

Bureau of Emergency Communications

Strategic Plan 2009-2011



Amanda Fritz, Commissioner
Lisa Turley, Director



Partners in Public Safety

Director's Message

When I joined BOEC almost eight years ago, I became a member of a truly talented and resourceful organization. Each and every day I am impressed by the commitment our employees demonstrate. There is an untiring willingness to work with our public safety partners in order to provide help to the community of Multnomah County. The underlying success of these efforts requires respectful communication, accountability, and a commitment to continual process improvement.

Although line employees - dispatchers and supervisors - are the most visible segment of our organization, a critical component of BOEC is the Executive Staff, who serve in the leadership positions of the agency. We have combined our expertise and energy in order to work together to develop this Strategic Plan. By identifying the most critical components of improved service delivery and strategizing about ways to make our efforts as coordinated, focused, and efficient as possible we hope to provide the community with the best level of 911 and emergency response service available in the Northwest.

We are proud to present the Strategic Plan for the Bureau of Emergency Communications. For us, it is a reflection of our vision of the type of organization we are striving to become and a commitment to produce the efforts necessary to achieve it. As the Director, I am proud to be a part of this team and have confidence that this plan will improve our organization and direct our current ability to deliver premier emergency communications services and our future growth.

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BOEC Vision, Mission, and Values

Vision

To better serve our community we are committed and compassionate public safety professionals supporting each other through respect, consistency, fairness, and integrity, and trusting that every action is taken from the highest and purest motive.

Mission

The mission of BOEC is to serve the community by providing the vital link to the proper emergency service response using the most efficient operating systems available.

Values

- **Competence.** The ability to perform all facets of the job with a high degree of skill, confidence, efficiency and reliability. People know the expectations of the job and perform in accordance with those expectations. People have the experience and expertise to work individually or as a team with a very diverse customer base, including callers and responders. People are able to fashion appropriate responses to new situations based on past experiences. More importantly, we trust that we all have the level of competence necessary to do our jobs well and in a timely manner.
- **Integrity.** Actions and decisions are values-based. The organization and the people stand for something. Values are not compromised for the sake of expediency. Doing the right things in the right way is more important than doing things the easy way.
- **Respect.** People are valued and feel valued. They support and encourage each other. The environment is free from hostility, intimidation, discrimination, bullying and harassment. When people disagree, they do so with civility and respect. There is no attacking, holding grudges, name-calling, or attributing motive. People will contribute to a positive work environment free of discourteous, disrespectful, and bullying behavior.
- **Responsibility.** People know their jobs and do them to the best of their ability. They are accountable for their own statements, actions and performance. There is no blame shifting or scape-goating. Credit for success is shared with all who contributed.
- **Teamwork.** The organization and its mission are paramount. There is a shared understanding of goals and priorities. People set aside their personal agendas and cooperate for the good of the team. Everyone contributes and communicates effectively. Team members are supportive and loyal to each other.
- **Compassion.** We care about each other, our public safety partners, and the community. That caring is demonstrated in the way we work and our treatment of each other.

Creating the Plan

Over the next 3 years, Portland's Bureau of Emergency Communications (BOEC) will follow the key strategic directions summarized in this Strategic Plan.

Planning is the process that allows us to focus our energies and resources in the most effective way. The resulting Strategic Plan is a road map for guiding our progress toward a pre-determined destination – improved customer service, improved quality of police, fire and EMS dispatching services, and an improved working environment.

Our destination was determined by gathering information, data and perspectives from a variety of sources to develop a comprehensive understanding of the management, organizational structure and operations of BOEC, as well as the contextual issues that affect customer service.

1. A 2004 study conducted to:
 - Identify customer service strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for improvement.
 - Identify fire and EMS dispatching strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for improvement.
2. On-going leadership development training and team effectiveness efforts for BOEC staff.
3. 2008-2009 City of Portland Service Efforts and Accomplishments report.
4. 2009 City of Portland Resident Survey report.

A critical part of our planning process was asking of others and ourselves what we do well and where we fall short. With this knowledge, we can build on our strengths and work to minimize or eliminate our weaknesses.

The planning process included not only BOEC staff, but also the police, fire, and EMS personnel we serve. Interviews were held with Multnomah County Commission staff, agency management staff, and BOEC managers, supervisors and staff. Detailed descriptive data and documentation were collected on workload, policies and procedures, and training programs. Direct observations were conducted of police, fire and EMS call-taking and dispatching activities on the BOEC operations floor. BOEC customers were surveyed, and focus groups held to validate issues identified through the surveys, and to identify any further issues to be addressed.

Among its many strengths, BOEC's management was praised for its dedication to its mission, for its highly inclusive management approach, and for recognizing the importance of delivering high-quality service to both the community and agencies. The highly innovative and extensive classroom and practical training was also highlighted.

This planning exercise reaffirmed that BOEC's greatest strength and asset is its highly motivated, committed, dedicated and professional staff. Experience teaches us that the community is best served when commitment and compassion thrive within the Bureau. Supporting each other with respect, consistency, fairness and integrity, enables us to continually give our best in times of crisis. Our Strategic Plan supports this vision.

We have made every effort to view ourselves objectively and to craft organizational strategies that are truly creative and responsive. We believe this Plan strikes the critical balance between the staff and the work they perform. Effectively implemented and sustained quality improvement is critical to improving the quality of services. Increasing the effectiveness of recruiting and hiring, as well as increasing employee well-being (directly linked to employee retention and absenteeism), are key to managing costs. Raising the level of leadership skills, accountability, and communication are integral to implementing the Plan.

To ensure we stay on the path as mapped out by the Plan that follows, we will be instituting and monitoring Key Performance Indicators (KPI) for each strategic direction.

Terminology

Critical Success Factor (CSF)

Any measurable business event, dependency, deliverable or other factor, which if not attained would seriously impair the likelihood of achieving a business objective.

Key Findings

Observations revealed through research and analysis that are helpful in determining the desired strategic directions and actions.

Key Performance Indicator

A measure that monitors how well the business is achieving its Critical Success Factors.

Next Steps

The intended actions to be taken to ensure the successful implementation of the Plan.

Strategic Direction

A statement of business intention within a specific area that may be measured quantifiably.

Strategic Plan

The overview of a long-range organizational roadmap with built-in checkpoints to ensure successful completion of Bureau goals.

Key Findings

Analysis of BOEC's strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for improvement revealed the following observations. We believe these observations are helpful in understanding the strategic actions we are taking.

- BOEC currently serves a population of 724,680*. This number is expected to increase by approximately 1.2% by 2010 (est. 739,173), and to increase approximately 6% by 2015 (est. 768,160).

*Source: Portland State University, Population Research Center at www.pdx.edu/prc

- Total BOEC staffing has increased by 5% between FY04/05 and FY09/10, from 137 FTE to 144 FTE. Total number of certified calltakers and dispatchers has increased by over 30% since FY04/05, from 89 to 116 certified.
- On-going technological changes directly impact the business of emergency communications and BOEC's quality of service. The ever-increasing rate of technological change will provide both opportunities and challenges.
- Implementing a formal process for customer issue resolution and quality assurance will lead to enhanced communication and relations between BOEC and partner agencies, a more transparent process, accountability for all process participants, continuous improvement, and better supervision and enforcement of call taking and dispatch policies and procedures.
- BOEC is committed to providing the highest quality emergency communications services while reducing the cost of recruitment, hiring and training. Management is thoughtful and dedicated to its mission, views jobs as critical, and recognizes the importance of delivering high-quality services to both community and partner agencies.
- BOEC provides a high level of innovative classroom and practical training to its staff, enabling them to keep their skills current.
- The level of leadership skills and accountability across the organization must continue to increase if BOEC is to successfully meet its objectives and navigate through change.
- The level of employee well-being, defined as job satisfaction, health, and morale, directly impacts retention, performance, costs, and BOEC's ability to attract and retain the best people.

Strategic Directions



Community and Partner Relationships

Promote and nurture relationships within the community and partner agencies.



Community and Partner Services

Increase the efficiency and quality of call handling and dispatching.



Organizational Improvement

Improve internal organizational effectiveness.



Recruitment and Hiring

Promote workforce excellence and make BOEC careers accessible to all people.



Training and Development

Provide consistent, high-quality, ongoing training to develop staff members to their fullest potential.



Employee Well-Being

Increase the level of employee morale, health, and job satisfaction.

Strategic Direction I

Community and Partner Relationships

Promote and nurture relationships within the community and partner agencies.

Mindful of our mission and commitment to provide emergency communication services to the community, and our interdependencies with agencies outside BOEC, we must:

1. Critical Success Factor

Measure and monitor targeted levels of partner agency and community satisfaction.

Key Performance Indicator

- Annual publication of Partner Agency Survey and Community Survey measures

2. Critical Success Factor

Ensure timely, appropriate, and effective communication with partner agencies.

Key Performance Indicator

- Call Processing Time
- Partner Agency Survey Scores

3. Critical Success Factor

Increase level of visibility in the community.

Key Performance Indicators

- Call Processing Time
- Community Survey Scores

Values supported: Integrity, Respect

Strategic Direction II

Community and Partner Services

Increase efficiency and quality of call handling and dispatching.

In order to maintain a high level of service during times of rapidly changing technology, limited resources, and ever evolving service demands, we must:

1. Critical Success Factor

Successfully implement and sustain an on-going Quality Assurance program.

Key Performance Indicators

- Incident Review
- Incident Processing Time
- Call Wait Time

2. Critical Success Factor

Encourage and require employee self-responsibility and accountability.

Key Performance Indicator

- Employee Performance Evaluation

3. Critical Success Factor

Take advantage of information and technology to improve level of service.

Key Performance Indicator

- Increase the number of APCO and NENA best practices and standards adopted

4. Critical Success Factor

Implementation of various strategies aimed at improving 911-service delivery.

Key Performance Indicator

- Reduce 911 call-waiting times.

Values supported: Competence, Integrity, Respect, Responsibility, Teamwork

Strategic Direction III

Organizational Improvement

Improve internal organizational effectiveness.

Increasing the level and quality of our services is dependent upon our staff's ability to improve its leadership and collaboration skills. Therefore, we must:

1. Critical Success Factor

Ensure fiscal responsibility.

Key Performance Indicator

- Estimated vs. Actual Expenses
- Estimated vs. Actual Overtime Expense
- Bureau Expenditures by Service Population

2. Critical Success Factor

Raise the level of leadership skills, teamwork and communication.

Key Performance Indicators

- Employee Survey Results Relating to Leadership, Teamwork & Communication
- Employee Performance Relating to Leadership, Teamwork & Communication

3. Critical Success Factor

Encourage employee self-responsibility and accountability.

Key Performance Indicator

- Employee Performance Evaluation

4. Critical Success Factor

Pursue best practices and standards.

Key Performance Indicator

- Increase the number of APCO and NENA best practices and standards adopted

Values supported: Competence, Respect, Responsibility, Teamwork

Strategic Direction IV

Recruitment and Hiring

Promote workforce excellence and make BOEC careers accessible to all people.

Given the unique skill set required, high job demands, and a commitment to foster equal opportunity, in order to attract the best people, we must:

1. Critical Success Factor

Maintain staffing requirements with certified employees.

Key Performance Indicator

- Certified Staff Level (Call Taker, Fire Dispatcher, Police Dispatcher, Senior Dispatcher, Supervisor)
- BOEC Staff Level
- Conversion of Trainees to Certified Staff

2. Critical Success Factor

Maintain respectful, effective, and collaborative working relationships within and between employee groups.

Key Performance Indicator

- Harassment and Rudeness Complaint Volume
- Discrimination Complaint Volume
- Adherence to Bullying Policy
- Employee Survey Results

3. Critical Success Factor

Support recruiting outreach programs that encourage diversity.

Key Performance Indicator

- BOEC Diversity vs. Community Diversity

Values supported: Competence, Integrity, Responsibility

Strategic Direction V

Training and Development

Provide consistent, high-quality, ongoing training to develop staff members to their fullest potential.

In order to provide a high level of service to the community and to partner agencies, and to maintain continuous improvement we must:

1. Critical Success Factor

Broaden the skill level of all BOEC staff.

Key Performance Indicators

- Employee Performance Relating to Skill Level

2. Critical Success Factor

- Continue to improve the conversion of trainees to certified staff and the number of training opportunities.

Key Performance Indicators

- Conversion of Trainees to Certified Staff
- Decrease Length of New Employee Training

Values supported: Competence, Integrity, Respect, Responsibility, Teamwork, Compassion

Strategic Direction VI

Employee Well-Being

Increase the level of employee morale, health, and job satisfaction.

In a high-pressure working environment, to serve our community with commitment and compassion, we must:

1. Critical Success Factor

Improve employee health and morale.

Key Performance Indicator

- Employee Absenteeism Rate

2. Critical Success Factor

Increase reported level of employee job satisfaction.

Key Performance Indicators

- Employee Turnover Rate
- Employee Survey Results

3. Critical Success Factor

Continually reinforce the vision, mission and values of the organization.

Key Performance Indicator

- Improve integration of Vision, Mission & Values into BOEC culture.

Values supported: Compassion, Teamwork

Next Steps

The research, analysis, and identification of the six strategic directions reflected in this document were the first steps in the strategic planning process. Effectively implementing these strategic directions will determine the success of the Plan.

In order to ensure the successful implementation of this Plan, BOEC will:

- Develop an overall implementation plan for the Strategic Plan, including key milestones.
- For each survey, assign responsibility for survey revisions, administration, collection, and processing.
- Identify ownership for Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).
- Define a process for tracking, monitoring, and publishing KPIs.
- Display KPIs visibly for employees.
- Define the intention for on-going Plan monitoring, and set review dates.

The implementation of the six strategic directions does not end the planning processes. External forces affecting the Bureau of Emergency Communications will continually change. A date will be established to initiate the development of a new plan before this Plan ends in three years.