

Northwest Fire District Embraces New Strategic Planning Model

The Northwest Fire District (NWFD) needed to re-create its strategic plan and decided to use the Balanced Scorecard Institute's Nine-Steps to Success® framework in an effort ensure the plan was reflective of the needs of its stakeholders.

The District is located mainly in the unincorporated areas of Pima County, north and west of Tucson, Arizona. The District's service area is approximately 140 square miles and includes the Town of Marana, Arizona. The District provides emergency fire, medical, hazardous materials, and specialized rescue services to an estimated population of 125,000 people. The geographic area served is considered a mixture of urban, suburban, rural and frontier in nature.

The District has used strategic planning since the late 90's, but previous plans were not well communicated or even accepted by those it impacted. Further, because of significant growth, the District's current plan was no longer reflective of its efforts. Plus, the plan needed to be integrated with the budget. Clearly, a new path was needed to get the District where it needed to go.

Under the Institute's framework, the re-creation of NWFD's strategic plan required that the District reach out to its internal and external stakeholders to find out what they valued in the way of emergency and life safety services. With that input, the District formed a strategic planning group of 40 employees, representing all levels of the organization, and provided them with training on Institute's Nine Steps to Success® process. A smaller "core" group was selected from the planning group to tackle the task of re-creating NWFD's strategic plan, starting with its mission, vision and values. This was no easy task. Barriers to communication had to be (and were) overcome. Time was short. Participation before, during and after each planning session was critical to the success of this effort.

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Northwest Fire District formed a Strategic Planning Group of 40 Employees

"Given the unique dynamics of the fire services labor/management process, the team from the Balanced Scorecard Institute adapted their processes to bring every one of the key players in the organization along in the development of the Fire District's enhanced strategic planning process that will guide our organization for the next five years."

— Jeff Piechura, NWFD Fire Chief

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In the end, barriers to the success of this project were overcome. Labor representatives worked with management staff on teams to develop each theme, objective, initiative and performance measure. Everyone's opinion was heard and considered in an open forum. Open, honest and transparent communication combined with the Institute's framework enabled the District to develop a final product that strategically reflected the wants and needs of the organization and its stakeholders.

The District's next challenge is to develop a tracking mechanism that will enable us to see how they are performing. This coupled with the development of an action plan for each objective will enable the District to prioritize their initiatives and evaluate the results of their efforts.

About the Balanced Scorecard

The balanced scorecard is a strategic planning and management framework used extensively in business & industry, government, and nonprofit organizations worldwide. A scorecard system aligns business activities to the vision and strategy of the organization, improves internal and external communications, and monitors organizational performance against strategic goals.

About the Balanced Scorecard Institute

The Balanced Scorecard Institute, a Strategy Management Group company, provides training and consulting services to commercial, government, and non-profit organizations in applying best practices in balanced scorecard, strategic performance management and measurement, and transformation and change management. The Institute also provides, through the balancedscorecard.org website, a resource to obtain information, ideas and best practices based on lessons learned from extensive experience in building strategic management and performance measurement systems using the award-winning Nine Steps to Success® balanced scorecard methodology.

For more information about the Balanced Scorecard Institute, call (919) 460-8180 or visit www.balancedscorecard.org.

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"The Balanced Scorecard Institute team ably brought labor and management together to develop a cohesive plan for our future. Gail and David superbly facilitated what we thought was impossible; building a strategic plan with input from every level of the organization that will increase the safety of our community."

— Captain Heath Evans



Northwest Fire Rescue District

Customer Service - Whatever It Takes