



Portland Fire & Rescue

Stakeholder Interviews Summary Report

Introduction

Portland Fire & Rescue (PF&R) protects the lives and property of City of Portland citizens by providing excellence in emergency services, training, and prevention. PF&R will implement a new Strategic Plan for 2010-2015 to highlight its key strategic issues, performance measures, and stakeholder interests to ensure that this excellence continues. The first step toward creating the 2010-2015 Strategic Plan is to conduct stakeholder interviews.

A “stakeholder” can be defined as:

Any individual, group, or institution that has a direct or indirect stake in an organization because it can affect or be affected by the organization’s actions and objectives.¹

Stakeholder interviews provide a wealth of information that serves as the foundation for the strategic plan. PF&R’s stakeholders exist both internally and externally. Both groups are potentially affected by the workings of PF&R and have an interest in whether certain conditions change or remain the same. AKT LLP interviewed the 28 internal and external stakeholders identified below in December 2009 and January 2010. Questions focused on identifying key points related to PF&R’s areas of excellence, issues, emerging trends, financial opportunities and challenges, and partnerships and collaborations. These topics are critical to identifying and understanding the external trends, emerging issues, and internal strengths and challenges facing PF&R in order for it to better serve its employees, its partners within the community, and the public.

Internal Stakeholders

PF&R CORE Leadership Team

John Klum, Chief

Jack Graham, Management Services Division, Senior Business Operations Manager

Mark Schmidt, Emergency Operations Division Chief

John Nohr, Prevention Division Chief

Scott Fisher, Training & Safety Division Chief

Additional Internal Stakeholders

Erin Janssens, Emergency Operations Deputy Chief

Kyle Wochnick, Training & Safety Training Captain

Jim Forquer, Portland Firefighters Association Executive Director

¹ George Luffman et al., *Strategic Management: An Analytical Introduction* (UK: Blackwell Publishing, 1996), 29.

External Stakeholders

City Council

Sam Adams, Mayor of Portland

Amanda Fritz, Commissioner

Betsy Ames, Chief of Staff for **Nick Fish**, Commissioner

Dan Saltzman, Commissioner

Randy Leonard, Commissioner

Lavonne Griffin-Valade, City Auditor, and **Beth Woodward**, Senior Management Auditor

City of Portland Bureaus

Carmen Merlo, Portland Office of Emergency Management Director

David Schaff, Water Bureau Director

Dean Marriott, Bureau of Environmental Services Director

Drew Barden, Office of Management and Finance Urban Economist

Ken Rust, Office of Management and Finance Chief Administrative Officer

Lisa Johnson, Human Relations Director

Lisa Turley, Bureau of Emergency Communications Director

Mark Greinke, Bureau of Technology Services Director

Paul Scarlett, Bureau of Development Services Director

Rosie Sizer, Chief of Police

Sue Keil, Portland Bureau of Transportation Director

Susan Anderson, Planning and Sustainability Director

Yvonne Deckard, Bureau of Human Resources Director

Andrew Scott, Financial Planning Manager, Office of Management and Finance

Additional External Stakeholders

Dr. Jon Jui, Multnomah County Medical Director

Summary of Stakeholder Interviews

Five general themes emerged from the stakeholder interviews. The following is a composite of the stakeholder interviews. The themes are based on the frequency of response and general agreement among internal and external stakeholders. Discussion of each theme reflects the range of stakeholder input gathered.

1. The Future of Response

The mission of PF&R is to aggressively and safely protect life, property, and the environment by providing excellence in emergency services, training, and prevention. PF&R strives to excel at its mission and this is recognized by both the internal staff and external members of the community. Statistically, PF&R's current response times are good, but there is room for improvement. As communities, cities, and regions face challenges, the following factors will affect the nature of how PF&R will be able to achieve excellence in response:

a. Type of response

The City of Portland has a diverse industrial base creating a wide range of requirements on PF&R's response capabilities. The majority of calls (68%-70%) PF&R receives are for emergency medical rather than fire services. PF&R, in most cases, is the first responder when 9-1-1 is dialed. There are staffing concerns with regard to the level of workers needed to maintain excellence in EMS response. Educational opportunities and outreach conveying the appropriate times to call 9-1-1 may reduce the amount of unnecessary 9-1-1 calls and responses, allowing PF&R to use its current EMS workforce effectively. The need for EMS elicits a specific type of response from PF&R and alters the equipment and staff needed to successfully carry out these types of responses.

PF&R will have to consider the age and type of equipment it uses for emergency response, staffing requirements in terms of those equipped to manage and respond to EMS calls, and strategic partnerships with other cities or organizations to better serve a growing, aging, and increasingly diverse and multilingual population.

b. Aging of Resources

PF&R's ability to respond to 9-1-1 callers is directly affected by aging equipment and training facilities. Apparatus maintenance, equipment management, and facilities upkeep are necessary to reduce response times in emergency situations. PF&R will need continuous funding resources to ensure proper upkeep of its equipment.

c. Sustainability

PF&R needs to consider and react to the following issues regarding sustainable practices, all of which will affect response time:

- Narrower streets
- Traffic calming devices (speed bumps, etc.)
- Curb extensions and pavement reductions
- Increased bicycle use
- Urban development and redevelopment
- Federal emission regulations
- Water use and reuse

PF&R works well with the City of Portland Bureau of Environmental Services, Bureau of Transportation, Bureau of Planning and Sustainability, Bureau of Development Services, and the Water Bureau. Continued cooperation and communication between PF&R and these Bureaus will help PF&R understand the concepts behind, influence the decision making of, and react to the potential implementation of new sustainable practices throughout the City of Portland.

d. Regional Partnerships

PF&R has slower response times in Portland's peripheral areas. A concentrated population in these areas, particularly SE Portland, will create a need for better response. PF&R will need to be a leader by developing regional relationships and partnerships with fire and emergency service departments in the surrounding areas. These partnerships not only have the potential to increase responsiveness to calls, but can also create efficiencies between departments that reduce costs and stretch resources. PF&R must balance its ability to be a fully functioning stand alone agency with the importance of creating regional partnerships.

e. Healthcare

The future of national healthcare reform is unclear. 9-1-1 calls are the primary healthcare option for many Oregonians, requiring PF&R to increase training and the number of EMS responders. PF&R will need to consider and be aware of future changes in healthcare, as these changes will alter the volume of 9-1-1 calls and the type of response needed.

2. Information Technology

Technology is central to the core operations of PF&R. It facilitates communication internally between staff, as well as with the City of Portland residents and its regional partners. Communication is currently difficult. Most PF&R employees work a 24/48 shift. Email accounts, laptops and notebooks, and wireless communication are important to maintain the instant connections that help PF&R communicate internally to ultimately reduce and improve its response times and overall interaction with the Portland community.

The Bureau of Technology Services (BTS) is the City of Portland's centralized technology service provider. PF&R works alongside BTS to facilitate its technology needs. PF&R's unique technology needs require full-time oversight and technical expertise of PF&R lieutenants who work with BOEC, specifically on the 9-1-1 floor. Technological malfunction is always a risk and PF&R's unique technology requirements make it difficult for BTS to serve PF&R properly. Both PF&R and BTS agree that better communication and collaboration between the two departments is necessary, especially because two major technology projects are scheduled to take place between 2010-2015:

- Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) System Replacement
- Fire Information Systems (FIS) Rewrite or Replacement

Time, training, organization, and cost are influential factors contributing to the successful implementation of the two projects.

3. Organizational Development

Succession planning is a key issue for PF&R. A written succession plan will help PF&R clearly examine and analyze its organizational structure for the long term. There is little transition out of PF&R other than retirement. Many of PF&R's employees are eligible for retirement in the next five years. There is a shortage of employees with enough experience to take over at the senior level and supervisor workloads are large, making training opportunities difficult. Turnover, lack of experience and expectations and, as a result, training become challenging for PF&R. In light of these challenges, PF&R will also have to consider and address the following issues when recruiting and hiring new staff:

a. A New Generation of Workers

There is a change in the available workforce for hire. The new generation of workers wants to be promoted based on accomplishments rather than longevity. Recent trends also indicate that the new workforce is more likely to change occupations rather than follow one career path. PF&R will have to adapt to this trend to retain the new staff members it hires.

b. Promotional Structure

PF&R promotes its employees based on time in grade, longevity, and demonstrated proficiency. PF&R hires new employees in blocks and opportunities for advancement are cyclical. Some newer and younger workers are reluctant to wait for promotional opportunities and older workers to retire in order to advance. Promotion based on accomplishment rather than time is an alternative promotional structure. Mentoring programs and effective supervisory training programs can help bridge the gap between experience and a reward-based promotional scheme.

c. Diversity

Diversity and inclusion are important issues for PF&R. PF&R's culture is traditional and established. PF&R is committed to diversifying its workforce and is successful in maintaining this commitment. Opportunities to improve and grow in certain areas always exist for organizations, and PF&R is no different. The following points suggest ways to successfully sustain a diverse workforce without compromising its hiring standards:

- Build relationships with grant-funded organizations that provide individuals for apprenticeships and internships
- Increase PF&R presentations at high schools, colleges, community meetings, and events
- Pursue more person-to-person individual outreach opportunities
- Fully use mentoring programs
- Provide more leadership training opportunities that reiterate the importance of team building, sensitivity, communication, and PF&R's mission, vision, and principles, with emphasis on "valuing and promoting professionalism, diversity, integrity, pride, competency, commitment, and tradition."
- Develop effective supervisory training in how to manage employees

4. **Level of Service**

PF&R's mission: "To aggressively and safely protect life, property and the environment by providing excellence in emergency services, training and prevention."

PF&R's vision: "The community we serve is safe from fire, injury and preventable emergencies because of our responsiveness, leadership, quality services and partnerships."

Public outreach and communications are highlighted as two of PF&R's areas of excellence. PF&R has a strong visible and physically healthy presence within the community it serves. Its mission and vision statements indicate that PF&R has the potential to be influential outside of its fire and emergency response services both within the community and region. There are opportunities for PF&R to interpret its public safety duties differently, allowing it to use its core competencies in outreach and communication. For example:

- Influence and be involved in city-wide and community wellness initiatives through healthy-living training and classes, which can be held at PF&R's community conference rooms for a fee to generate internal revenue
- Use of social media outlets, such as Facebook and YouTube, to post public service announcements on a variety of topics not limited to fire and emergency rescue
- Promote the City's larger image to the public

PF&R and the City of Portland can work together to expose issues and initiatives that are important to the City and the community. PF&R can form regional partnerships with other fire and rescue agencies, not only to strengthen regional ties, but also to generate and form strategic partnerships within the City of Portland and other bureaus and organizations.

5. Financial Opportunities and Challenges

PF&R's primary funding source is the City's General Fund. PF&R competes with other public safety bureaus and other city organizations for funding. Other sources of revenue include charges for grants, licenses, permits, and other services. PF&R is heavily impacted by the City's overall fiscal condition. The current economy has caused reductions in the General Fund, and, as the second largest budget, PF&R is affected by the reduction. The City's public safety and other bureaus, as a whole, are likely to feel the effects of budget reductions for the next several years, and strategic budget planning is essential, especially as all City of Portland labor contracts are up for renewal and bureaus feel that they are already spread too thin. Internal and external stakeholders elaborated on the financial opportunities and challenges discussed below:

- PF&R needs to continue to pursue regional partnerships with other fire stations and organizations to create financial and operational efficiencies. For example, there are overlapping response districts for river patrols.
- Cooperation, coordination, and planning can divide and reduce the response requirements for each district involved. PF&R has a strong relationship with the Gresham Fire Department and a growing relationship with Tualatin Valley Fire and Rescue. Internal stakeholders are concerned about PF&R's relationship with Clackamas Fire District #1 and the fact that political barriers can make regional collaborations difficult.

Not all public safety agencies report to the same City of Portland Commissioner. Public safety agencies and other bureaus are spread across four Commissioners and the Mayor. It is difficult to balance the funding priorities for all the bureaus with reduced General Fund revenue. PF&R can increase communication and collaboration between all of Portland's public safety and other bureaus to reduce this disconnect, and encourage partnerships that are efficient and viewed favorably. Examples are detailed below:

- *Portland Police Bureau:* PF&R and the Police Bureau are both public safety bureaus that depend on communication to effectively serve the public. Efficiencies will result from a strong relationship between the two largest public safety bureaus, for example, collaboration on response vehicles sent to call sites and community action groups that combine community policing with community education.
- *Portland Office of Emergency Management (POEM):* POEM receives one of the smallest allocations of the City of Portland's General Fund. PF&R's collaboration and communication with POEM can create financial efficiencies. Homeland security, large-scale disaster preparedness, and disease are emerging threats to public safety both locally and nationally. PF&R needs to consider how to respond to these threats.
- *Bureau of Emergency Communication (BOEC):* BOEC has a full-time customer service person to serve PF&R. This partnership is critical to determine the appropriate resources needed on a per call basis. Agreement is critical on the appropriate amount of resources to determine budget needs and constraints.
- *Portland Bureau of Transportation (PBOT):* PF&R's ability to respond is affected by narrowed streets, curb extensions, and traffic calming devices. PF&R benefits from being a part of PBOT's decision making and review process concerning these issues to ensure it has the appropriate funding to support infrastructure changes.

- *Bureau of Technology Services (BTS)*: PF&R will replace two of its large internal technology resource systems within the next five years. PF&R's technology needs are unique and system implementation and training will be costly. It is imperative for BTS and PF&R to work together to achieve financial efficiency. This applies not only to the new CAD and FIS implementation, but also to wireless communication, email, and other devices.
- *Water Bureau*: Water flow and pressure are essential for PF&R to fight fires. PF&R and the Water Bureau need to maintain strong communication in order to ensure PF&R has the water quantity and water pressure needed.
- *Bureau of Environmental Services (BES)*: PF&R has large trucks and prefers wider streets to maneuver its equipment. PF&R needs to work closely with BES, as narrowed streets and reduced paved areas are important to manage storm water.
- *Bureau of Development Services (BDS)*: BDS regulations impact the safety of buildings and construction. PF&R's involvement in the development and plan review process, particularly street patterns and development layouts, will decrease any future cost of being unaware of these regulations.
- *American Medical Response (AMR)*: AMR contracts with Multnomah County Emergency Medical Services (EMS) to provide ambulance services to City of Portland citizens. Multnomah County EMS is the regulatory agency for all ambulance services, public and private, including AMR. Resources for this service are controlled by Multnomah County EMS, making a strong relationship between PF&R and the County critical in providing excellent emergency medical care.

Summary

Portland Fire and Rescue's internal and external stakeholders were thoughtfully responsive with their answers to interview questions. Their responses provide the foundation needed to move forward in the PF&R strategic planning process. Analysis of the responses highlight five critical issues that will be important to consider in the upcoming phases of the project:

- Maintaining integrity of core operations and aging resources with equal or reduced funding
- Reducing response times to all 9-1-1 calls
- Formalizing succession planning with a focus on increasing workforce diversity
- Pursuing technology and operational equipment upgrades and replacements
- Cultivating stronger partnerships with both other regional fire agencies and City of Portland bureaus

The next steps in the PF&R strategic planning process will be the completion of an Environmental Scan, Focus Group meetings, survey distributions and a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Challenges (SWOC) Analysis. The issues highlighted in the stakeholder interviews will be analyzed in preparation for Strategic Theme development and the Task Force work sessions.