

2026  
**Strategic Plan**



**Appendices**

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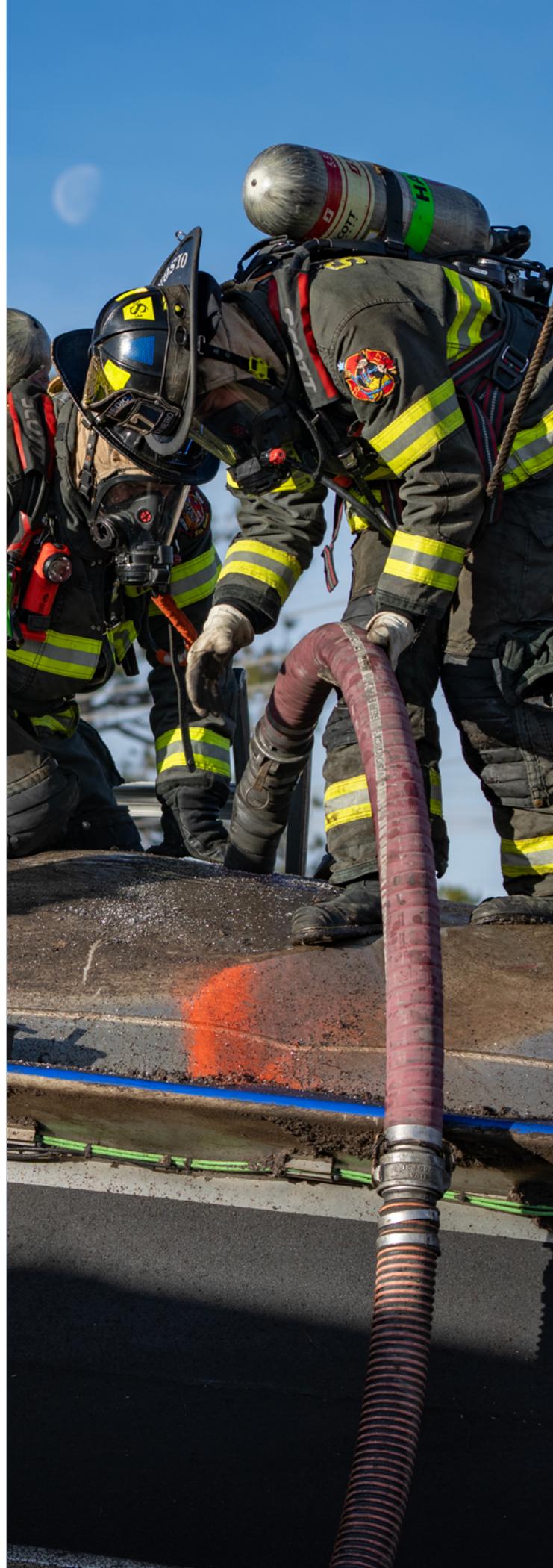
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# Appendix 1: Strategic Plan Process

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## Overview

In 2025, South Metro Fire Rescue (SMFR) embarked on updating its strategic plan to help guide the organization's direction, priorities, and investments over the coming years. The process drew on the perspectives of SMFR's employees, leadership, Board of Directors, and external partners and stakeholders. This input was the foundation for the creation of the entire strategic framework. An iterative review process ensured that the final strategic plan resonated with every level of the organization.

## Stakeholder Input

Understanding the perspectives of key stakeholders provides important context for the strategic planning process. Receiving input is essential to ensure the strategic framework is aligned with the organization's day-to-day reality and how internal and external stakeholders perceive South Metro.

As part of the strategic planning process, SMFR conducted a robust engagement process from October-December of 2025 to learn more about what a wide range of stakeholders view as critical for the organization. The engagement process included:

- + A meeting held on October 30 with the Service Group, a group of SMFR leaders who provide various services to the community and frequently interact with related partners
- + 18 1:1 interviews held with external stakeholders
- + Group interviews with members of the Steering Committee, the Strategic Planning Committee, and the Board of Directors, held on December 1
- + An employee survey sent to all South Metro personnel
- + A partner survey shared with all of South Metro's traditional external partners, including municipalities and counties in its service area
- + A review of background data shared by South Metro as well as researched by Raftelis

## From Input to Framework

Findings from the engagement process were synthesized in the Sense of Engagement Report (Attachment 3), which was shared with the Steering Committee and Strategic Planning Committee. Using these findings as a foundation, the team drafted an initial strategic framework, as well as an organizational mission and values statement. All employees were able to review the draft framework and provide comments in late December 2025.

During a strategic planning retreat in January 2026, SMFR's Board of Directors and Executive Team refined the draft strategic framework and created strategic goals and outcomes. Following the retreat, the first draft of the full strategic plan was created. During a series of meetings in February 2026, the Steering Committee, Stakeholder Committee, and all SMFR employees provided feedback on the draft. This feedback was incorporated into the final strategic plan in late February-early March 2026.

# Appendix 2: Glossary

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## Strategic Plan

A strategic plan is a working, living document that reflects the policy direction from the elected body, sets the Vision for the organization, and drives and informs an Implementation Plan which the staff will create to ensure progress and measurable results. The strategic plan should be on a review cycle: annually by the leadership team, quarterly by the implementation team, and as often as needed by finance to update the budget.

## Vision Statement

A vision statement clearly describes the long-term goals, dreams, and aspirations for the organization and community. It is a clear, ambitious statement that inspires passion and long-term change to achieve strategic goals. The Vision sets the bar high in terms of how the organization wants to be perceived by the world in the future and is a self-fulfilling prophecy. When everyone shares the vision, employees will adopt the behaviors required to make the vision a reality. The vision leads your organization - it guides your Strategic Goals, Outcomes, Adaptive Strategies and Work Plans.

Vision Statements are:

- + Clear and simple
- + Inspiring and uplifting
- + Broad
- + Built to last

They:

- + Avoid elaborate language and buzz words
- + Are easily explained by any staff or elected official
- + Motivate people to engage and support your work
- + Give hope for the future

**HELPFUL HINT:** A vision statement is a “perfect future” if everything worked out exactly as you had planned. It is not WHAT you do (that is a Mission Statement.)

## Mission Statement

A Mission Statement is a statement of purpose: a practical, tangible tool you can use to make decisions about priorities, actions, and responsibilities. A mission describes the reason why the organization exists. It converts the broad dreams and aspirations of the Vision into more specific, action-oriented terms. A mission can explain your goals in a clear and easy to understand manner. It creates focus for your work and accountability to stay on track. A mission is generally a short sentence or two that includes WHAT you do, for WHOM you do it, and HOW.

## **Fundamental Differences Between Vision and Mission Statements:**

- + The focus of the vision is the distant future (10 years, 20 years, 30 years); the outcomes of the mission are the here and now.
- + Vision gives a broader perspective of the envisioned future state; the mission details the what and how.

## **Characteristics of the Vision and Mission Statements:**

- + The vision should have a personality of its own. It should define the peculiar facet/s of the organization's long-term success and what sets it apart from the rest of the world.
- + Vision and mission statements must be unambiguous and bring clarity to the employees, residents and community.
- + The values and belief systems of the organization should be reflected in the statements.
- + The Vision statement should be challenging and motivating at the same time.

## **Core Values Statement**

Demonstrable behavioral characteristics and cultural beliefs that drive interaction and engagement. Can be defined and used as measures of behavior and “how” your organization conducts themselves on all levels.

## **Guiding Principles**

Guiding Principles are the foundational principles that never change for an organization – a core concept that forms the basis for all of the decision making. They are essential to success no matter what the goals or strategies might be. Examples usually mention financial sustainability and similar concepts.

## **Key Focus Areas**

These are the priorities, the most important issues, opportunities or trends facing your organization over the next 5 – 10 years. They are usually broad areas of service that will have the most positive impact on your community. Traditionally, they don't change over the course of several years.

## **Big Picture Outcomes**

The Outcomes are bigger picture and longer term – what is the organization trying to achieve by allocating time and resources to the Key Focus Areas? What is the end result if we are successful? The Outcomes are without specific numbers or data because they are the change/difference that happens as a result of implementing your strategic plan (policy level, organizational level, community level). Metrics will be the specific numbers or measurements of success (tactical and operational).

## **Strategic Goal**

Strategic Goals are the larger, broader, often intangible concepts that will need to be accomplished to address the Key Focus Areas and be successful in the coming years. Strategic Goals are typically longer term (3 – 5 years) in nature and have milestones along the way to measure success. Goals are big, broad statements that, when accomplished, significantly move the needle on your Key Focus Areas. If you are successful at achieving your KFA's, you will achieve your Priorities and realize your Vision.

## **SMART Objectives**

SMART Objectives are milestones along the road to achieving your bigger picture Strategic Goals. They are accomplishments that can be defined in quantifiable and measurable terms. SMART means Specific, Measurable, Actionable, Realistic and Timebound. Objectives are specific, actionable targets that need to be achieved within a smaller time frame to accomplish your Strategic Goals. SMART Objectives typically take between 1 – 3 years to complete.

## **Action Steps**

Action Steps are very specific tasks that need to be completed to achieve the SMART Objectives and Strategic Goals. They are very short term (no longer than 90 – 180 days to complete).

## **Key Performance Indicators/Metrics/Measurables**

Key Performance Indicators are measurable values that demonstrate how effectively the organization is achieving Strategic Goals and Outcomes. KPIs are used to evaluate success at reaching targets metrics in budget, strategic planning, master plans, and more. A great KPI measures not just numbers – it measures what is most important. A short example: if your desired Outcome is to increase community engagement, don't measure the number of people that attend meetings. Instead, measure how engaged they are.

## **Implementation Roadmap or Plan**

The Implementation Plan is a spreadsheet or tracking document for the strategic plan that is based on the Key Focus Areas, Strategic Goals and Outcomes. The Implementation Plan tracks several key issues: the SMART Objectives to accomplish the Goal, the Action Steps that will accomplish the SMART Objective, and the KPI's that will measure success for the Outcomes. Included will be who is responsible, specific timelines, and any resources needed to accomplish the work.

# Appendix 3: Sense of Engagement Report

## Introduction

South Metro Fire Rescue (“South Metro” or “SMFR”), is in the process of updating its strategic plan. A strategic plan creates a roadmap for an organization to achieve long-term success and guides resource allocation and decision-making to move South Metro toward its intended vision. It also helps to answer four specific questions:



To help answer these questions, Raftelis conducted a robust engagement process from October-December of 2025 to learn more about what a wide range of stakeholders view as critical for the organization. The engagement process included:

- + A meeting held on October 30 with the **Service Group**, a group of SMFR leaders who provide various services to the community and frequently interact with related partners
- + 18 **1:1 interviews** held with external stakeholders
- + Group interviews with members of the **Steering Committee**, the **Strategic Planning Committee**, and the **Board of Directors**, held on December 1
- + An **employee survey** sent to all South Metro personnel
- + A **partner survey** shared with all of South Metro’s traditional external partners, including municipalities and counties in its service area
- + A review of **background data** shared by South Metro as well as researched by Raftelis

## Document Purpose

This document summarizes the input received from these stakeholders and outlines the key themes for developing the organization’s updated strategic framework. A separate document titled “Strategic Framework” is a review of the key themes applied to the process of strategic planning, and both of these documents will be used as the foundation of conversations held at the strategic plan retreat on January 29, 2026.

# Cross-Cutting Themes

The table below summarizes themes heard across the different engagement activities. Note not all stakeholder groups were asked the same questions. The following sections of the report contain greater detail on the feedback from various stakeholder groups.

	1:1 Interviews	Group Interviews	Service Group	Employee Survey	Partner Survey
<b>Strengths</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Strong reputation</li> <li>+ Great working relationships with other agencies</li> <li>+ Rapid response; great standard services</li> <li>+ All-hazards</li> <li>+ Risk reduction, public health, education</li> <li>+ Professionalism</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ People are the magic”</li> <li>+ Strong culture of supporting people (employer of choice)</li> <li>+ The team (our personnel)</li> <li>+ Communication to our stakeholders and communities</li> <li>+ Response times</li> <li>+ Innovation, willingness to try new approaches</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Great partnerships and responsive to other agencies’ needs</li> <li>+ Taking care of employees</li> <li>+ Proactive community engagement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ The people and crews</li> <li>+ Internal support (Logistics and Wellness)</li> <li>+ Great equipment</li> <li>+ Training</li> <li>+ Public support/ passage of 7A</li> <li>+ Leadership</li> <li>+ Compensation</li> <li>+ Service delivery</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Strong reputation</li> <li>+ Excellent partnerships</li> <li>+ Professionalism; dedication by a highly skilled team</li> <li>+ Good community outreach and visibility</li> </ul>
<b>Challenges</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Financial constraints; reimbursement</li> <li>+ Reliance on Fire/ EMS as a safety net</li> <li>+ Aging, growing pop.</li> <li>+ Responding to regulatory changes</li> <li>+ Maintaining culture amidst turnover</li> <li>+ Politicization of public safety</li> <li>+ Density</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Changing demographics (aging)</li> <li>+ Loss of healthcare; using 911 as a doctor</li> <li>+ Increasing density</li> <li>+ Changes in weather causing higher risk factors</li> <li>+ Revenues to match increasing need</li> <li>+ Facilities keeping up w/ growth of the organization</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Wildland-urban interface (WUI)</li> <li>+ Cybersecurity</li> <li>+ Medicaid cuts and more reliance on EMS for healthcare</li> <li>+ Changing financial environment and revenue fluctuations</li> <li>+ Responding to needs of 12 unique municipalities &amp; 3 counties</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Sustaining service levels with population growth and rising costs</li> <li>+ Organization structure that is efficient and meets current needs</li> <li>+ Succession planning</li> <li>+ Recruitment and retention</li> <li>+ Aging population; more EMS demand</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Maintaining service levels amidst growing population</li> <li>+ Financial challenges</li> <li>+ Workforce and retention</li> </ul>
<b>Opportunities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Advocacy for partners</li> <li>+ Technology, incl. AI</li> <li>+ More partnerships and engagement</li> <li>+ Engaging entire organization for desired culture</li> <li>+ Imagining and training for worst-case scenarios</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Communication (internally and externally)</li> <li>+ Succession planning</li> <li>+ Technology (AI, data analysis)</li> <li>+ Evaluating delivery of service to match needs of communities</li> <li>+ Rightsizing response</li> <li>+ Investing in facilities for the future</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Strengthen mutual and automatic aid coordination</li> <li>+ Operational and political advocacy for regional partners</li> <li>+ Continue recruitment strategies to get high quality, mission-driven candidates</li> <li>+ Maintain strong financial stewardship</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Increased professional growth opportunities</li> <li>+ Funding infrastructure and new stations</li> <li>+ Increased financial discipline</li> <li>+ Focus on paramedic recruitment and retention</li> <li>+ Expand Wellness program</li> <li>+ Stay focused on culture</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Continued proactive engagement and long-range planning</li> <li>+ Remaining fiscally prudent and controlling costs</li> <li>+ Considering impacts of AI on operations</li> </ul>
<b>Other Trends</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Lithium ion, electrical vehicles (EVs), data centers</li> <li>+ More local burden for emergency response</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ More medical than fire response</li> <li>+ Changes in building codes</li> <li>+ Not a trend, but fiscal responsibility/ sustainability was a common theme</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Fire suppression for EVs</li> </ul>		

## 1:1 Interviews

In collaboration with the Steering Committee, several stakeholders were identified for one-on-one interviews with Raftelis. Participants were selected based on their knowledge of fire and rescue services, their close working relationships with SMFR, as consumers of the services, and due to the depth of their insight into the future of SMFR. Raftelis conducted 18 interviews over the course of November; during these interviews, participants were asked four primary questions to better understand their perceptions of the organization and its operating environment.

### Key Themes

- + Interviewees highlighted strong working relationships and want the organization to continue its excellent, proactive communication and engagement.
- + They also anticipate increased call volume from a growing and aging population. There will be more reliance on EMS, including for behavioral health.
- + Financial challenges will continue, in part due to changes in reimbursement models. South Metro must be prepared in how to manage expected service levels as it faces more constraints.
- + SMFR has a strong reputation and is well-positioned to be a legislative advocate for other public safety and local government agencies facing shared challenges.
- + As natural turnover occurs, it will be critical to be intentional about sustaining the desired organizational culture.

### Question 1: What about the services that SMFR provides right now that you want to preserve no matter what?

- + Good working relationships and communication; interviewees feel like a partner
- + Strong individual relationships with South Metro staff working in communities
- + Rapid response, standard, mandated services
- + All-hazards capabilities
- + Helping neighbors, especially incident dispatch team
- + Risk reduction, prevention, and education
- + The Public Health program as behavioral health support becomes increasingly important
- + “Not just what they do, but how they do it” - professionalism and bedside manner

### Question 2: What will change, improve, or happen in the next 5-10 years that SMFR will have to address in order to be successful?

- + The area’s population is growing and aging
- + Increased density
- + Impacts of emerging technologies such as lithium ion, electric vehicles, and data centers
- + Financial constraints and reimbursement challenges
- + Due to this, and changes in Medicaid, Fire/EMS will likely become more of a safety net for behavioral health. More people will be “using 911 as their doctor.”
- + Emergency response models may be pushed away from FEMA and rely more on states, and in practice, local jurisdictions. Local jurisdictions may bear a greater cost burden for emergency response as well.

**Question 3: What are some of the opportunities that SMFR can leverage to be successful?**

- + Staying abreast of how to use technology and AI to help operations. However, as the service population ages, there may be hesitancy to engage with technology regarding healthcare concerns.
- + Preparing for the worst, unimaginable scenarios
- + While trust in government is low, trust in South Metro is high. The organization can leverage its strong reputation for legislative/advocacy leadership.
- + Increasing partnerships and proactive community engagement
- + Focusing internally to engage the entire organization and being mindful of desired culture

**Question 4: What are some of the challenges you see for SMFR?**

- + Heightened expectations for financial discipline as many government agencies face a challenging budgetary environment
- + Changes in reimbursement models
- + Increased politicization of public safety
- + Responding to regulatory requirements, including the discovery obligations under Rule 16 of criminal code
- + Relaxing of codes to build more density
- + As members of the Executive Team retire, how will the organization maintain its current desired culture?

## Group Interviews

On December 1, Raftelis conducted group interviews with members of the **Steering Committee**, the **Strategic Planning Committee**, and the **Board of Directors**. While different questions were asked of each group, several key themes emerged.

### Key Themes

- + **Issues/challenges:** All three groups saw challenges with the changing demographics (an aging population, aging in place); the legislative effects on the affordability of healthcare (more people without healthcare); and how the facilities and buildings of SMFR have not been able to expand at the same level as the growth in the organization and the growth in the various communities. Additionally, the changes in weather patterns that create more risk and being able to adapt the structure of service delivery to the changing needs of the community were identified as common challenges.
- + **The Value and Use of the Strategic Plan:** The responses from the Steering Committee and the Board group conversations were all focused on using the strategic plan as a working document that is used at every Board meeting to help frame and guide discussions and decisions about resource allocation. Integrating the plan into the culture of the organization through budget processes, recruiting and hiring practices, performance evaluations, and employee recognition was also mentioned. There was a strong understanding that the plan needs the full support and engagement across the full leadership spectrum to “be dirty, not dusty.” The Strategic Plan should be a clear and transparent communication tool to show the community how their money is being prioritized for the future delivery of services that they need and want.
- + **Strengths:** The common theme among all three groups could be summarized as “our people and our culture.” The specific comments focused on being an employer of choice and the various investments that the organization has made in wellness, health, training and development, and

compensation packages for the personnel. The culture (“the SMFR Way”) was also a through line of why the organization has been successful at building partnerships and relationships in the community. One additional theme was the high quality of service delivery, including response times.

## Other Notable Comments

While not shared universally across the three groups, the following topics may be important for consideration:

- + The use of outcome-based metrics
- + The strategic plan as a philosophy, not just a directional document
- + Visibility, image, branding of SMFR
- + Community risk reduction

## Service Group

The Service Group is a group of South Metro leadership whose teams provide important services to the community and regularly interact with external service providers and related partners. On October 30, the Service Group met to discuss the agency’s focus and impactful trends over the next several years.

### Question 1: Putting yourself in the service provider’s shoes, what would be the most important thing for SMFR to focus on over the next 5, 10, and 15 years?

Participants emphasized the need for proactive engagement and coordination with surrounding and partnering agencies for

- + Mutual aid
- + Legislative advocacy
- + Transparency and financial responsibility
- + Responsiveness to local needs
- + Alignment of resources, especially in response to community growth
- + Clarity on the role of SMFR

### Question 2: What trends will affect SMFR’s ability to provide services to the community?

- + **Technological:**
  - **AI** was viewed as a complex trend; one that can enhance operational efficiencies but also carries notable risks
  - **Cybersecurity** risks are ever-evolving
  - Emerging risks of **electric vehicles**, which create new fire suppression challenges
- + **Workforce:**
  - Challenges with **recruitment**, including a national shortage of firefighters and paramedics. Despite these challenges, South Metro has recently seen higher **quality candidates**.
  - SMFR remains a “**destination**” employer
- + **Political and Economic:**
  - **Legislation and regulatory changes** can create financial and service implications
  - **Financial volatility** due to property tax fluctuations, real estate trends, and increasing costs
  - South Metro must continue to respond to **changes within its partner and neighboring agencies**
- + **Operational:**
  - Due in part to changes in Medicaid, **EMS’s role is increasingly shifting**
  - **Wild-urban interface** (WUI) will continue to be an area of concern

# Employee Survey

A short online survey was sent to all SMFR employees. A total of 128 responses were received, for a response rate of 17% (769 employees as of January 1, 2025). The survey instrument can be found in Appendix A.

## **Question 1: When you think about what is going well right now for the organization, what are the top three things that come to mind?**

- + Employees have the right tools to do their job, including equipment, apparatus, and personal protective equipment (PPE)
- + Great internal support; the Wellness Program and Logistics were highlighted most frequently
- + High-quality training
- + Strong public support, as indicated by the recent passage of ballot initiative 7A
- + Top-tier service and excellent response times delivered by dedicated employees
- + Strong leadership
- + Compensation, including both pay and benefits

## **Question 2: Thinking ahead 5-10 years into the future, what are your biggest challenges for the organization?**

- + Sustaining current service levels amidst population growth and rising costs
- + Organizational structural concerns, such as becoming too “top heavy” and the current EMS structure
- + Succession planning
- + Retention and recruitment, especially for paramedics
- + Aging population and increased demand for EMS

## **Question 3: Tell us one thing you love about working for SMFR.**

- + “The people I work with” – strong dedication and personal ties to crews
- + Positively impacting the community, being mission-driven
- + Feeling supported, with excellent resources and equipment as well as the wellness program

***“My crew at my station is the only thing that matters. That is my family.”***

## **Question 4: If you were making the decision, what are the five biggest, most important priorities that you would focus on to improve the work of SMFR into the future?**

- + Infrastructure investment, including upgrading existing facilities, building new stations, and investing in apparatus
- + Financial/budget concerns, including heightened expectations for prudent stewardship and stretching resources
- + Reduce the work week for improved employee wellness
- + Enhancing training and building a training facility
- + Hiring, especially for EMS
- + Maintaining focus on being a leading Fire/EMS organization and an employer of choice

# Partner Survey

Raftelis developed a brief survey for South Metro’s external partners (such as municipalities and counties within its service area) to provide feedback. The survey was then sent by South Metro; a total of 21 responses were received. The survey instrument can be found in Appendix B.

## Question 1: What are the three most significant strengths that SMFR can leverage to be successful in the future?

Nearly all responses focused on the following strengths of South Metro:

- + Reputation for excellent partnerships
- + Professionalism and dedication, with a highly skilled team
- + Community outreach and visibility

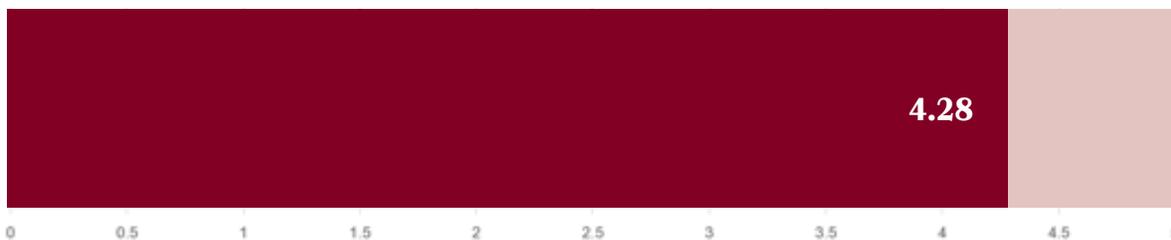
## Question 2: What are the 3 most significant challenges that SMFR will need to address or overcome to be successful in the future?

Most responses focused on:

- + Maintaining service levels amidst continued population growth of the service area
- + Financial challenges, including rising costs for equipment and personnel, as well as long-range funding strategy
- + Workforce challenges such as retention

## Question 3: How would you rate your agency/community’s current working relationship with South Metro? 1 = needs significant improvement, 5 = very strong partnership

Average rating = 4.28



Participants were asked to describe why they chose their rating. Representative responses of favorable (ratings of 4+) responses include:

- + “...appreciated your willingness to talk to our Council earlier this year to hear its feedback about whether to request a property or sales tax increase in the fall. SMFR also acted on the feedback it received from us and other local governments related to that decision.”
- + “Outreach is regular and substantial”
- + “Communication with my community’s staff and residents on incidents, policies and events seem to be comprehensive.”

Representative responses of less favorable (ratings of  $\leq 3$ ) responses include:

- + “Less and less of a partner in our data and information administratively”
- + “We have a solid foundation due to the efforts of the Community Risk Reduction Team and South Metro Safety Foundation, but there is significant room to strengthen day-to-day collaboration and community engagement”

**Question 4: Other than items you have previously identified, are there any additional thoughts SMFR should consider as it develops its new strategic plan?**

Out of 12 responses to this question, most touched on the following themes:

- + Expressions of appreciation and remarks around “keep it up”
- + Continued proactive engagement and long-range planning
- + Remaining financially prudent and controlling costs
- + Considering how AI can impact operations

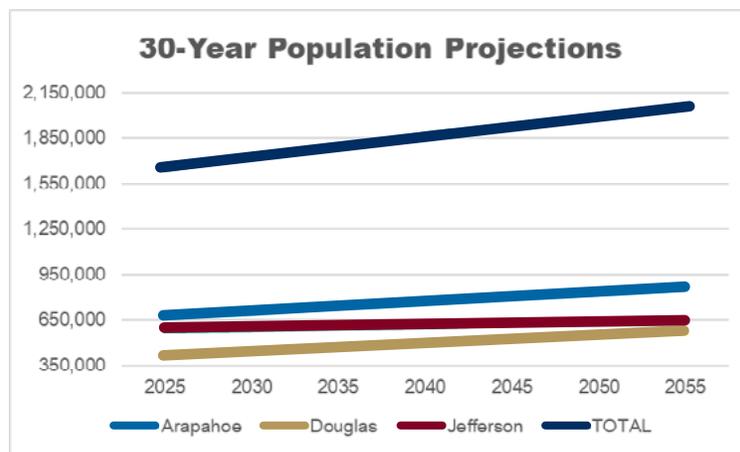
## Supporting Data and Trends

The following section includes additional information about some of the trends identified during the engagement process that South Metro should consider as it develops its strategic plan. Select relevant data points have been included to provide additional context.

### Growing, Aging Population

The population of the counties in South Metro’s service area are expected to grow by about 24.4% over the next 30 years. Note these estimates do not specify those “in district.”

Source = [Colorado State Demography Office](#)



	2025	2030	2035	2040	2045	2050	2055	% Growth
<b>Arapahoe</b>	667,885	692,570	728,427	763,856	794,906	823,938	851,589	27.5%
<b>Douglas</b>	401,211	436,921	470,833	501,601	528,255	550,552	568,781	41.8%
<b>Jefferson</b>	577,837	585,095	597,244	608,028	617,308	623,814	628,907	8.8%
<b>TOTAL</b>	1,646,933	1,714,586	1,796,504	1,873,485	1,940,469	1,998,304	2,049,277	<b>24.4%</b>

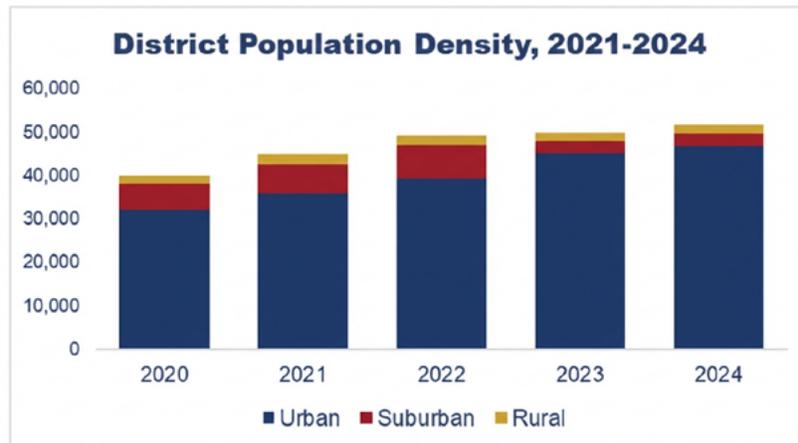
The median age is also expected to increase, especially in Douglas County.

Source = [Colorado State Demography Office](#)

	2025	2030	2035	2040	2045	2050	2055	% Increase
<b>Arapahoe</b>	38.4	39.3	40.0	40.4	40.8	41.2	41.7	<b>9%</b>
<b>Douglas</b>	39.1	40.5	41.7	42.8	43.8	44.8	45.7	<b>17%</b>
<b>Jefferson</b>	41.7	42.6	43.2	43.7	43.9	44.1	44.4	<b>6%</b>

## Population density is increasing.

Source = South Metro Fire Rescue 2025 Fact Sheet



Other key population trends mentioned by participants in the engagement process include:

- + Mental health and substance use
- + Unhoused population
- + Increasing density and high-rise apartments

## Political and Regulatory

Participants highlighted a few key political and regulatory trends, including:

- + A decreasing level of support (from the federal and state government, and from a budgetary perspective) for health and human services.
- + As FEMA faces an uncertain future, a [Review Council](#) on the agency is expected to release a report in mid-December that will outline potential recommendations for the national emergency response model.
- + EMS agencies will be impacted as there are changes in Medicare coverage and as more people lose health insurance.
- + The built environment is changing, with the State of Colorado updating regulations regarding density, as well as individual communities changing their community development design regulations.

## Workforce

Workforce trends mentioned by engagement participants include:

- + The fact that new hires, broadly speaking, may not be as committed to a career and may not find the same value in staying with one organization for a long time.
- + Succession planning is crucial as many executive level team members approach retirement.
- + Maintaining and enhancing the current culture is critical to future success, will require commitment and focus.
- + Increased challenges with paramedic burnout and retention.
- + There are some concerns about the organizational structure. Data from the 2024 Employee Survey conducted by the National Business Research Institute, shared by SMFR as background material, shows that 70% of respondents disagreed with the statement “The new EMS rank structure integrates well into the chain of command.” This sentiment echoes some comments from the

Employee Survey conducted for this report.

## **Technology**

Key technological trends mentioned by engagement participants include:

- + Telehealth
- + Response to incidents with technology, such as autonomous vehicles, robots, and drones
- + Increase in data to drive decisions
- + Increased fire suppression challenges for EVs, lithium ion batteries, data centers, and other emerging technologies.

## **Customer Expectations**

Customer (and partner) expectations noted include:

- + Strengthened human connection with South Metro’s team – “We know them personally.”
- + A sense of feeling like they are a part of our community
- + A desire to be partners in planning

## **Additional Risk Factors**

Additionally, participants highlighted increased risk factors such as climate and weather issues, as well as wildfire planning and response.

# Appendix 4:

## List of Reference Documents

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**The following documents and data informed the development of this plan (listed alphabetically):**

- + 2021-2025 and 2016-2020 Strategic Plans
- + 2021 Community Risk Assessment – Standards of Cover
- + 2022 SMFR Fire Protection District Service Plan
- + 2024 Annual Comprehensive Financial Report
- + 2024 Annual Response Report
- + 2024 Community Services Division Community Risk Reduction Strategic Plan
- + 2024 Division Appraisals for ARFF, Communications, CRR  
Investigations, Dispatch, Dive, Emergency Management, EMS, Fire  
Suppression, Hazmat, Public Health, SWAT, Tech Rescue, Training, Wellness, and Wildland
- + 2024-2026 Emergency Communications 3-Year Plan
- + 2024-2026 Fleet Services Strategic Plan
- + 2025 Budget Report
- + 2025 Fact Sheet
- + 21R-02 Accreditation Report
- + ESRI Community Profile data
- + Other organizational data including HR information and working agreement with Local 2086
- + Polling data and research related to Ballot Measure 7A
- + Recommendations from May 2025 Organizational Assessment conducted by Firefighter  
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