire department from finance, IT, or HR, so far this approach has not been effective. Even if this assignment arrangement were successful, the KF&BD requires additional administrative and support positions. Support staffing has remained static or decreased even as the number of emergency operations personnel and the services of the fire department have increased.

An issue compounding the administration and support staffing problem has been KF&BD's inability to harness technology. Without integration of technology tools, the fire department will continue to struggle to provide information for analysis and benchmarking performance based outcomes. Successful implementation of the New World CAD by NORCOM is seen as one of the primary solutions to the problem.

An Efficiency and Effectiveness Study commissioned by the City of Kirkland and King County Fire District #41 was conducted on the KF&BD in 2008. Many of the study's major findings and major recommendations have not been addressed and are still outstanding.¹ They include:

- The high level of EMS responses has the unintended consequence of lowering the level of fire protection.
- KF&BD is totally dependent upon mutual and automatic aid response for marine rescue/firefighting.
- The measurement of response time standard is flawed and overly ambitious.
- EMS response crew size should be reduced from three to two.
- KF&BD failed to meet response time standard 50 percent of the time from 2004-2007.

To discourage this organizational evaluation, feasibility, and strategic plan from lying fallow, ESCI recommends the Kirkland City Council prioritize and adopt the goals found in this report. To have a fruitful outcome of the recommended top priority goals requires the KF&BD to have

¹ See Appendix B: Management Advisory Group, Recommendations and Findings.

the authority, resources, responsibility, and accountability for implementation. To that end each strategic plan goal includes:

- Goal Statement
- Recommended Actions
- Implementation Metrics
- Resources Required

All of the pieces are in place for the KF&BD to become the organization, “known for consistently meeting our citizens’ needs and epitomizing a winning “major league” team; our efforts build community ownership and pride in our brand.²”

Fire and Building Department Findings and Recommendations

A total of 90 recommendations are provided throughout this report. The following sections summarize the major findings and key recommendations related to each.

Organizational and Community Overview

Organizational and community overview is a summary of basic information about the City of Kirkland, Washington, and the Kirkland Fire and Building Department. It includes an overview of City governance; organizational structure; service area size; the community environment; resources dedicated to the fire and emergency medical services (EMS), the building division, and emergency management; and a financial survey. Significant findings include:

- ❖ Kirkland’s 2011 population is estimated to be 80,505, a 62.24 percent increase from 2010. The increase is connected to the annexation of Fire District #41, a portion of Fire District #36 (Woodinville), and a small area of Fire District #34 (Redmond). Annexation increased the service area slightly as KF&BD already provided contracted service to King County FD #41 prior to the annexation.
- ❖ KF&BD’s organizational structure, while atypical in that the director has oversight of building services, emergency management, and the fire department, is functioning well.
- ❖ KF&BD’s most recent survey by the WSRB (Washington Surveying and Rating Bureau) was in June 1995. Improvements in staffing, apparatus, and fire stations suggest that KF&BD would benefit from a re-evaluation by WSRB.
- ❖ Kirkland has developed financial long-term plans for operating KF&BD that include a CIP (capital improvement plan) for the acquisition of major assets for the fire department.
- ❖ In March of 2011, KF&BD began charging for BLS (basic life support) EMS transports from medical incidents.

² Source: KF&BD Strategic Goal No. 1, Goal Statement.

Fire and Building Department

The single largest change to occur for the City of Kirkland in years was the annexation in June 2011. KF&BD was already providing contract fire and emergency services to Fire District #41 and added coverage to a portion of Fire District #36 (Woodinville) and a small area of Fire District #34 (Redmond) as a result of the annexation. While KF&BD added emergency response personnel to serve the annexed area, there was no corresponding increase in administration and support. Recommended actions include:

- ❖ Amend job descriptions to accurately reflect roles and expectations for administration and support staff.
- ❖ Increase emergency operations by adding a BLS aid unit staffed between 8:00 AM and 8:00 PM to maintain adequate personnel for a moderate risk fire event.
- ❖ Annually conduct a detailed analysis of revenue versus expenditure to validate that EMS transportation activity is meeting stated goals established by the City.
- ❖ Bill for EMS transport when responding and transporting patients outside of the City of Kirkland.
- ❖ Add one FTE administrative assistant for EMS and one FTE financial analyst to administrative support functions.

Summary of Stakeholder Input

To validate the mission, vision, and values of the KF&BD, ESCI solicited input from internal and external stakeholders (City Council, City Management, KF&BD Members, neighboring service providers) through two separate venues: one-on-one interviews conducted by the ESCI team during the initial data gathering process and a citizens group formed to participate in the strategic planning process. As part of the interview process, the internal and external stakeholders were asked to identify their perspectives on the department's strengths and weaknesses, as well as the challenges facing the department and critical issues it needs to address. The most frequently reported input for each was:

- Organizational Strengths
 - Community satisfied with service
 - Best trained and highest morale in the area
 - Training division is good; personnel are well trained
 - Department has good people and a good leader
- Organizational Weaknesses
 - Geography; jurisdictional boundaries
 - Money
 - Need for a fireboat

- Stability and predictability in costs; any incident will generate overtime
- Containing growth of call volume; growing number of non-emergency calls
- External political forces
- Challenges
 - Response time
 - Slow growth of expenses
 - Funding, leadership, too few administrative staff
 - Overpricing of service
 - Housing prices down
 - Underprepared for a disaster
- Critical Issues
 - Coverage in annexation area
 - Funding that is sustainable for all city departments
 - Funding, levy approval for Medic One program
 - Ongoing workload/cultural shift
 - Need to be more community connected; need to be more agile in addressing change

Department Mission and Values

A validated mission statement is clearly stated and intentionally simplistic; the Kirkland Fire Department *Mission* accurately describes the organization's general purpose. The Mission Statement for the Kirkland Fire Department validated during this study is:

Providing timely, emergency response and safeguarding the lives, property, and environment of our community.

Management Components

Fundamental tools necessary for organizational management are inadequate. ARs (administrative rules) and SOGs (standard operating guidelines) specific to the fire department were generally outdated. Additionally, variations exist between City and KF&BD AR documents including safety, purchasing, and public access to records and document retention. There should be a sense of urgency given to developing a complete set of documents.

Internal tension between the KF&BD and Finance and Administration (F&A) is concerning, though recent moves on the part of the two directors has made what is described as "improvement" to the working relationship.

KF&BD's management of external communication efforts has been reduced to reacting to media worthy events.

Highlights and ESCI recommendations for management components include:

- ❖ Outsource development and maintenance of Administrative Rules and Standard Operating Guidelines to a third party. Development and maintenance of Administrative Rules and Standard Operating Guidelines should include involvement of the City human resource department.
- ❖ Prioritize media messaging. Use "Currently Kirkland" and other media outlets as a tool to leverage the reach and impact of fire department public information and education messages.
- ❖ Develop a procedure and policy for reporting and retaining all employee exposure records.
- ❖ Establish a medical baseline for new firefighters at the time of hire/appointment.
- ❖ Provide a fire service-related occupational and health program.

Emergency Management (Disaster Preparedness)

Given the number of tasks and functions required of managing an emergency management program, KF&BD is performing well considering the lack of FTEs allocated to the program. However, this comes at an opportunity cost to the fire department by squeezing out other program needs (financial, HR, and IT services to name a few) that would otherwise be provided by the deputy chief of administration. Acquiring additional staff to provide the daily work necessary to maintain a state of readiness would free the deputy chief to perform other essential tasks directly related to the administration of the fire department, relegating the emergency management workload to providing management guidance and gravitas to the program.

Highlights and ESCI recommendations for emergency management include:

- ❖ Develop and implement a plan outlining how volunteers will be used and managed during emergency events.
- ❖ Identify a location and develop a dedicated EOC; apply for a matching grant from the Washington EMD Emergency Operations Center Grant Program (requires a 25 percent local match).
- ❖ Complete and publish the Continuity of Operations (COOP) and Continuity of Government (COG) plans.
- ❖ Develop a Hazard Identification and Vulnerability Assessment and a Hazard Mitigation Plan. Submit to King County for inclusion as an annex to the County plan.
- ❖ Hire a full-time City emergency manager, shifting daily responsibilities from the Deputy Chief of Administration to the emergency manager.

Fire Prevention Bureau

The City of Kirkland's process for construction permitting delivers a higher level of service than is commonly seen by involvement of the fire and building departments from pre-application conference for commercial developments and continuing throughout the construction process.

KF&BD current completion rate for scheduled annual inspections of an estimated 20 percent may expose emergency services personnel and public to unacceptable risk during a fire event.

Fire and life-safety public education efforts of the KF&BD were limited to outside special requests that have since been discontinued.

Highlights and ESCI recommendations for the fire prevention bureau include:

- ❖ Integrate KF&BD fire prevention records management with the EnerGov RMS software used by the Building Division.
- ❖ Conduct a fire and life-safety inspection of all inspectable occupancies in the next 12 months. If necessary use emergency services personnel to complete inspections.
- ❖ Develop and adopt a plan for the maintenance, repair, and flow testing of all fire hydrants in the City of Kirkland.
- ❖ Acquire and deploy electronic tablet devices for field data entry and rapid downloading to the records management system.
- ❖ Adopt a local residential sprinkler ordinance for new residential construction.

Fire and Emergency Medical Services (Emergency Response)

The hierarchal structure of the KF&BD operates as intended with the building services manager. In contrast, ESCI found that in practice the fire chief is the direct report for any number of other fire department personnel and activities. Deputy fire chiefs routinely perform administrative, technician, and clerical tasks. Time devoted to activities outside of essential functions and principal accountabilities have reduced the deputy chiefs' availability to perform job critical administrative and supervisory duties.

Given the number of FTEs dedicated to emergency operations (a minimum staffing of 19 per day, 30 personnel assigned to each shift), KF&BD's use of overtime is appropriate. Leave time use categorized as sick leave and injury is considered to be high.

EMS is expected to continue as the predominate factor affecting service demand. ESCI recommends that the KF&BD move forward and analyze the feasibility of contracting ALS response services with Medic One.

Capital facilities, apparatus, and capital equipment for the KF&BD constitute a large investment. Planning for remodels and the replacement of fire stations is a major capital expense and requires long-range planning. With two fire stations nearing their life expectancy, ESCI recommends that a capital plan for the rebuild or replacement of fire stations be developed. It is further recommended that KF&BD develop an internal long-term plan for funding the maintenance and replacement apparatus and capital equipment that aligns with the City CIP. The KF&BD pay rates into internal service fund reserves for facility and vehicle replacements and a sinking fund for replacement of equipment is being developed in cooperation with the Finance Department.

KF&BD relies on automatic aid to have adequate personnel for most fire incidents. Over the past two years, each of the neighboring fire and EMS agencies has gone through some reduction of fire stations, staffed apparatus, or personnel. To mitigate the reduction and improve coverage to the northwest (Finn Hill) area of the City, ESCI recommends that the KF&BD construct and staff a joint fire station with the Northshore Fire Department.

There are two alternative methods for KF&BD to meet the current adopted response time objectives. First, change the response time objectives to the match the response that the fire department is able to meet. Second, add facilities, emergency response units, and personnel to the department to the level that will meet the response objectives. For Kirkland to increase resources requires a large capital investment and ongoing expenditures. Capital requirements involve the addition of two fire stations, one in the Finn Hill neighborhood and a second in the southern section of the City. Each fire station would need an engine and aid unit and a minimum of six personnel per day to cross-staff the units.

Of the potential partnerships with neighboring fire and EMS service providers, ESCI considers Northshore and Bellevue fire departments to be feasible partners. Consolidation of fire and EMS into a single operational unit, either through Interlocal Agreement (ILA) or the formation of an RFA would provide increased fire and emergency service efficiency in the areas served by the three fire departments.

ESCI developed 34 cooperative efforts strategies that the KF&BD could pursue. They are judged as being feasible and most likely to result in significant improvement to systems and/or programs. These strategies should be acted on regardless of action on a regional partnership.

Highlights and ESCI recommendations for fire and emergency medical services include:

- ❖ Store personnel protective equipment (PPE) in a separate, well ventilated room.
- ❖ Establish a minimum requirement for annual company and individual training evaluations. Include shift battalion chief involvement in annual evaluations.
- ❖ Jointly construct and staff a new fire station with Northshore FD. The fire station should be located in an area to serve the Finn Hill neighborhood and Northshore FD.
- ❖ Provide Advanced Life Support (ALS) services within the City of Kirkland via the King County Medic One program.
- ❖ Modify the EMS response protocol of sending three responders to medical incidents. Redeploy with dedicated staffing of two-person aid units, or single person quick response unit for low priority EMS incidents.
- ❖ Expand the current partnership with the King County Sheriff's Marine Unit and the Seattle Fire Department to provide a joint, coordinated response to marine firefighting and rescue incidents.

Accountability and Reporting

While the KF&BD is mostly meeting accountability and reporting requirements, there is a need for improvement. The accreditation process is one way for a fire department to make certain it is covering all of the accountability and reporting bases. The process of becoming an accredited agency is a time consuming, labor intensive, costly process. Therefore ESCI has recommended that the KF&BD make accreditation a long-term item and focus on other issues first.

In the last *Response Time Objectives Report* submitted (2010), KF&BD did not define the geographic areas where requirements are not being met, or explain predictable consequences, or the steps necessary to achieve compliance. KF&BD is meeting its stated response performance goals (including turn out time) approximately 50 percent of the time. KF&BD has not developed options to improve response performance. Without action to improve response time performance, subsequent reports will include similar results.

Tools for the reporting and archiving of data and information of KF&BD activities are labor intensive. This is exemplified by the number of staff hours required to capture background information for this study. Most of the improvements to reporting hinge on deployment of the New World CAD. Efforts should be directed at the implementation of the CAD system.

ESCI recommends that KF&BD disseminate reports (information) in a dashboard display customized for the end user.

Highlights and ESCI recommendations for accountability and reporting include:

- ❖ Adopt a two tiered response time objectives for fire, EMS, hazardous materials, technical rescue, and specialized rescue incidents.
- ❖ Develop and adopt response time intervals, benchmark, and review at a minimum annually.
- ❖ NORCOM – Establish communication center performance measurement benchmarks that meet national standards.
- ❖ Adopt turnout time standards based on incident type and time of day.
- ❖ Integrate the New World RMS (records management system) with emergency management plans, records, and reports.

Major Findings and Recommended Priority Goals

ESCI's recommended priority goals for the KF&BD result from stakeholder interviews with community members, policymakers, administration, KF&BD, neighboring fire department leadership, the organizational evaluation, and ESCI's analysis and experience. Recommended priority goals were developed in recognition of what is important to the public. Initiatives and key priorities were assigned recommended actions and implementation metrics to track progress over time. The goals are ambitious but realistic targets that are achievable.

Goal No. 1: Administrative Infrastructure

Goal Statement: Build an administrative infrastructure that efficiently provides administration and support functions for KF&BD. (Administrative and support staff realignment, administrative rules, and guidelines)

Goal No. 2: Staffing and Deployment

Goal Statement: Increase the ready availability of fire apparatus and personnel. (Swing staffing of aid units and engine/ladder companies and staffing levels)

Goal No. 3: Outreach and Education

Goal Statement: Provide contemporary, practical fire prevention, EMS, and emergency management education and informational services to the community. (PIO, PEO, and community preparedness)

Goal No. 4: Performance

Goal Statement: Develop, measure, and meet response and measurable performance benchmarks. (Response time)

Goal No. 5: Partnerships

Goal Statement: Develop partnerships with neighboring fire and EMS agencies to improve services and the level of service in a cost efficient manner. (Training, maritime response, joint staffing of fire stations, RFA)

Strategic Goals

The following are ESCI's recommended strategic goals internal to the KF&BD. Community members, policymakers, administration, and KF&BD personnel participated in a two day process to assist in developing priorities for the Kirkland Fire Department strategic plan. Five of the seven are incorporated as top priority goals. The remaining two are internal strategic organizational goals that meld with the validated mission, vision, and values of the KF&BD.

Strategic Organizational Goal No. 1: KF&BD Branding

Goal Statement: Create an attractive brand for KF&BD to inform and market our services

Strategic Organizational Goal No. 2: KF&BD Internal (City) Relationships

Goal Statement: Enhance a positive culture with internal customers; Kirkland Fire Department and other City Departments

