



MT. LEBANON FIRE DEPARTMENT

STRATEGIC PLAN

2019-2025



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STRATEGIC PLAN

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2008, the Mt. Lebanon Fire Department initiated a strategic planning process to develop its first formal strategic plan. The plan was updated in 2013 to reflect the department at that point. Now, five years later, the department conducted a major redevelopment of its strategic plan to ensure that it is up to date in meeting the department's current and future situation and needs. Plan development was facilitated by a Strategic Planning Team, which consisted of both career and volunteer staff of varying ranks and tenure. The plan's goals and objectives were all derived from community, staff and external stakeholder input, supplemented by data review and an environmental scan.

The 2019 version of the strategic plan focuses on several key areas to improve service delivery to the community. First, it was found that the community was very happy with our services if they used them. However, there was little awareness of what the organization did for the community in total. A stronger branding and marketing focus will provide awareness of these important services. Second, career staffing continues to reflect the changing organization. With several recent retirements, our career staff has gotten much younger and less experienced. Due to the inexperienced new hires, staff training and the proper tools to deliver the training are critical to deliver the same level of service as in the past. Finally, continued efforts around volunteer recruitment is identified as an improvement area. As the number of volunteers continues to drop statewide, the Mt. Lebanon Fire Department has bucked that trend. However, continued, innovative recruitment and retention of highly qualified volunteers will allow for continued success.

This strategic plan is designed to guide the department over the next six years. The plan is submitted to the Mt. Lebanon Commissioners and was adopted by the Mt. Lebanon Fire Department membership at a monthly meeting. The strategic plan should be reviewed periodically to allow for adaptation to changing circumstances and to ensure that it remains current. The Mt. Lebanon Fire Department has a proud history of exceptional community-focused service delivered by a highly trained and professional staff of career and volunteer firefighters. The department membership looks to utilize this plan to develop an even stronger future.

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STRATEGIC PLANNING TEAM

Dan Morris (Chair)
Sean Daniels
Joe Gavita
John Lufburrow
Krister Nielsen
Steve Noorbakhsh

STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

A Strategic Planning Team comprised of career and volunteer staff of varying ranks and tenure, facilitated development of the strategic plan. The strategic planning process commenced in the summer of 2018 and concluded in the fourth quarter of 2018. The University Associates strategic planning model, as taught and promoted at the National Fire Academy, was utilized in the development of the plan. The strategic planning process consisted of following procedures:

1. Review of documents:
 - a. 2013 Mt. Lebanon Fire Department Strategic Plan Update
 - b. 2017 Mt. Lebanon Fire Department Annual Report
 - c. 2017 Mt. Lebanon Fire Department Training Needs Assessment
 - d. 2017 Mt. Lebanon Fire Department Accreditation Report
 - e. 2018 Mt. Lebanon Comprehensive Plan Draft
 - f. 2018 Mt. Lebanon Strategic Financial Plan
2. Review of fire incident and non-emergency activity data
3. Department mission, vision and values
4. Survey of volunteer staff
5. Survey of career staff
6. Volunteer staff focus groups
7. Career staff focus groups
8. Review with the Mt. Lebanon Commission
9. Resident focus groups
10. Business and facility focus group
11. External stakeholder focus group
12. Chief officer discussion session
13. Department review and comment on draft plan

The career staff and volunteer staff surveys were based on a modified Campbell Organizational Survey instrument. The external stakeholder focus group was comprised of other municipal departments (Police, Planning), mutual aid fire departments and outside agencies.

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Mt. Lebanon Fire Department is to serve and safeguard our diverse community through the delivery of professional, efficient and effective services protecting life, property and the environment.

VISION STATEMENT

It is our vision to be leaders in delivering the highest quality and cost-effective prevention, education and emergency response services.

ORGANIZATIONAL VALUES

The Mt. Lebanon Fire Department values are catered to each specific audience.

To the residents:

We owe the residents of Mt. Lebanon the highest quality of service possible, characterized by pride, professionalism, personalized delivery and public trust.

To the Fire Department:

We owe the Mt. Lebanon Fire Department our full commitment and dedication. We will always look beyond the traditional scope of our individual positions to promote teamwork, innovation and organizational effectiveness.

To each other:

We owe each other a working environment characterized by trust and respect for the individual, fostering open and honest communications at all levels and personal accountability.

To ourselves:

We owe ourselves personal and professional growth. We will seek new knowledge and greater challenges and strive to remain at the leading edge of our profession.

SWOC ANALYSIS

Strengths

- Level of training, education of personnel
- Esprit de corps/morale
- Department involvement in the community
- Customer service focus
- Comprehensive non-emergency program offerings
- Quality of programs delivered
- Commitment of personnel
- Immediacy of response from the on-duty crew
- Response times
- Training opportunities and departmental training standards
- Well equipped
- Volunteer firefighter recruitment
- Diversity in occupational backgrounds of volunteer personnel

Weaknesses

- Depth of institutional knowledge
- Volunteer mentoring
- Awareness, expectations and operational use of the volunteer classification system
- Awareness of the award and recognition program and frequency of award distribution
- Leadership development
- Access to quality hands-on training sites
- Volunteer succession planning
- Depth of volunteer operators
- Volunteer utilization
- Communication of value to community stakeholders

Opportunities

- Re-accreditation through the Commission on Fire Accreditation International
- Acquiring a hands-on training facility
- Better community engagement, especially with businesses
- Improved branding of the Fire Department to help public understand our non-emergency products
- Mutual aid and regional team training
- Improve communications among all Mt. Lebanon public safety agencies
- Joint training with police and EMS
- Emerging and yet to be discovered technology and research
- Streamline committees
- Improve communication between career and volunteer organizations

Challenges

- Economy and budget
- Cuts to federal grant programs
- Retirement of senior volunteer firefighters / apparatus operators / Fire Inspectors
- Retirement of chief officers
- Preserving institutional knowledge with upcoming retirements
- Volunteer time availability

INTERNAL STAKEHOLDER INPUT

Internal stakeholders consist of both career and volunteer personnel. All members were given the opportunity and encouraged to submit their input to the process via an online survey and through small focus groups. Several themes emerged through this feedback including:

The fire department commitment to ongoing improvement is excellent.

The requirements of the MLFD have a small effect on personal life of the volunteer members.

Soliciting more input among members for non-emergency operations.

The relationship between career and volunteer staff continues to be strong.

MLFD training standards, while not easy to achieve, prepare our staff to be effective in fire ground operations.

Fire prevention personnel should spend less time on suppression staff tasks.

Members would like more input regarding feedback and performance.

More members would like additional internal training to better prepare for the department's requirements.

COMMUNITY INPUT

Meetings with several key groups such as business owners, residents, elected officials and other municipal department heads were conducted.

The community expects a high level of service and above-average outcomes from the fire department.

The fire department should maintain current programs, and proactively identify and address community risks and emerging trends.

Resident awareness of the scope and number of fire department emergency and non-emergency services can be improved.

Satisfaction with the fire department's delivery of emergency and non-emergency services is excellent.

The fire department should maintain accreditation through the Commission on Fire Accreditation International, and status as a Gold Level Participating Department in the Office of the Pennsylvania State Fire Commissioner Voluntary Certification Program.

EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDER INPUT

Meetings were held to solicit input from our automatic and mutual aid departments and other public safety partners.

Mt. Lebanon Fire Department is regarded by peer agencies as a regional fire service leader.

The fire department is well equipped, well trained, professional and has excellent response times.

The fire department has a strong customer service focus and good public relations.

Periodic joint training with Mt. Lebanon Police Department and annual joint training with Medical Rescue Team South Authority is recommended.

Periodic meetings of the Police Chief, Fire Chief and EMS Chief are recommended.

Mutual aid training should be expanded to include periodic drills with Bethel Park and Scott Township.

Mutual aid fire departments are experiencing declining volunteerism and weak weekday daylight turnout.

There is potential for the fire department to respond to increased numbers of QRS calls, non-transport aided cases and requests for assistance at cardiac arrests.

NIMS Refresher training is needed for municipal and school district staff.

Priority Ranking of Fire Department Services

As determined by a survey of residents and business leaders

Program	Average Rank	Time Commitment	Public Awareness
Fire Inspections & code enforcement	3.11	High	Medium
Smoke Alarm Installations	3.50	Medium	Low
Facility staff training	4.17	Medium	Low
Elementary School Fire Safety Program	4.50	High	High
Fireplace inspections & home safety inspections	4.56	Medium	Low
Smoke detector blitzes/After the fire program	6.17	Low	Low
Citizen's Fire Academy	8.50	Medium	Low
Safety Fairs	9.25	Low	Low
Children's safety camp	10.17	Medium	Low
Public Station Tours (walk in, daycares, play groups, etc.)	10.75	Low	Low
First Fridays/Ultra Party	11.78	Medium	Medium
Block Parties	12.11	Low	Medium
Public notifications via TV	12.33	Low	Low
Host blood drives	12.75	Medium	Low
4th of July	12.78	Low	Medium
Light up nights	12.89	Low	Medium
Memorial Day parade	13.44	Low	High
Halloween Parade	14.44	Low	High
Relay For life	15.00	Medium	Low

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goal 1 – Continue to improve service delivery to the community

Objective 1-A Achieve re-accreditation from the Commission on Fire Accreditation International

Recommendations:

- Complete annual reports
- Budget for re-accreditation expenses
- Prepare for peer assessment
- Review results and benefits of accreditation annually as part of a regular drill
- Identify, train and prepare an Accreditation Manager successor

Priority: High

Primary responsibility: MLFD Administration

Responsibility shared with: Operations and Emergency Management

Status: 2019

Target completion date: 2022

References: Career staff focus group
Volunteer staff focus group
Resident focus groups
External stakeholder focus group

Objective 1-B Update pre-incident plans for target hazards

Recommendations:

- Identify top target hazards
- Add special circumstances to the strategy section of top target hazard pre-plans
- Review select pre-plans annually as part of paid man drill and regular drill
- Analyze the category and class of risk in each planning zone with methodology that can be used in the future.

Priority: Medium

Primary responsibility: Operations and Emergency Management

Shared responsibility: Fire Prevention / MLFD Administration

Status: 2019

Target completion date: 2022

References: 2013 Mt. Lebanon Fire Department Strategic Plan
2017 CPSE Accreditation Report
Career staff focus group

Objective 1-C Publish and review the updated municipal emergency operations plan

Recommendations:

- Review & Update the emergency operations plan annually
- Remove outdated copies of the municipal emergency operations plan
- Review the updated municipal emergency operations plan at a regular drill

Priority: Medium

Primary responsibility: Operations and Emergency Management

Status: In process

Target completion date: 2025

References: 2013 Mt. Lebanon Fire Department Strategic Plan
2017 Mt. Lebanon Fire Department Accreditation Report
Career focus group

Objective 1-D Increase the reliability of volunteer staffing for emergency responses

Recommendations:

- Monitor results of volunteer staffing and response modifications
- Implement Active911 recall group paging to reflect a call upgrade
- Evaluate the call credits on strategic days to boost volunteer interest.
- Improve standby shift coverage

Priority: High

Primary responsibility: MLFD Administration

Responsibility shared with: VFC Board of Directors

Status: Start in 2019

Target completion date: 2022

Contingency Plan: Research additional staffing options or duty shift program modifications

References: 2013 Mt. Lebanon Fire Department Strategic Plan
Survey of volunteer staff
Survey of career staff
Analysis of fire incident response data

Objective 1-E Augment customer service and post-emergency victim support

Recommendations:

- Conduct customer service training annually at a regular drill
- Train additional volunteer staff to perform After the Fire Occupant Services
- Increase awareness of Care 100 program

Priority: Medium

Primary responsibility: Community Outreach and Marketing

Status: Start in 2019

Target completion date: 2021

References: 2013 Mt. Lebanon Fire Department Strategic Plan
Career staff focus group
Volunteer staff focus group
External stakeholder focus group

Objective 1-F Expand training and meetings with mutual aid fire departments and outside agencies

Recommendations:

- Conduct joint training with MRTSA annually
- Conduct joint training with MLPD
- Expand mutual aid drills to include periodic drills with Bethel Park and Scott Township
- Conduct a joint officer meeting with MLPD
- Conduct a Public Safety Committee meeting quarterly with MLPD, MLFD, and MRTSA
- Review large purchases with Public Safety Committee to evaluate bulk buying

Priority: Medium

Primary responsibility: MLFD Administration

Responsibility shared with: Training

Status: Start in 2019

Target completion date: 2020

Reference: External stakeholder focus group
Career focus groups

Objective 1-G Conduct NIMS refresher training

Recommendations:

- Conduct NIMS refresher training at a regular drill
- Review and conduct as needed NIMS refresher training for municipal, Mt. Lebanon School District and St. Clair Hospital staff
- Conduct NIMS training to meet municipal requirements
- Conduct a community-wide tabletop EOC exercise

Priority: Medium

Primary responsibility: Operations and Emergency Management

Status: Start in 2019

Target completion date: 2025

Reference: External stakeholder focus group

Objective 1-H Conduct incident command training

Recommendations:

- Conduct incident command simulation training at a paid man drill annually
- Identify and train two additional Blue Card Command instructors
- Conduct incident command simulation training at a regular drill annually
- Maintain Blue Card Incident Command Certification

Priority: Medium

Primary responsibility: Training

Status: Start in 2019

Target completion date: 2025

References: Survey of career staff

Survey of volunteer staff

Career staff focus groups 2017 Mt. Lebanon Fire Department

Training Needs Assessment

Objective 1 - I Establish a Juvenile Fire Setter Program

Recommendations:

- Train more staff for program delivery
- Work with MLPD, MRTSA, and public to identify participants

Priority: Med

Primary responsibility: Fire Prevention

Status: Start in 2019

Target completion date: 2021

References: Career staff focus groups

2017 CPSE Accreditation Report

Objective 1 - J Improve the MLFD fire investigator program

Recommendations:

- Appoint a program manager to manage the program
- Identify MLFD staff to participate in the program
- Seek annual training opportunities to fulfill training requirements
- Evaluate interest in new career staff

Priority: Medium

Primary responsibility: MLFD Administration

Shared responsibility: Training

Status: Start in 2020

Target completion date: 2025

References: Career staff focus groups

Objective 1 - K Implement a personal development plan for each member

Recommendations:

- Review annually each member's training program
- Create a pathway for each member
- Guide pathway based on volunteer interests
- Annual review of member performance
- Assign volunteers to each Lieutenant
- Develop a formal remediation/retraining process if a member is unable to demonstrate competency
- Create a plan to distribute outside training to members

Priority: Medium

Primary responsibility: Training

Shared responsibility: VFC Board of Directors

Status: Start in 2020

Target completion date: Ongoing

References: Volunteer staff survey

Objective 1 - L Evaluate Continuity of Operations Plan readiness

Recommendations:

- Review Continuity of Operations Plan annually
- Revise plan to include materials, supplies, apparatus and fuel

Priority: Medium

Primary Responsibility: Emergency Management and Operations

Status: Start in 2019

Target completion date: 2025

References: 2017 CPSE Accreditation Report

Objective 1 - M Evaluate the accuracy and effectiveness of critical procedures

Recommendations:

- Review critical procedures annually
- Update out of date procedures
- Remove and replace procedures as needed to ensure redundancy

Priority: Medium

Primary Responsibility: MLFD Administration

Shared Responsibility: All shifts

Status: Start in 2019

Target completion date: 2020

References: Career focus groups

Goal 2 – Improve organizational effectiveness

Objective 2-A Redundancy / Succession Planning

Recommendations:

- Conduct necessary training to ensure all critical platoon functions can be performed by any career staff assigned to that platoon
- Develop and implement a succession plan for VFC officer positions
- Conduct a Volunteer Operator training program

Priority: High

Primary responsibility: MLFD Administration

Responsibility shared with: VFC Board of Directors / Training

Status: Start in 2019

Target completion date: 2025

References: Survey of career staff
Survey of volunteer staff
Career staff focus groups
Volunteer staff focus groups

Objective 2-B Evaluate the effectiveness of the recruitment and retention plan

Recommendations:

- Develop a target volunteer recruit profile, with a focus on availability and commitment
- Conduct exit interviews with volunteers who resign
- Conduct a targeted recruitment campaign for volunteers with weekday daylight availability
- Certify recruitment and retention coordinators

Priority: Medium

Primary responsibility: Recruitment and Retention Committee / Community Outreach and Marketing

Status: Start in 2019

Target completion date: 2025

References: 2013 Mt. Lebanon Fire Department Strategic Plan
Survey of volunteer staff
Analysis of fire incident response data

Objective 2-C Review the Accident Prevention and Risk Management Plan

Recommendations:

- Train department members in the risk management model and procedure for reporting workplace hazards, and review the department’s accident prevention and risk management plan at a regular drill

Priority: Low

Primary responsibility: Safety Committee

Responsibility shared with: Training

Status: 2020

Target completion date: 2020

References: 2013 Mt. Lebanon Fire Department Strategic Plan
2017 Mt. Lebanon Fire Department Accreditation Report

Objective 2-D Research and Upgrade Department Technology

Recommendations:

- Research and evaluate new and emerging technology and equipment to improve emergency and non-emergency operations
- Research new equipment

Priority: Medium

Primary responsibility: Fire Chief / Operations and Emergency Management

Shared responsibility: Training / Resource Management

Status: Start in 2019

Target completion date: 2025

References: Survey of volunteer staff
Career staff focus groups

Objective 2-E Construct a hands-on training facility

Recommendations:

- Construct a hands on multi-discipline training facility in the Municipality of Mount Lebanon to meet the training requirements of the department

Priority: High

Primary responsibility: MLFD Administration

Status: In design

Target completion date: 2022

Reference: ISO Rating
Career focus groups
Volunteer focus groups
2013 MLFD Strategic Plan

Objective 2 - F Improve post incident reviews as a training tool

Recommendations:

- Conduct a formal review on large or complex incidents.
- Work with career staff and volunteers on scene or through pictures to explain what was done, how it was done, and why it was done
- Conduct short, informal thirty second reviews after calls to help volunteers understand and learn from incidents the career staff may deem routine
- Review complex calls at officer meetings

Priority: Medium

Primary Responsibility: All Career Officers

Status: Start in 2019

Target completion date: 2025

Reference: Volunteer staff survey

Objective 2 - G Refine records management

Recommendations:

- Analyze current records management practices
- Update ordinances to reflect a move to digital records acceptance
- Identify need for offsite records storage

Priority: Low

Status: Start in 2020

Primary responsibility: All Shifts

Target completion date: 2024

References: Career focus groups

Objective 2 - X Improve internal content delivery on website

Recommendations:

- Utilize the internal portion of the MLFD website to share information with members
- Clean up the Members landing page, so content is organized
- Create an area where outside trainings can be posted

Priority: Low

Primary responsibility: Website Committee

Status: Start in 2019

Target completion date: 2019

Reference: Volunteer staff survey
Career focus groups

Goal 3 – Continue to support effective community outreach

Objective 3-A Create a framework for program delivery of MLFD missions

Recommendations:

- Create Branding Image
- Utilize for all internal and external communications and outreach

Priority: High

Primary responsibility: MLFD Administration

Shared responsibility: Community Outreach and Marketing

Status: Start in 2019

Target completion date: 2020

References: Resident focus group
Business focus group
Resident Survey

Objective 3-B Increase public awareness of department non-emergency services

Recommendations:

- Utilize the customer service center “welcome packet” and the community “Welcome Wagon” to introduce department services to new residents
- Partner with groups to reach various demographics
- Work with Public Information Office to promote MLFD services
- Increase awareness through mailings
- Partner with Community Business Development
- Develop joint public safety programs with MPLD and MRTSA for the community

Priority: High

Primary responsibility: Community Outreach and Marketing

Status: 2019

Target completion date: 2025

References: Resident survey
Resident focus group
Business focus group

Objective 3-C Continue the door-to-door smoke alarm and carbon monoxide installation and awareness campaign

Recommendations:

- Increase smoke alarm funding to continue the program into remaining response zones
- Seek corporate or community grants for smoke alarm and carbon monoxide detector funding
- Utilize GIS data to generate target areas

Priority: High

Primary responsibility: Community Outreach and Marketing

Status: 2019

Target completion date: 2025

References: Resident focus groups
Analysis of fire incident and non-emergency activity data

Objective 3-D Monitor the organizational feedback using a survey

Recommendations:

- Conduct a short annual membership survey evaluating areas covered by the strategic plan

Priority: High

Primary responsibility: Strategic Plan Committee

Status: Start in 2019

Target completion date: 2025

References: Survey of career staff
Survey of volunteer staff
Career staff focus groups
Volunteer staff focus groups

Objective 3-E Monitor external feedback using a survey

Recommendations:

- Conduct a short annual survey distributed to residents and businesses evaluating areas covered by the strategic plan

Priority: High

Primary responsibility: Strategic Plan Committee

Status: Start in 2019

Target completion date: 2025

References: Survey of career staff
Survey of volunteer staff
Career staff focus groups
Volunteer staff focus groups

Goal 4 – Maintain quality facilities

Objective 4-A Conduct a comprehensive station maintenance assessment

Recommendations:

- Work with Public Works to conduct a station maintenance assessment
- Identify replacement life cycles for building systems, furniture, paint, and floor coverings
- Develop a repair / replacement schedule

Priority: Low

Primary responsibility: MLFD Administration

Shared Responsibility: Safety Committee / Resource Management

Status: Start in 2019

Target completion date: 2019

References: 2013 Mt. Lebanon Fire Department Strategic Plan Update
Career staff focus group
Volunteer focus group

Goal 5 – Continue to pursue grant funding opportunities
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Objective 5-A Utilize grants to facilitate MLFD Missions

Recommendations:

- Apply for federal and state grants as available and appropriate
- Identify and apply for corporate or community-based grants as available and appropriate
- Explore grant opportunities that support department missions
- Research grant opportunities from local business groups
- Utilize volunteer staff with experience in grant procurement

Priority: Medium

Primary responsibility: MLFD Administration

Shared responsibility: Community Outreach and Marketing

Status: Start in 2019

Target completion date: 2025

References: Survey of volunteer staff
Career staff focus groups

Goal 6 – Improve Leadership Development and Consistency

Objective 6-A Formalize job duties of volunteer classifications

Recommendations:

- Review the volunteer firefighter classification levels and requirements at a regular drill
- Implement operational guidelines and expectations for the volunteer firefighter classification levels

Priority: High

Primary responsibility: MLFD Administration

Responsibility shared with: VFC Board of Directors / Training

Status: Start in 2019

Target completion date: 2020

References: Survey of volunteer staff
Survey of career staff
Volunteer staff focus groups
Career staff focus groups

Objective 6-B Provide leadership training to staff

Recommendations:

- Consider an outside instructor conduct leadership and management training with a focus on leadership, team building, conflict resolution, tough discussions, time management and project management annually at a paid man drill
- Give the Lieutenant rank more responsibility for volunteer staff development
- Utilize volunteer staff with occupational expertise in leadership and management to conduct leadership training at a regular drill
- Conduct officer training for FF 1st Class / Senior FF / Master FF

Priority: High

Primary responsibility: Fire Chief

Responsibility shared with: Training

Status: Start in 2019

Target completion date: 2025

References: Survey of career staff
Survey of volunteer staff
Career staff focus groups
Volunteer staff focus groups

Goal 7 – Improve internal communications

Objective 7-A Improve departmental communications via appropriate media

Recommendations:

- Review policy and procedural changes at drills and meetings, accompanied by e-mail notification, prior to implementation
- Formalize procedure for operational changes to ensure communication through entire department
- Continue to e-mail the municipal administrative report
- E-mail and post officer meeting minutes
- E-mail and post officer meeting platoon reports
- Update and post training calendar in station and on the website
- Reorganize website to be more effective in presenting documents to members

Priority: High

Primary responsibility: MLFD Administration

Shared responsibility: Training / VFC Board of directors / Website Committee

Status: Start in 2019

Target completion date: 2025

References: Survey of volunteer staff
Volunteer staff focus groups

Objective 7-B Develop volunteer organizational and benefit training

Recommendations:

- Review with each new member, when eligible, how incentive accounts work
- Update incentive account numbers regularly posting via appropriate means for membership to view
- Formal training for members regarding the duties of the Relief Association
- Formal training for members explaining their role in MLFD

Priority: Low

Primary Responsibility: VFC Board of directors

Status: Start in 2019

Target completion date: 2022

References: Volunteer staff focus groups
Volunteer staff survey