



October 2022

Executive Summary

In 2020, the VRFA implemented a five-year strategic plan based on the priorities expressed by the community. External and internal stakeholders worked with facilitators to share their experiences, opinions, advice, and desires regarding the VRFA and agency's future. This comprehensive process revealed gaps in departmental capabilities and services. From this process, five major strategic initiatives were identified to assist the agency. Below is a summary of the initiatives and progress that occurred between January 2022 and September 2022.



The VRFA's strategic plan and initiatives will guide the agency in identifying future needs for meeting the community's expectations for fire department-based safety services. The strategic plan serves as a road map for how the VRFA will meet the demand for services within available resources.



Introduction

This report provides an update and status of the major initiatives of the 2020 - 2025 Strategic Plan. The report lists every goal, objective, and associated task with the initiative. Each objective has a status report and comment section. In addition, each objective has an assigned staff member/or division that is responsible for that specific focus area. The report will be published semi-annually or as requested by the Fire Chief or Board of Governance.

To monitor the progress of each initiative, we have created four status report levels for each objective. The following color and explanation define the status level:

On-going: Represents an objective that will be continually worked on.

In progress: Represents an objective that is actively being worked on.

Deferred: Represents an objective that is not currently being worked on.

Completed: Represents an objective that has been achieved.

In summary, the following strategic initiatives were identified by external and internal stakeholders as the foundation for the development of goals and objectives:

[Initiative #1 - Accreditation](#)

The VRFA will strive to implement the goals and objectives of the strategic plan over the next five years and become an accredited agency.

[Initiative #2 - Capital Facilities Plan](#)

The VRFA will develop and implement a plan for capital facilities and equipment for future growth and improvement.

[Initiative #3 - Staffing](#)

The VRFA will examine current staffing levels, models, procedures and identify areas for improvement.

[Initiative #4 - Mentorship](#)

The VRFA will ensure the enduring success of the agency and its staff through sustainable internal mentorship.

[Initiative #5 - Communication](#)

The VRFA will examine both internal and external communication processes for service gaps and areas for improvement.



Initiative #1: Accreditation	
Goal 1	Pursue, achieve, and maintain official accreditation status through CPSE to better serve our community through a formal process.
Objective 1A	Form team or committee structures with management components as needed to pursue and maintain accreditation.
Timeframe	3 months Assigned to: Deputy Chief K. Olson
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the needed team/committee structure(s) for the various components of the accreditation process. • Outline management positions to lead and oversee the teams/committees and overall accreditation process. • Establish team/committee member criteria objectives. • Select and assign team/committee members. • Select/assign management positions within the team/committee
Status	Completed September 2018
Comments	The accreditation team was selected, and areas of responsibility were assigned.
Objective 1B	Conduct a community hazards and risk assessment and publish a Community Risk Assessment - Standards of Cover document.
Timeframe	1 year Assigned to: Deputy Chiefs K.Olson & Larberg
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obtain instruction on hazard and risk assessment and standards of cover preparation. • Perform community hazards and risk assessment. • Evaluate historical community emergency response performance and coverage. • Establish benchmark and baseline emergency response performance objectives. • Publish the Community Risk Assessment - Standards of Cover. • Maintain and annually update the Standards of Cover document.
Status	Completed June 2019
Comments	A Community Risk Assessment and Standard of Cover document were completed and published.
Objective 1C	Conduct and document a self-assessment of the department utilizing the CPSE / CFAI Fire and Emergency Services Self-Assessment Manual (FESSAM) criteria.
Timeframe	18 months Assigned to: Deputy Chief Larberg
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obtain instruction on writing a FESSAM. • Assign the self-assessment manual category and criterion writing to the department accreditation committee/team members, as appropriate. • Apply for “Applicant Agency” status with the CFAI. • Publish the FESSAM.
Status	Completed March 2021



Comments	The FESSAM has been completed. An assigned CFAI mentor has reviewed our documents and recommended we applied for Candidate status.	
Objective 1D	Develop a community-driven strategic plan.	
Timeframe	6 months	Assigned to: Deputy Chief Larberg
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold an external stakeholder meeting where community members provide feedback on program priorities, service expectations, concerns, and strengths perceived about the VRFA. • Provide internal stakeholder work sessions to evaluate (and update, if necessary) the mission, vision, and values; determine internal strengths and weaknesses, external opportunities, and threats. • Establish critical issues and service gaps. • Determine specific strategic initiatives. • Develop goals, objectives, critical tasks, and appropriate timelines to include levels of measurability to achieve over five years. • Create a vision for the developed strategic plan. • Publish and distribute the formal strategic plan to stakeholders as determined by the VRFA. 	
Status	Completed	
Comments	The 2020 – 2025 Strategic Plan was approved by the Board of Governance and published in January 2020.	
Objective 1E	Implement the community-driven strategic plan.	
Timeframe	On-going	Assigned to: Deputy Chief Day
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a subcommittee to review the draft strategic plan on a regular basis (as established by the VRFA). • Determine a work plan for the accomplishment of each goal and implement that work plan. • Evaluate completed and uncompleted/on-going goals and objectives within the plan on an annual basis. • Report progress to internal and external stakeholders on an annual basis. 	
Status	In progress	
Comments	A Strategic Plan semi-annual report was completed and published in July 2021. A subcommittee was created to evaluate the strategic plan. Discussion and strategic plan updates are discussed at Senior Staff and Command Staff meetings.	
Objective 1F	Achieve agency accreditation by the CFAI.	
Timeframe	4 – 6 months	Assigned to: Deputy Chief Larberg
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply for “Candidate Agency” status with the CFAI. • Prepare for CFAI Peer Assessor Team visit. • Upload Strategic Plan, Standards of Cover, and Self-Assessment Categories and Criterion for review and comment by the Peer Team. • Host the site visit for accreditation review. • Review Peer Team recommendation to CFAI for VRFA Accredited status. 	



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attend CFAI hearings and defend VRFA internal accreditation process and documents. • Receive vote during the CFAI hearings in favor of accredited status.
Status	Completed
Comments	A site visit took place in October. Peer assessors recommended the VRFA to be accredited. A CFAI Commission Hearing was held on December 15, 2021. The Commission ruled in favor of accredited status for the VRFA. Congratulations!
Objective 1G	Maintain accredited status with the CFAI.
Timeframe	On-going Assigned to: Analytics Manager Noah Chang
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit the required Annual Compliance Reports to CFAI. • Attend CFAI Dayroom Discussion web-meetings for continued education. • Participate in the accreditation process by providing “peer assessors” for external department review and identification of possible best practices. • Participate in the annual CPSE Excellence Conference for continued education and networking with other accreditation teams and accredited agencies. • Submit annual compliance reports as required by CFAI policies. • Establish succession development of the internal accreditation team in preparation for the next accreditation cycle.
Status	On-going
Comments	Accreditation is an on-going process. Accredited agency status is for a five-year term. Annual compliance reports will be submitted every twelve months by Analytics Manager Noah Chang who serves as our accreditation manager.



Initiative #2: Capital Facilities Plan	
Goal 2	Develop a capital facilities improvement plan that supports the mission of the VRFA and the community, based on the Community Risk Assessment – Standards of Cover (CRA-SOC) document.
Objective 2A	Evaluate the VRFA’s current capital facilities and equipment condition to establish a baseline for future improvements.
Timeframe	6 months Assigned to: Chief Swearingen/Deputy Chief Mack
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate the current valuations of the capital facilities and equipment of the VRFA. • Evaluate the current repair and maintenance costs. • Gather and consolidate current documents, data, and information relevant to capital facilities and equipment using content management. • Create a report with recommendations (if applicable) and submit it to agency leadership for further consideration and direction.
Status	Completed
Comments	A new Pierce 107’ aerial ladder truck has been delivered and crews are in the process of completing training. We’re anticipating an in-service date sometime in the Q4 2022. Staff are also reviewing and updating an apparatus replacement plan as well as requirements for other capital purchases such as Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBAs).



Objective 2B	Develop a formal capital facilities/equipment plan using the CRA-SOC, data projections, and established benchmarks to identify future areas of growth and/or improvement.	
Timeframe	12 months	Assigned to: Chief Swearingen/Deputy Chief Mack
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Conduct a gap analysis to analyze the area of current and future improvement needs. ● Conduct a SWOT analysis on VRFA's status relative to the benchmarks and the CRA-SOC ● Consider the short-term to define what capital is and use outside resources to establish future plans and standards. ● Consider the long-term to analyze the size, design, and cost of facilities and fire stations to include but not limited to facility age, capacity, functionality, and hazard risk. ● Research funding options. ● Develop a formal capital facilities/equipment plan with recommendations to the Fire Chief. 	
Status	Completed	
Comments	A Deputy Chief and Fire Chief developed a six-year capital facility (CFP). The 2021 – 2027 CFP was approved by the Board of Governance in March 2021.	
Objective 2C	Perform an evaluation to reflect the VRFA's progress relative to capital facilities and equipment plan.	
Timeframe	6 months	Assigned to: Chief Swearingen/Deputy Chief Mack
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Create an evaluation report with recommendations and submit to the leadership team for further consideration and direction. ● Create, establish, or modify the funding to fit the capital facilities and equipment document. ● Conduct an annual evaluation and monitor for desired outcomes. 	
Status	Completed	
Comments	Staff completed an RFQ for Architectural and Engineering services (A&E) based on the approved six-year CFP and is the process of negotiating an agreement with the prevailing firm. Land was purchased at 30 th and I Street NE for a new fire station. Options for a new Station 38 are being explored in Pacific and staff have had preliminary discussions with the City of Auburn and the GSA sites new ownership group regarding the Station 35.	



Initiative #3: Staffing

Goal 3	Ensure the VRFA has the adequate number of staff to achieve and sustain current and future organizational initiatives.		
Objective 3A	Conduct an operations and suppression staff analysis.		
Timeframe	On-going	Assigned to:	Senior Staff

Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perform a demographic analysis to assess the projected population growth in each service area for the next five years. • Perform a station coverage analysis to assess if the current station locations and quantity meet the needs of all communities and VRFA performance measures. • Perform a deployment/apparatus analysis to determine if the current apparatus location and staffing is adequate. • Identify any staffing gaps from the analyses. • Create a report with recommendations and submit it to agency leadership for further consideration and direction. • Develop and implement any recommendations approved by agency leadership. 		
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Status	On-going		
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Comments	Senior Staff continues to analyze population growth, call volume, performance reports, and service gaps. Execution of the current CFP and associated changes to staffing and deployment are currently underway.		
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Objective 3B	Conduct a workload analysis of administration, support services, and support services.		
Timeframe	6 months	Assigned to:	Senior Staff
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a consistent staffing review process for department heads to review workloads, to assess performance relative to workloads, and to identify gaps or needs. • Task department heads with the staffing review process, to include an annual timeline for completion. • Analyze the data from the annual staff review by department. • Identify, based on the data, any impacts on workload that could be improved. • Create a report with recommendations (if applicable) and submit it to agency leadership for further consideration and direction. • Develop and implement any recommendations approved by agency leadership. 		
Status	On-going		
Comments	<p>Senior Staff and division heads continually review workloads, data, and performance to identify service gaps and the needs of their divisions. Support Services received software (Operative IQ) in Q4 of 2021 to increase equipment, supplies, and consumables efficiencies. A needs assessment was sent to each division head to determine priorities, make organizational improvements, and/or allocate resources. Senior Staff is in the process of assessing management tools and practices that imbed best practices of the accreditation process within the daily processes of the VRFA. These practices would further leverage existing software applications (PowerBI, PowerDMS, ESRI).</p>		
Objective 3C	Develop a cost analysis based on the results of objectives 3A and 3B, to determine potential budgetary impacts and to support budget requests.		
Timeframe	12 months	Assigned to:	Senior Staff
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Based on recommendations from objectives 3A and 3B, determine the cost points for capital and operations. • Determine the projected costs of needs/changes. • Present recommendations and requests to the Board of Governance for approval. • Secure approved funding through the annual budget process. 		
Status	On-going		
Comments	<p>Senior staff and division heads consider various costs associated with potential budget impacts and requests. Staff will be working with our A&E firm to further scope and scale the CFP in anticipation of going to voters in 2023. Staff have recommended two new FTEs in 2022. In addition, several capital expenditures are recommended in the 2023 budget.</p>		



Objective 3D	Ensure that the VRFA is recruiting and hiring the most qualified and diverse candidates that represent the community served.	
Timeframe	12 months	Assigned to: Senior Staff / Human Resources
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyze all historical data relative to recruitment and hiring for administrative and non-administrative positions. • Conduct outreach and marketing relative to recruitment using various media sources. • Create outreach programs to recruit individuals that are representative of the diverse demographics of the community served. • Evaluate current testing practices. • Incorporate innovative ideas with current practices for recruitment (marketing and outreach). • Create a report with recommendations for improved recruitment strategies and processes and submit to the leadership team for further consideration and direction. • Develop and implement any recommendations approved by leadership. • Secure adequate funding to recruit more personnel, so that the VRFA has a more diverse staff. 	
Status	On-going	
Comments	VRFA Human Resources and select staff continue to work with the King County Fire Chiefs Association and Zone 3 agencies to develop county-wide recruiting materials intended to draw in a more diverse candidate pool. VRFA recently completed our first hiring process via “WA Fire Careers”, a consortium of fire agencies within Zone 3 who have consolidated recruiting and testing resources.	
Objective 3E	Utilize current training systems, resources, and practices for the onboarding of new hires (firefighter recruits and other staff).	
Timeframe	6 months	Assigned to: Senior Staff / Human Resources
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a documented process for the onboarding of new hires. • Conduct an orientation for the new hires. • Conduct an outfitting process of equipment and PPE for each new hire. • Conduct station tours for understanding and acclimation of new hires. • Transition new recruits to the SKCFTC for operational training. • Begin the training for recruits and the shadowing process for support services and administration hires. • Assign mentors to each new hire. 	
Status	Completed	
Comments	A new onboarding process was instituted with new hires. The feedback has been positive, and Human Resources continues to evaluate and improve the process.	



Objective 3F	Evaluate the overall VRFA recruitment process and determine if further analysis is needed.	
Timeframe	12 months	Assigned to: Senior Staff / Human Resources
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify efficiencies and deficiencies observed (internally) during the outreach and recruitment activities. • Create a survey for new hires regarding VRFA recruitment processes and resources. • Administer a survey to new hires and review the results. • Create a report with recommendations and submit to the leadership team for further consideration and direction. • Develop and implement any recommendations approved. 	
Status	In progress	
Comments	<p>Senior staff and HR will continue to analyze recruitment, marketing, and outreach activities for new employees. As partners in the joint recruitment effort, “WA Fire Careers,” the VRFA evaluates ways to collaborate and coordinate outreach efforts to maximize recruitment efforts and resources. We will continue to analyze strategies for increasing diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in our workforce.</p>	



Initiative #4: Mentorship

Goal 4 **Develop an agency-wide mentorship and succession program to enhance the personal and professional development of all VRFA members.**

Objective 4A **Conduct an assessment to identify division-specific mentorship and succession needs.**

Timeframe 6 months **Assigned to:** Deputy Chief Day/Division Heads

- Critical Tasks**
- Division Heads meet, including senior staff, to define and set expectations for mentorship and succession.
 - Initiate two-way communication within each division to identify key leadership roles and mentorship needs.
 - Develop a report of mentorship program recommendations and submit to the leadership team for consideration and direction.
 - Division Heads meet to consider leadership findings and reach a consensus on division mentorship, and succession needs to include minimum standards.

Status **On-going**

Comments Personnel continue to pursue higher education degrees and enroll in various leadership programs. Several officers have been enrolled in Seattle Fire Department’s Executive Leadership Academy at UW. Department heads conducted a needs assessment to address minimum/desired standards, credentials, and resources.

Objective 4B **Design and implement division-specific mentorship programs and succession plans.**

Timeframe 6 months **Assigned to:** Senior Staff/Division Heads

- Critical Tasks**
- Division heads identify stakeholders (staff) responsible for developing minimum standards for a mentorship and succession program in their area of responsibility.
 - Division heads, with support from staff, develop the relevant mentorship curriculum and succession planning based on agreed-upon minimum standards.
 - Department heads collaborate with leadership and finance to identify program costs.
 - Division heads submit a mentorship curriculum and succession plans to leadership for approval.

- Implement approved programs and monitor outcomes.

Status **On-going**

Comments After completing and evaluating the needs assessment, division heads will design and recommend specific mentorship and succession plans for their division to Senior Staff. Staff are in the process of developing a tool/dashboard that will provide employees with a pathway for various promotional opportunities.



Objective 4C	Develop an evaluation and improvement process for mentorship programs and succession plans.	
Timeframe	On-going	Assigned to: Senior Staff
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design an evaluation process to determine the effectiveness of the programs and identify opportunities for improvement. • Gather feedback from division heads and staff about their experiences. • Create a report with recommendations and submit it to leadership for further consideration and direction. • Implement approved changes and continue to monitor the effectiveness of the program. 	
Status	On-going	
Comments	The department will continue to evaluate and improve mentorship and succession planning. A committee will develop a career pathway for various divisions, specialties, and leadership positions based on the needs assessment.	
Initiative #5: Communication (internal and external)		
Goal 5A	Enhance the quality of service delivery through diversified communication to citizens and establish a consistent and transparent message to employees.	
Objective 5A.1	Identify all ways that the VRFA communicates internally.	
Timeframe	6 months	Assigned to: Deputy Chief Day
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet with stakeholders to identify the ways communication is currently being conducted internally at the VRFA. • Create a report of findings and submit it to leadership for further consideration and direction. 	
Status	In progress	
Comments	This is an on-going effort to identify different methods of internal communications. A survey was recently distributed to all personnel to capture the best practices for internal communication.	
Objective 5A.2	Conduct a needs assessment to determine areas of improvement in internal communication.	
Timeframe	6 months	Assigned to: Deputy Chief Day
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review findings from the report generated in objective 5A.1. • Design a survey to capture areas for improvement regarding internal communications. • Administer the survey to all VRFA internal stakeholders, with a timeline for completion/submission. • Collect and evaluate the survey results. • Create a report with survey findings and recommendations (if applicable) and submit it to leadership for further consideration and direction. 	



Status	In progress
Comments	A survey has been distributed to all personnel. An assessment is being conducted based on the results of the survey and Senior Staff is discussing how to implement new approaches based on the survey's findings.
Objective 5A.3	Develop strategies to address internal communication gaps and opportunities.
Timeframe	12 months Assigned to: Senior Staff
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a committee of staff representing all departments within the VRFA. • Research and discuss solutions to internal communication needs. • Create a report with recommendations (if applicable) and submit it to leadership for further consideration and direction. • As approved, implement changes or inputs to improve internal communications.
Status	In progress
Comments	Information kiosks have been installed at each station and crews are providing feedback on content.
Goal 5B	Enhance the quality of the VRFA's service delivery and in turn, the safety of the public through diversified external communications.
Objective 5B.1	Analyze the current external communication information and channels utilized and determine their effectiveness.
Timeframe	6 months Assigned to: Public Information & Education Staff
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review information shared externally, and channels currently used to share information. • Collect current/projected demographics and related information needs for external stakeholders. • Identify gaps and opportunities relative to external communication info and channels. • Prioritize opportunities identified and create a report with recommendations (if applicable) and submit it to leadership for further consideration and direction. • Eliminate any inefficient processes in external communication.
Status	Completed
Comments	External surveys were distributed via social media to solicit feedback regarding external communication. After reviewing the data, communication gaps were found in our Spanish-speaking community, older adults, and the business community. Demographic information was collected in all three cities. The data will be useful in strategies to improve services to the whole community, and revisions to our current approaches are being evaluated.



Objective 5B.2		Enhance the information shared externally as well as the channels used to share information externally.	
Timeframe	12 months	Assigned to:	Public Information & Education Staff
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As approved (outcome of objective 5B.1), develop any new or updated external information content. • Initiate or create VRFA accounts with new channels for external communications, as identified. • Distribute the information content developed via existing and new channels. 		
Status	Completed		
Comments	Based on survey feedback, several strategies have been implemented on social media. The survey suggests more business-related information, firefighter content, QR codes linking to the website, and video content. PIE specialists will be encouraged to post-incident information on social media.		
Objective 5B.3		Identify, develop and implement (external stakeholder) feedback mechanisms for the VRFA.	
Timeframe	6 months	Assigned to:	Public Information & Education Staff
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify feedback mechanisms currently used by the VRFA. • Evaluate the current mechanisms for applicability and effectiveness. • Research any unused / additional feedback mechanisms / tools. • Create the mechanisms to allow for feedback from the community. • Outline feedback content focus areas (i.e., feedback regarding service delivery, reputation, quality of information shared, credibility of staff). • Create a report with recommendations (if applicable) and submit it to leadership for further consideration and direction. • Implement the new mechanisms and collect data. • Evaluate and revise annually or as determined. 		
Status	Completed		
Comments	Based on survey feedback, a social media management tool (Sendible) was added for more efficient posting. Sendible has been a valuable tool for social media postings. Information on the VRFA website was reconfigured to allow translation into ten+ languages to reach non-English speaking populations.		
Objective 5B.4		Develop and implement a process for evaluating external communication systems and processes while planning for improvement.	
Timeframe	On-going	Assigned to:	Public Information & Education Staff
Critical Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Representatives from the PIEO and EM meet to establish a process for annual review of external communication processes and systems. • Create a documented process (plan) for annual review of external communication processes and systems. • Submit plan to leadership for further consideration and direction. 		



Valley Regional Fire Authority
2020 – 2025 Strategic Plan Semi-Annual Report

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- Implement the approved plan and strategies on an annual basis.
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Status

In progress

Comments

Statistics are analyzed based on quarterly reports from social media and the VRFA website. Based on these results, staff will develop and implement strategies.