

CRITICAL ISSUE B: CULTURE



Initiative 1: Enhance alignment between community, elected officials, management, labor/volunteer representatives, and overall workforce.

Strategies:

1. Create a process that allows for goal setting, strategic planning, and periodic feedback by all stakeholders of the community and the members of the organization.
2. Encourage regular communication between all stakeholders on strategic issues, while continuing to address operational issues through the established chain of command.
3. Embrace the differences in generational understanding and approach to issues to be successful in addressing the opportunities and challenges that will face organizations in the future.
4. Foster alignment between the community, elected officials, management, labor/volunteer representatives, and the overall workforce to create a culture of inclusion, adaptability, and innovation.
5. Establish a mechanism within the agency to monitor and promote cultural awareness and sensitivity reflective of the culture of the community served.

Initiative 2: Promote an organizational environment that is adaptable, open to change, innovative, and focused on continuous improvement.

Strategies:

1. Select and promote leaders and managers in the organization who model the desired organizational behavior of self-assessment and continuous improvement.
2. Encourage members of the organization to be engaged in outside organizations, both professional and community based.
3. Adopt a philosophy that promotes seeking out the best industry practices of other professional organizations and establish a process by which the organization can evaluate those practices and implement those that are relevant in their own organization to improve performance.
4. Develop an organizational culture that embraces continuous improvement for the organization and its employees.
5. Recruit and hire employees who demonstrate the necessary knowledge, skill sets, and abilities to develop an effective and innovative organizational environment.

Initiative 3: Establish organizational expectations for employee education, credentialing, and continued professional development.

Strategies:

1. Encourage and provide incentives for personal growth through a comprehensive organizational professional development plan that includes training and education, that is incorporated into the requirements for promotion to leadership positions, and that results in the increased professionalism of the fire and emergency services.
2. Develop a professional mentoring process to assist individuals in creating and achieving their professional development plan.
3. Develop a reverse mentoring program where new employees engage with senior leadership to familiarize them with the latest technologies and thought processes of the emerging workforce and community.
4. Establish a process to continually assess the skills, knowledge, and abilities needed by the organizational workforce to meet the changing community demands for service, to meet the external challenges placing pressures on the organization, and to help address the changes and innovation that are occurring or will need to occur in the agency.

Case Study: Charleston Fire Department (CFD)

Location: Charleston, SC

Coverage Area: 150,000 residents over 104 square miles

No. of Employees: 401

Annual Calls for Service: 24,000

Serving one of the most historic cities in the United States, CFD is steeped in a rich history and tradition. An unfortunate part of its history is the 2007 Sofa Super Store fire that resulted in the line of duty deaths (LODD) of nine CFD firefighters. Since then CFD strategies have taken two distinct paths: those that advance the modern fire department and those that reinforce what it means to be a CFD firefighter. A recent recruit class was tasked with researching every LODD in the department's history, CFD has become a leader in incident command, fire tactics, and regional partnerships through strong strategic planning and a focus on constant improvement. Such traditions as company pride and badge pinning ceremonies remain integral to CFD's culture.

