



2022-2025

# Buffalo Grove Fire Department Strategic Plan



October 25, 2024

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## Listing of Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Explanation
ALT	Acting Lieutenant
ASC	Acting Shift Commander
CPSE	Center for Public Safety Excellence
LT	Lieutenant
SAM	Self-Assessment Manual
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats

# About Us

The Buffalo Grove Fire Department is a full-service public safety agency with the responsibility of responding to and mitigating incidents involving fires, medical emergencies, hazardous materials, technical rescues, and for providing public fire safety education and fire safety inspection services. The Department operates out of three fire stations from which it equips and deploys one engine company, two truck companies and three Advanced Life Support (ALS) ambulances. All fire suppression companies are ALS equipped and staffed with a minimum of three personnel. The Department's 54 shift personnel respond to roughly 4,900 calls each year and provide service to nearly 42,000 residents and over 800 businesses located in the Village of Buffalo Grove. In addition, the Buffalo Grove Fire Department is a member of the Mutual Aid Box Alarm System (MABAS), which is a regional and multi-state agreement that ensures access to a wide variety of resources from other fire departments.

## OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES



### MISSION

Provide professional services with Commitment, Loyalty, Integrity, and Pride.



### VISION

The Buffalo Grove Fire Department will aspire to be the premier emergency services provider, delivering exceptional service and value to our community.



### VALUES

The Buffalo Grove Fire Department will endlessly strive to achieve our mission based on these values: Service, Adaptability, Fairness, Empowerment, and Respect.

# Executive Summary

From July through September 2021, the Buffalo Grove Fire Department worked to complete a thorough community driven strategic planning process that sought to identify a clear vision for the Department and the necessary goals and initiatives needed to make that vision into a reality. Facilitator Dr. Lewis Bender led a planning team made up of command staff and union leadership including both lieutenants and firefighters.

In advance of the initial planning team discussions, the Department solicited employee and community feedback through the distribution of two electronic surveys. The data collected from these surveys, combined with the extensive background information contained within the Department's Risk Assessment and Standards of Cover document, acted as a broad environmental scan of the Department's operating environment. To supplement this information, the planning team met on August 19, 2021 to conduct an initial strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) analysis and on August 31, 2021 the facilitator led employee, resident, and business leader focus group discussions.

Based upon the results of the environmental scan, the planning team identified four primary goal areas needed to enact the collective vision for the future:

- Staff and Organizational Development
- Organizational Efficiency and Team Development
- Infrastructure Improvements
- Communication/Technology Enhancement

Within each goal area, key objectives and yearly initiatives were created to enable effective implementation of the plan. These strategic action items have been summarized on the following page.

## Planning Team Members

Mike Baker, Fire Chief

Bill Wagner, Deputy Fire Chief

Mike Spiro, Battalion Chief

Brian Beck, Battalion Chief

Ron Two Bulls, Battalion Chief

Shawn Collins, Battalion Chief

Tina Hayes, EMS Coordinator

Tyler Grace, Fire Analyst

Al Caballero, Lieutenant/Union President

Frank Doll, Firefighter Paramedic/Union VP

Phil Schroeder, Firefighter Paramedic

Tyler Petersen, Firefighter Paramedic

# Strategic Planning Action Chart

	Key Objectives	2022 Initiatives	Initiative Champion
<b>Strategic Goal</b> <b>Area #1</b> <b>Staff and Organizational Development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Design and Implement Succession Planning Program</li> <li>- Develop a Leadership Development Program</li> <li>- Develop a Comprehensive Recruitment Program</li> </ul>	Review ALT Program	BC Collins
		Research and Develop Structure for LT Orientation Program	BC Collins
		Create recruitment plan and materials for 2023 Testing Cycle	Chief Baker
		Create ASC Program	BC Collins
<b>Strategic Goal</b> <b>Area #2</b> <b>Organizational Efficiency and Team Development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Establish consistency across shifts/uniformity of information</li> <li>- Improve communication content</li> <li>- Empower Lieutenants</li> </ul>	Identify communication best practices	DC Kane
		Identify and create a plan to address scope/expectation gaps	DC Kane
		Create Generational Differences Training Program	DC Kane
<b>Strategic Goal</b> <b>Area #3</b> <b>Infrastructure Improvements</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Remodel/Replacement Station 25</li> <li>- Space Needs Analysis for Station 26</li> <li>- Effective vehicle maintenance and repair program</li> <li>- Accredited status</li> </ul>	Decision on remodel vs replacement for Station 25	Chief Baker
		Completion of SAM	Tyler Grace
		Completion of CSPE Site Visit	Tyler Grace
		Review Cost/Effectiveness of Fire Fleet Maintenance Contract	Tyler Grace
		Clarification of Vehicle Maintenance Responsibilities with Public Works	Chief Baker
		Creation of Department Vehicle Repair Team	BC Beck
<b>Strategic Goal</b> <b>Area #4</b> <b>Communication and Technology</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Enhance use of in station technology</li> <li>- Improve use of vehicle technology</li> <li>- Improve internal communication methods</li> <li>- Create an effective Community Outreach Program</li> </ul>	Implementation of Infinite Command	Tyler Grace
		Identify PrePlan Needs	DC Kane
		Data/File Cleanup in preparation for cloud.	Tyler Grace
		Implementation of data validation and internal data portal	Tyler Grace

# Strategic Planning Action Chart

	Key Objectives	2023 Initiatives	Initiative Champion
<b>Strategic Goal</b> <b>Area #1</b> <b>Staff and Organizational Development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Design and Implement Succession Planning Program</li> <li>- Develop a Leadership Development Program</li> <li>- Develop a Comprehensive Recruitment Program</li> </ul>	Update ALT Program	BC Collins
		Conduct 2023 Testing with updated materials	Chief Baker
		Formalize and implement ASC Program	BC Collins
<b>Strategic Goal</b> <b>Area #2</b> <b>Organizational Efficiency and Team Development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Establish consistency across shifts/uniformity of information</li> <li>- Improve communication content</li> <li>- Empower Lieutenants</li> </ul>	Identify LT leadership trainings	BC Collins
		Publish Updated Communications SOP	DC Kane
		Review effectiveness of ALT Roundtables	DC Kane
<b>Strategic Goal</b> <b>Area #3</b> <b>Infrastructure Improvements</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Remodel/Replacement Station 25</li> <li>- Space Needs Analysis for Station 26</li> <li>- Effective vehicle maintenance and repair program</li> <li>- Accredited status</li> </ul>	Survey officers on All Officer Meetings structure/content	DC Kane
		Completion of Phase 1 planning for Station 25	Chief Baker
		Research and identify appropriate internal repairs	BC Beck
		Create recommendations for changes to 2024 FSI Contract	Chief Baker
		CFAI Hearing	Tyler Grace
<b>Strategic Goal</b> <b>Area #4</b> <b>Communication and Technology</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Enhance use of in station technology</li> <li>- Improve use of vehicle technology</li> <li>- Improve internal communication methods</li> <li>- Create an effective Community Outreach Program</li> </ul>	Select Station 26 Consultant	Chief Baker
		Development of PrePlan Program Structure	Tyler Grace
		Expand use of Station Dashboards	Tyler Grace
		Draft Radio Replacement RFP	BC Russell
		Conduct trial of station Surfaces	DC Kane
		Assess AVL time impacts	Tyler Grace



# Strategic Planning Action Chart

	Key Objectives	2024 Initiatives	Initiative Champion
<b>Strategic Goal</b> <b>Area #1</b> <b>Staff and Organizational Development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Design and Implement Succession Planning Program</li> <li>- Develop a Leadership Development Program</li> <li>- Develop a Comprehensive Recruitment Program</li> </ul>	<p>Assess workforce and create formal Succession Plan</p> <p>Evaluate 2023 recruitment cycle</p> <p>Consolidate and publish components of leadership development program</p>	<p>Chief Kane</p> <p>DC Collins</p> <p>DC Collins</p>
<b>Strategic Goal</b> <b>Area #2</b> <b>Organizational Efficiency and Team Development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Establish consistency across shifts/uniformity of information</li> <li>- Improve communication content</li> <li>- Empower Lieutenants</li> </ul>	<p>Conduct employee survey to evaluate goal area initiative success</p> <p>Survey and Revise ALT Roundtables/All Officers content</p> <p>Identify needed leadership trainings and update SOPs</p>	<p>Caitlin Wagener</p> <p>DC Collins</p> <p>BC Pasquarella</p>
<b>Strategic Goal</b> <b>Area #3</b> <b>Infrastructure Improvements</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Remodel/Replacement Station 25</li> <li>- Space Needs Analysis for Station 26</li> <li>- Effective vehicle maintenance and repair program</li> <li>- Accredited status</li> </ul>	<p>Completion of Station 25 architectural design</p> <p>Complete Phase 1 planning for Station 26</p> <p>Implement internal repair program and update SOPs</p>	<p>Chief Kane</p> <p>Chief Kane &amp; DC Collins</p> <p>DC Collins</p>
<b>Strategic Goal</b> <b>Area #4</b> <b>Communication and Technology</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Enhance use of in station technology</li> <li>- Improve use of vehicle technology</li> <li>- Improve internal communication methods</li> <li>- Create an effective Community Outreach Program</li> </ul>	<p>Implement Stage 1 of Preplan Program</p> <p>Implement CRR Program</p> <p>Launch of Public Access Defibrillation Program</p> <p>Evaluation of Radio Replacement proposals + Select Vendor</p> <p>Deploy Station Surfaces and evaluate results</p>	<p>Caitlin Wagener</p> <p>Caitlin Wagener</p> <p>BC Pasquarella &amp; Peter Gripper</p> <p>BC Russell</p> <p>DC Collins</p>

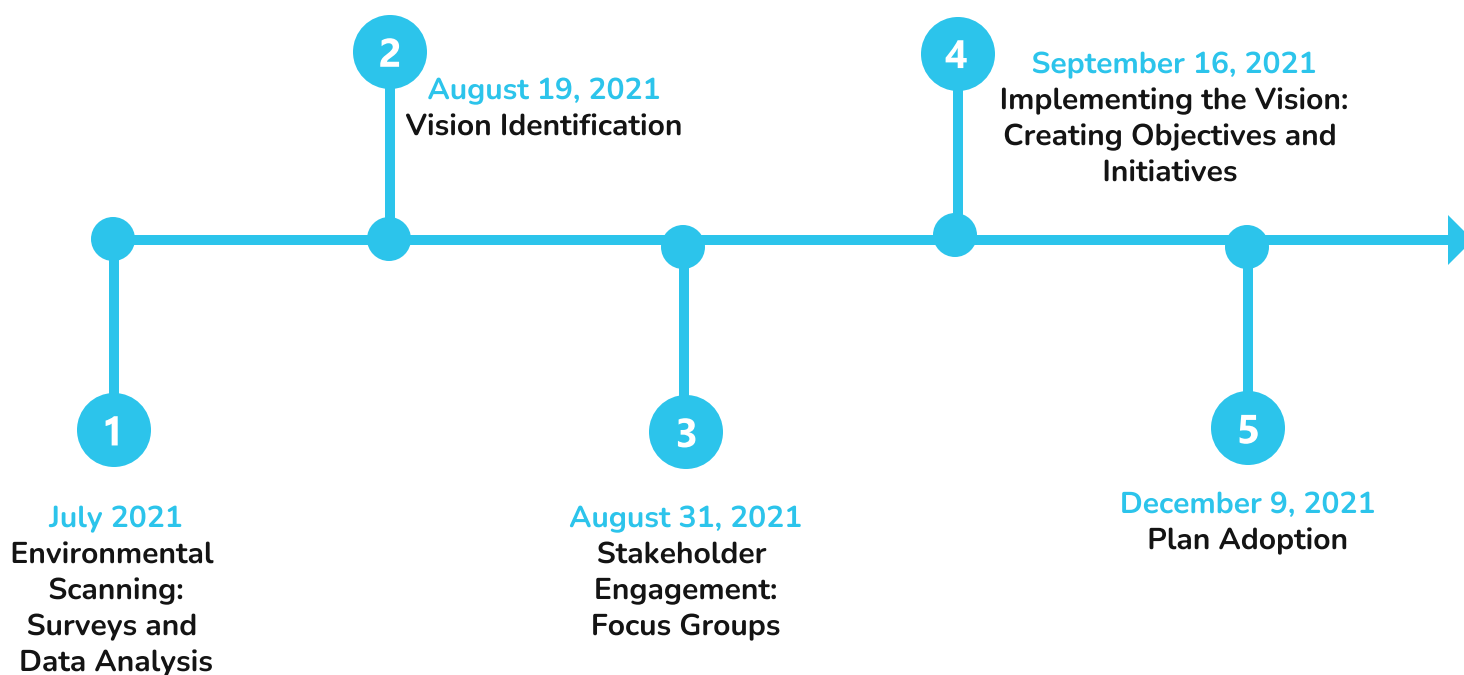
# Strategic Planning Action Chart

	Key Objectives	2025 Initiatives	Initiative Champion
<b>Strategic Goal</b> <b>Area #1</b> <b>Staff and</b> <b>Organizational</b> <b>Development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Design and Implement Succession Planning Program</li> <li>- Develop a Leadership Development Program</li> <li>- Develop a Comprehensive Recruitment Program</li> </ul>	<p>Implementation of Succession Plan</p> <p>Update marketing/outreach approach following 2024 review</p>	<p>Chief Kane</p> <p>DC Collins</p>
<b>Strategic Goal</b> <b>Area #2</b> <b>Organizational</b> <b>Efficiency and</b> <b>Team</b> <b>Development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Establish consistency across shifts/uniformity of information</li> <li>- Improve communication content</li> <li>- Empower Lieutenants</li> </ul>	<p>Assess additional trainings and/or communication approaches pending outcome of survey</p>	<p>DC Collins</p>
<b>Strategic Goal</b> <b>Area #3</b> <b>Infrastructure</b> <b>Improvements</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Remodel/Replacement Station 25</li> <li>- Space Needs Analysis for Station 26</li> <li>- Effective vehicle maintenance and repair program</li> <li>- Accredited status</li> </ul>	<p>Open Station 25</p> <p>Begin Station 26 construction</p> <p>Ongoing review of Self-Assessment Performance Indicators</p>	<p>Chief Kane</p> <p>Chief Kane &amp; DC Collins</p> <p>DC Collins</p>
<b>Strategic Goal</b> <b>Area #4</b> <b>Communication</b> <b>and Technology</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Enhance use of in station technology</li> <li>- Improve use of vehicle technology</li> <li>- Improve internal communication methods</li> <li>- Create an effective Community Outreach Program</li> </ul>	<p>Assess Station 26 Audio/Visual needs</p> <p>Distribute and train on new portable radios</p> <p>Implement Stage 2 of preplanning program</p> <p>Continued implementation of CRR Program</p>	<p>DC Collins</p> <p>BC Russell</p> <p>BC Russell</p> <p>Caitlin Wagener</p>



# Planning Process Overview

The Planning Team underwent an extensive process to identify both the current state of the Department and the Department's ideal future. The process, outlined below, was strongly based in both community and employee engagement and remained focused on creating an actionable end result. The process itself was designed to gain a clear picture of the Department's current position, the needs of the community it serves, and to identify the necessary path into the future.



## About the Facilitator

Dr. Lewis Bender, PH.D. retired as a professor from Southern Illinois University Edwardsville. His primary research focus has been on organizational teams and the myriad factors and variables that impact team processes and effectiveness. He is a specialist in helping teams and organizations to become more effective and efficient. Throughout his career, Professor Bender has been deeply involved in community-based applied research, organizational goal setting and planning, and approaches to organizational development.

# Employee Engagement

## Electronic Survey

In early June 2021, a survey was released to all fire department employees soliciting feedback on Department service levels, administration, staffing and operations, and equipment and facilities. In total, 47 responses were received, representing 76% of the Department. Results were largely positive with respondents indicating that the Department's staff work well together to provide high quality services to a community that values it, that personnel have clear job expectations, and that the Department has the equipment needed to maintain service levels.

The most critical responses within the survey related to the maintenance and condition of the equipment and fire stations. Nearly 60% of respondents indicated that they disagreed that the existing fire stations provide suitable living and working conditions, while 34% of respondents indicated that the fire equipment was not properly maintained. However, it should be noted that the open-ended comments suggested that the low ratings given to fire equipment maintenance may be reflective of past performance rather than the new fire fleet maintenance contract.

## Staff Work Group

In late August, firefighters and lieutenants from all three of the Department's shifts met to conduct a SWOT analysis and worked to develop a vision for the future of the Department. In an effort to promote open discussion, the conversation was held without the presence of command staff and was facilitated by Dr. Bender. This exercise worked to supplement the broad electronic survey and to create the opportunity for free flowing, unrestricted conversation and brainstorming. The end result accurately captured the state of the Department from the perspective of the Department's personnel and helped to set the stage for the Planning Team to finalize the Strategic Plan's goal areas, objectives, and yearly initiatives.

### Key Findings

Strong trust in the capabilities of Department's firefighters/lieutenants

Improvement needed for internal communications across shifts

Plan for Station 25 needed due to the condition of facility

# Community Outreach

## Key Findings

High level of satisfaction with quality of service, professionalism and expertise of staff, and speed of response

Village funding priorities are in line with resident values

Focus needed on community engagement and education

## Electronic Survey

In July 2021, the Department released an electronic survey to the community to gather information on the perceptions and values of the community. The gathered responses were extremely positive, and broadly reinforced the Village's current funding priorities. The survey results also showed a clear desire for additional community engagement and education efforts both in traditional ways such as through school outreach or smoke detector programs, as well as through new techniques such as an expanded social media presence.

## Focus Groups

After the survey concluded, the Department held a community focus group in late August 2021. Community members from various demographic groups and backgrounds participated in a virtual conversation led by Dr. Bender. The community focus group was complemented by a business focus group with representatives from various sectors of Buffalo Grove's business community. The results of these discussions added needed depth to the survey and largely confirmed the survey's findings. The participants emphasized the high quality of service they have received and indicated a desire for further engagement and education opportunities.



# Environmental Scan

After considering the results of the Department's community outreach and employee engagement efforts, the Planning Team finalized its SWOT analysis. The analysis, summarized below, helped to provide the foundation for the formation of the Strategic Plan's goal areas and guiding objectives.

## STRENGTHS

- Professionalism and Expertise of Personnel
- Training and Education
- Vehicles and Equipment
- Mutual Trust between Department, Village, and Community
- Dedication of Personnel
- Department Culture

## WEAKNESSES

- Lack of racial/gender diversity within employees
- Limited exposure to low frequency/high risk incidents
- Lack of experience
- Vehicle maintenance
- Internal communication

## OPPORTUNITIES

- Expanded Involvement in Community
- Public education
- Expanded use of technology/social media
- Training

## THREATS

- Budget cuts
- Political shifts within community
- Unfunded mandates
- Potential changes to population/increased call volume
- Recruitment
- Social Media
- Economy
- Public health/pandemics

# Implementing the Vision

## Goals and Objectives

After conducting a full environmental assessment, including input from both internal and external stakeholders, the Planning Team identified four primary strategic goal areas to achieve the Department's vision for the future. Each goal area consists of several objectives that will be achieved prior to the Strategic Plan's conclusion in 2025. While these objectives are often intangible, they act as the target for the Department as it moves into the future and as Department leadership determines priorities on an annual basis.



## Annual Initiatives

In recognition of the dynamic environment in which fire agencies operate, the 2022-2025 Strategic Plan seeks to ensure that it remains as adaptable as possible. While the overarching goals and objectives remain the same, annual initiatives provide the necessary milestones that ensure that progress is being made. Initiative Champions have been identified and act as the leaders for their associated initiatives. Depending on the initiative, a team of both shift and administrative personnel may be used to accomplish the tasks. Due to changing circumstances, it is important to note that not all objectives will have an associated initiative each year.





# 2022-2025 Goals and Objectives

**Goal Area 1:** The Department will recruit, develop, and maintain a high quality staff to meet the needs of the community.

**1. Design and implement a succession planning program that identifies leadership positions in transition and identifies suitable candidates or training needs.**

To ensure continuity of operations in all Department programs while the Department continues to experience a significant number of retirements, the Department will create a formal succession plan. The plan will focus on all facets of the Department including special teams leadership, vehicle maintenance, and upcoming promotional opportunities.

**2. Develop a formal leadership program consisting of revised training programs for acting lieutenants and acting shift commanders and a lieutenant orientation program for newly promoted officers.**

With 73% of the Department's officer corps having less than five years of experience within their current position, a strong leadership development program is necessary to ensure the Department's command personnel have the necessary skills to guide the Department forward. The Department's acting officer programs play a key role in training current and future officers and create additional leadership capacity within the ranks.

**3. Implement a comprehensive recruitment program for the 2025 firefighter paramedic testing cycle that focuses on recruiting a high quality and diverse applicant pool.**

Like many fire agencies both nationally and in northeastern Illinois, the Department has experienced a reduction in the number of interested applicants. To ensure the Department can address its anticipated hiring needs, the Department must modernize its recruitment materials and develop a thorough outreach program to encourage a deep, highly qualified, and diverse applicant pool. The Department will assess the effectiveness of its 2023 firefighter paramedic testing cycle and fully revise its recruitment program in advance of the 2025 testing cycle.



# 2022-2025 Goals and Objectives

**Goal Area 2:** The Department will develop an inter-shift team-based approach to communication and employee empowerment to promote organizational efficiency.

**1. Identify appropriate communication channels for all types of Department communications.**

The complex nature of the Department's work schedules can frequently create communication gaps and differing approaches to the distribution of information. While technology has provided the Department with numerous avenues of disseminating information, different personnel utilize differing communication tools. To ensure all personnel have access to and understand where to seek up to date information, the Department will revise its communication standard operating procedure to identify relevant best practices.

**2. Increase transparency and consolidate Department communications to ensure clarity of communications and transparency.**

A common symptom of twenty-four hour shift work combined with geographically distanced fire stations is the creation of information silos. To ensure all members of all shifts receive necessary information and similar messaging, the Department will seek to consolidate the distribution of certain Department wide communications such as meeting minutes, utilize acting officer roundtables and all officer meetings to encourage inter-shift communications, and increase access to information through a strategic planning dashboard.

**3. Empower line officers through increased access to leadership trainings to encourage effective decision making, initiative, and time management.**

Due to the significant number of recent officer promotions, there is a need to more clearly identify role expectations, a line officer's scope of managerial discretion, and to provide the officer corps with additional training opportunities. To address this need, the Department will identify human resources leadership trainings designed to provide officers with effective decision making, initiative, and time management skills. Subsequently, the Department's standard operating procedures relating to training will be updated to reflect the prioritized trainings. The trainings, combined with the leadership development program outlined in goal area 1, will provide current and future officers with the skills necessary to succeed in their roles.

# 2022-2025 Goals and Objectives

## **Goal Area 3: The Department will have the state of the art infrastructure needed to support the Department's mission.**

### **1. Identify and implement a remodel or replacement strategy for Station 25.**

Station 25, constructed in 1975, is nearing the end of its useful life. To ensure adequate service levels within District 25, the Department must identify a financially and operationally viable path for the future of Station 25 and begin new construction or the remodel of the station. The design process for the selected strategy will incorporate significant levels of internal employee input and will focus on maximizing value for both the Department and the Village's residents.

### **2. Conduct a Space Needs Analysis for Station 26.**

Like Station 25, Station 26 is an aging station in need of improvement. While a space needs analysis was recently conducted in 2017, an updated analysis is needed to define renovation options, timelines, and financial impacts. The Department will work with the Office of the Village Manager to conduct the analysis of existing conditions, available options for renovation, and any other associated planning needed to ensure the station's remodel in approximately 2025.

### **3. Create an effective vehicle maintenance and repair program utilizing a combination of line personnel, contracted services, and the Public Works Fleet Maintenance Division.**

In 2020, the Department's fleet maintenance and repair services began to be provided by a third party vendor. The model represented a significant change from previous practice. To ensure an effective and efficient repair program, the Department must assess the impacts of the change to a contracted service, identify internal areas of potential growth, and further define its relationship and workflow with the Public Works Fleet Maintenance Division. The Department will update all relevant standard operating procedures, create and train an internal department repair team, modify the existing contract to reflect any needed improvements, and create a service level agreement with the Public Works Department.

### **4. Become an internationally accredited fire department.**

The Department views international accreditation through the Commission on Fire Accreditation International as a key part of its efforts to achieve its strategic vision. While not physical infrastructure, the continuous improvement model, as outlined by CFAI, acts as the key structure for the Department to drive incremental progress within the organization. The Department will seek to achieve accredited status in 2023.

# 2022-2025 Goals and Objectives

**Goal Area 4:** The Department will utilize cutting edge technology and data driven approaches to ensure effective public communications, emergency response, and station operations.

**1. Maximize the use of technology within the stations to promote better communications and greater efficiencies.**

To promote better communications, as well as more efficient and effective station and emergency operations, the Department will seek to identify and implement new software and equipment within its fire stations. When possible, existing software or equipment will be maximized to limit financial impact, while still creating measurable progress. The Department will implement station dashboards to streamline access to essential information and identify and test solutions to remove any barriers to electronic access. Finally, the Department will fully implement and train its personnel on Office 365.

**2. Leverage existing and potential technologies within its emergency response vehicles to create safer and more effective operations.**

The Department's emergency response vehicles are equipped with high-quality technology designed to promote safe, efficient, and effective emergency response. To further its vision, the Department must ensure that all of the currently existing equipment is utilized to its maximum capabilities, adequate replacement plans are in place, and that new trends are monitored to ensure that the Department's emergency response personnel continue to have all necessary tools. To that end, the Department will seek to utilize its existing mobile data terminals to provide first in companies with essential pre-incident information, secure the replacement of all portable radio units, and implement the use of automatic time stamps through the computer aided dispatch system's use of automatic vehicle location.

**3. Create an effective data-based community outreach program.**

The COVID-19 pandemic dramatically changed the Department's existing public education program. As the Department looks to the future and seeks to redefine the structure of its public education strategy, the Department must rely upon its Community Risk Assessment (CRA) to create specifically targeted, outcome driven programming. The Department will seek to create a formal Community Risk Reduction program that utilizes the CRA's identified risks and trends.

# Next Steps

## The Buffalo Grove Fire Department views strategic planning as a continuous process.

In order to remain relevant, accurate, and actionable, the current status of the strategic plan and the needs of both the organization and the community need to be consistently assessed. While the overarching goal areas and strategic objectives remain in place, the plan is annually refreshed with new initiatives and action items. The annual strategic planning process will take place as outlined in the chart below. At the close of each year, after the planning process has concluded, the strategic plan's various action charts will be updated to reflect the upcoming initiatives.

