



CITY OF VIRGINIA BEACH

Fire Department

Strategic Plan 2026-2028



VBFD Credo

Striving for **excellence**, protecting with **honor**.

The VBFD Way

- Our core values of **Service, Caring, Integrity, Trust, and Honesty** guide us as we serve the community and enrich lives.
- Seeking the **truth** is critical to our organizational wellbeing.
- We embrace **optimism** and know that any challenge can be met with the proper will.
- We remain **humble** but we are **confident** in our ability.
- Our **training** guides us. We value constant professional development and strive to ensure succession from within our ranks.
- We always display **courage and professionalism**, remaining **calm** in crisis and bringing order to chaos.
- We are **prepared** and continuously explore so we can adapt, improve, and ensure resilience.
- We embrace **technology** and are willing to incorporate new tools and techniques to achieve success.
- We all have a role in **preventing** the emergency and reducing risk. This is the most effective way to **protect** our community.
- We are not perfect, but we seek perfection so we can **achieve excellence**. The little things matter.
- **Exceeding the standard** is the standard and **leadership** is expected at all levels.

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Message from the Fire Chief

To the members of the Virginia Beach Fire Department and to the community we are honored to serve:

It is my privilege to present the 2026–2028 Strategic Plan for the Virginia Beach Fire Department. This plan is more than a document—it is a shared commitment to our mission: Service delivered with Integrity driven by Excellence. It reflects who we are, what we value, and where we are going together.

This strategic plan was built deliberately and inclusively. It incorporates feedback from our workforce, input from over 1,200 residents through a statistically validated community survey, and alignment with the priorities of the Virginia Beach City Council. The result is a clear roadmap grounded in data, shaped by experience, and guided by our credo: striving for excellence and protecting with honor.

Our focus over the next three years is centered on four strategic pillars.

First, Service Excellence. We will optimize emergency response and resource deployment, modernize service delivery, and strengthen interagency coordination. We are committed to measurable improvements in response performance, more precise dispatch alignment, targeted Community Risk Reduction, and enhanced readiness. We will institutionalize innovation—using structured evaluation, after-action learning, leveraging of artificial intelligence, and data analytics to ensure we continuously improve.

Second, a Healthy, Safe, Skilled, and Engaged Workforce. Our people are our greatest strength. We continue to reduce occupational risk, expand medical and behavioral health support, modernize training through technology, and formalize mentorship and succession planning. By building a sustainable and diverse talent pipeline, we will ensure the next generation of leaders is prepared, supported, and mission ready.



Third, Modern Infrastructure and Resources. Safe facilities, reliable apparatus, up-to-date equipment, and resilient logistics systems are essential to operational readiness. We will conduct comprehensive facility assessments to develop a facility master plan for determining long-term funding needs. We will expand on the efforts of the last few years to strengthen fleet replacement planning, modernize equipment cycles, and improve asset management transparency. These investments are not optional; they are foundational to firefighter safety and community protection.

Fourth, Communication, Culture, and Collaboration. Trust is built through transparency and consistency. We will enhance community engagement, expand public communication capabilities, improve internal collaboration, and ensure our culture remains value driven. Leadership at every level will be accountable for aligning our actions with our core values of Service, Integrity, Honesty, Caring, and Trust.

This plan is a living framework. It will be reviewed, measured, and refined. It demands participation from every member of this department, because implementation—not authorship—is what creates progress.

To our community: your fire department is prepared, adaptable, and forward-looking. To our members: your professionalism, courage, commitment, and dedication make this vision achievable.

The future of the Virginia Beach Fire Department is strong because it is built on shared purpose. Together, we will achieve service excellence—because here, exceeding the standard is the standard.

Fire Chief Kenneth Pravetz





Mission

***Service** delivered with **Integrity** driven by **Excellence**.*

Vision

A community where exceptional public safety is assured for everyone.

Values

- **Service** - Professional and trained workforce, providing for others before self.
- **Integrity** - Moral and ethical conduct at all times.
- **Honesty** - Being truthful, transparent, and clear in all actions.
- **Caring** - Treating others with compassion and empathy.
- **Trust** - Consistent actions that build confidence and mutual respect with our community and team.



Strategic Planning Process

A strategic plan is a living management tool that provides direction, builds upon identified strengths and shared vision, documents goals, objectives, and accomplishments, and optimizes internal and external resources to accomplish the mission. In 2025, the VBFD set out to update its strategic plan.

As a result, the department established realistic goals and objectives using internal and external stakeholder input to chart the course for the continued future success of the organization. The VBFD understands that strategic planning can be an opportunity to unify leadership, employees,



stakeholders, and customers through a common understanding of where the organization is going, how everyone involved can work to achieve a common purpose, and how progress and levels will measure success. The VBFD strategic plan is a living document that will continue to change as it uses the following process.

Generate/Update

VBFD leadership guided a collaborative, inclusive strategic planning process designed to reflect the needs and expectations of both the community and the workforce. The process brought together external perspectives, internal insights, and broad employee participation to shape the final Strategic Plan.



To understand community priorities, external feedback was gathered through two primary methods: a citywide citizen survey and strategic planning meetings hosted by the City's library system. The citizen survey was open to residents of the City, who were randomly sampled via mailed surveys. A total of 1,206 responses were received. For a city of approximately 460,000 residents, this sample size yields a confidence level of 95% with a margin of

error of $\pm 2.8\%$. These results supplemented the broader citywide survey conducted annually, which also includes questions related to the VBFD.

Internal feedback was collected independently by a third-party organization through a department-wide survey. This approach ensured anonymity, encouraged candid input, and provided a clear picture of employee needs, challenges, and priorities across all bureaus and ranks.



The Strategic Planning Workgroup—open to any employee who wished to participate—served as the central forum for developing ideas and priorities. Workgroup members

reviewed internal and external feedback, identified emerging themes, and drafted preliminary priorities and concepts. These ideas were then presented to senior staff.

Senior staff subsequently workshopped the Strategic Focus Areas, refined the priorities, and developed the final Strategic Plan. Their work ensured alignment with organizational mission, operational realities, and long-term service commitments to the community.

The VBFD will conduct an annual review and evaluation of the Strategic Plan to assess progress and make necessary adjustments based on current conditions. This review will occur prior to July 1, the start of the City's fiscal year, and may be completed via email or in-person meetings. A formal, comprehensive review and revision of the Strategic Plan will occur every two years, at



which time the VBFD will reconvene the Strategic Plan Working Group to revisit the planning process and update the plan accordingly.

Develop Implementation Strategy

During this phase of the planning cycle, we determine how the Strategic Plan will be put into action. This includes identifying the steps required to translate the plan into meaningful activities that advance our goals and objectives. We outline the decisions, responsibilities, and actions necessary to turn strategic goals into operational reality.

Initiate Program

During this phase of the planning process, the real work begins. This is where the Strategic Plan is transformed from concepts into actions and measurable performance. While the first two phases identify the *what* and *why* of the organization's priorities, this phase focuses on the *how*, *who*, *when*, and *how often* the activities will be carried out.



Strategy implementation requires participation across the entire organization. The earlier phases of the process are primarily led by leadership, supported by senior management and key employees. Implementation, however, depends on the workforce, those who will execute the strategic actions and integrate them into daily operations. Leadership maintains oversight of the Strategic Plan, ensuring alignment, accountability, and progress, while employees bring the plan to life through consistent, coordinated performance.

Evaluate Performance

The process of strategy evaluation is often overlooked in strategic planning. After the initial surge of activity during plan development—followed by the realities of executing strategy alongside day-to-day operations—evaluation can easily be neglected. When this occurs, strategies quickly become outdated and misaligned with the evolving needs of the organization. To prevent this, the VBFD will utilize an automated tracking system that will be updated at least semiannually.

Evaluation will occur at the program manager level and will include direct linkages between goals, objectives, and tasks. Goals represent broad, long-range statements that describe the desired outcomes the fire department intends to achieve within each Strategic Focus Area. Objectives define the specific, measurable, time-bound actions or milestones that define

how the department will achieve each Goal. Tasks, documented within the program level evaluation form, provide context, progress updates, and completion status.

The purpose of this evaluation process is to create a clear connection between the goals outlined in the Strategic Plan and the ongoing work of VBFD programs. This linkage—combined with structured feedback—establishes a performance improvement system that reflects progress and enables timely adjustments in response to departmental and citywide priorities.

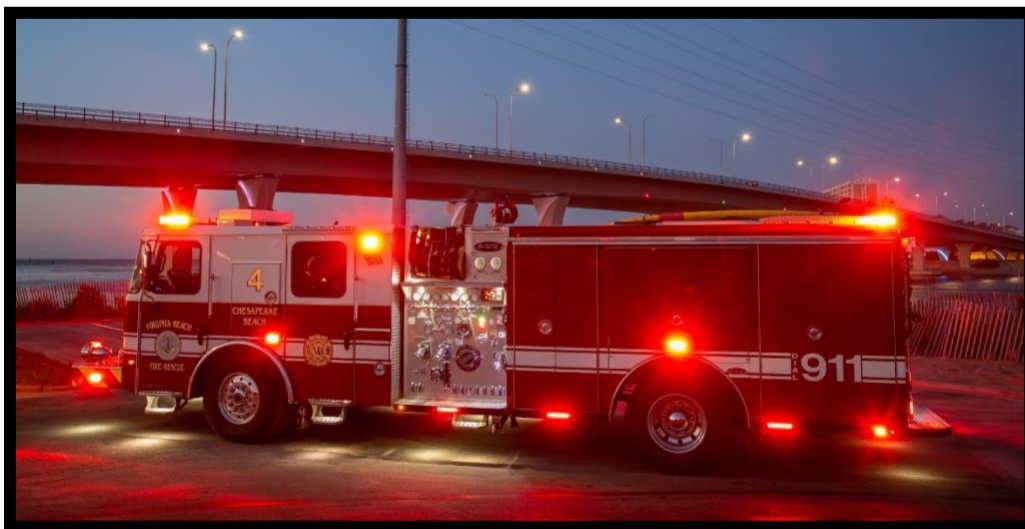
A simple color-coded progress tracking system, applied at the individual strategy level and accompanied by narrative notes, will be completed and reviewed by both the program manager and the oversight manager. This two-tier review provides accountability and ensures consistent oversight.

A summary page will offer high level visibility into progress across four overarching focus areas: service, workforce, resource management, and culture.

Make Necessary Adjustments

The semi-annual review process does not mean the VBFD will formally amend or modify the Strategic Plan each time performance is evaluated. However, this process does allow for “micro-changes” when appropriate. As noted earlier, the VBFD’s strategic planning process is continuous; the plan and its components will be regularly reassessed, and the Department will pivot as needed.

During each semi-annual review, new factors affecting the VBFD’s operating environment will be identified and evaluated. Based on this assessment, the Department will determine what adjustments should be made to ensure the Strategic Plan remains relevant, responsive, and aligned with departmental and citywide priorities.



City of Virginia Beach City Council Goals and Priorities

In addition to direction from leadership and input from citizens and employees, the VBFD strategic planning process is guided by the goals and priorities established by City Council. The VBFD Strategic Plan supports these priorities by aligning departmental goals with the broader needs of the City.

By ensuring this alignment, the VBFD promotes continuity of effort between elected officials and local government operations. This reduces disconnects between the City's overall mission and the services delivered by the Department, strengthening cohesion, accountability, and shared purpose across the organization.



FY2026 – FY2027 City of Virginia Beach Focused Action Plan

2040 City of Virginia Beach Comprehensive Plan



Definitions

Strategic Focus Areas

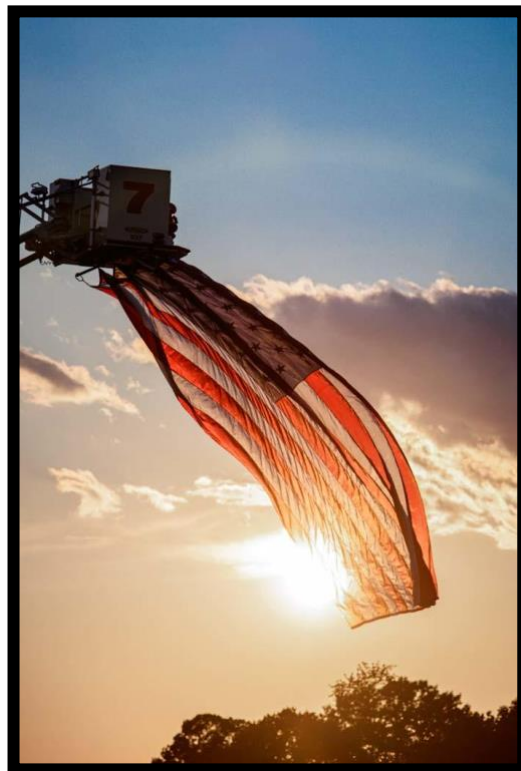
The broad, high-level domains of organizational performance define *where* a fire department intends to concentrate its energy, resources, and improvement efforts over a multi-year period. They serve as the structural pillars of the strategic plan, guiding the development of goals, objectives, tasks, and performance measures.

Goals

Broad, long-range statements that describe the desired outcomes the fire department intends to achieve within each Strategic Focus Area. They articulate what the organization aims to accomplish to fulfill its mission and meet community expectations.

Objectives

Specific, measurable, time-bound actions or milestones that define how the department will achieve each Goal. They translate strategic intent into concrete steps that can be implemented, tracked, and evaluated.



Strategic Focus Area 1: Service Excellence



Goal 1.1: Optimize Emergency Response and Resource Deployment

Objective 1.1.1: Review and compare staffing, apparatus, and deployment models to improve Effective Response Force and response times by 10% of current performance.

Objective 1.1.2: Review, optimize, and coordinate Advanced Life Support recruitment, training, deployment, and service delivery to ensure a proficient workforce capable of effectively meeting community needs.

Objective 1.1.3: Evaluate dispatch alignment to ensure the right resource is sent to the right call.

Objective 1.1.4: Standardize tactical decision-making and accountability to strengthen consistency across incidents.

Goal 1.2: Strengthen Strategic Partnership and Interagency Coordination

Objective 1.2.1: Enhance collaboration with other City departments and regional Public Safety partners.

Objective 1.2.2: Foster the creation of a joint Public Safety Analytics Group and actively participate in its development and ongoing collaboration.

Goal 1.3: Strengthen a Culture of Continuous Innovation and Learning

Objective 1.3.1: Implement standardized reporting and written evaluations for pilot programs, training, travel, and new technology or process trials, using trial periods and A/B testing to assess operational changes.

Objective 1.3.2: Enhance the use and reliability of the existing After-Action and Lessons-Learned processes by ensuring reports are completed, reviewed, and incorporated into organizational improvements such as training, policy updates, and operational decision making.

Goal 1.4: Modernize and Optimize Service Delivery

Objective 1.4.1: Create an Operational Deployment Master Plan that uses data, risk, and performance metrics to ensure apparatus and staffing are strategically aligned with current demand and future growth.

Objective 1.4.2: Target Community Risk Reduction outreach and service delivery by station, demographic profile, and risk conditions.

Objective 1.4.3: Reduce preventable non-emergency calls for service volume by 10% by 2028 through targeted Community Risk Reduction outreach.

Objective 1.4.4: Strengthen VBFD integration with city task forces—such as Traffic Engineering, Public Works, and Health—by establishing a clear reporting mechanism for task force members to share information with departmental staff.

Objective 1.4.5: Enhance maritime readiness and water response capabilities to support local, state, and federal incidents.

Strategic Focus Area 2: A Healthy, Safe, Skilled, and Engaged Workforce



Goal 2.1: Reduce Occupational Risk and Support Total Wellness

Objective 2.1.1: Develop a plan to convert from current scheduling to the 42-hour work schedule for health, parity and prepare readiness model.

Objective 2.1.2: Expand medical screening and preventative health measures.

Objective 2.1.3: Embed mental health clinician in academy, officer training, and officer in-service support.

Objective 2.1.4: Track and report trends in injuries, claims, and behavioral health incidents annually.

Goal 2.2: Establish a Structured Training and Professional Development Framework

Objective 2.2.1: Modernize training delivery with virtual/augmented reality and digital tracking.

Objective 2.2.2: Produce research-based briefs to support evidence-based training and tactical decisions.

Objective 2.2.3: Develop a Field Training Master Plan that formalizes company and multi-unit training delivery.

Objective 2.2.4: Expand Emergency Medical Services training, Continuing Education Unit opportunities, and competency checks.

Objective 2.2.5: Create rank- and role-specific training matrices.

Goal 2.3: Institutionalize Mentorship and Succession Planning

Objective 2.3.1: Expand mentorship opportunities for sworn and civilian personnel.

Objective 2.3.2: Create civilian professional development plans and promotional opportunities.

Objective 2.3.3: Track internal promotion readiness and leadership participation rates annually.

Objective 2.3.4: Develop cross-bureau rotations for succession readiness.

Objective 2.3.5: Explore retired firefighter partnerships outside of contract agency employment.

Goal 2.4: Build a Sustainable and Diverse Talent Pipeline through Recruitment

Objective 2.4.1: Develop recruitment partnerships with schools, military, and community organizations.

Objective 2.4.2: Expand Cadet Program through dedicated staffing and organizational support to enhance recruitment and workforce development.

Strategic Focus Area 3: Maintain and Modernize Infrastructure, Apparatus, Technology, and Equipment



Goal 3.1: Ensure All Facilities Are Safe, Functional, and Aligned with Current and Future Operational Needs

Objective 3.1.1: Conduct a comprehensive facilities assessment within the first 12 months to identify structural, safety, Americans with Disabilities Act, and operational deficiencies across all stations and administrative buildings.

Objective 3.1.2: Develop a prioritized 2-year facilities improvement plan including timelines, cost estimates, and funding strategies.

Objective 3.1.3: Implement critical repairs and upgrades (HVAC, bay doors, training spaces, living quarters, security, etc.) with quarterly progress reviews.

Objective 3.1.4: Enhance station resilience by planning upgrades related to severe-weather hardening, backup power systems, and energy efficiency.

Objective 3.1.5: Standardize station technology infrastructure (network cabling, Wi-Fi, server needs, alerting systems) across all locations.

Goal 3.2: Maintain a Safe, Reliable, and Modern Fleet to Support Response Capabilities

Objective 3.2.1: Update and maintain a multi-year fleet replacement schedule that incorporates lifecycle benchmarks, maintenance data, and operational demand.

Objective 3.2.2: Reduce out-of-service time through preventive maintenance tracking and improved vendor service agreements.

Objective 3.2.3: Secure increase in annual funding for apparatus replacement, modernization, or specialty unit procurement.

Objective 3.2.4: Begin procurement of at least four heavy apparatus per year.

Goal 3.3: Ensure Firefighting, Emergency Medical Services, and Technical Rescue Equipment Is Up-to-Date, Well-Maintained, and Adequate for Mission Needs

Objective 3.3.1: Complete a department-wide equipment inventory and condition audit including firefighting tools, Personal Protective Equipment, Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus, Emergency Medical Services supplies, rescue gear, and special operations equipment.

Objective 3.3.2: Create a standardized equipment replacement cycle based on National Fire Protection Association standards, manufacturer recommendations, and operational usage.

Objective 3.3.3: Upgrade aging Personal Protective Equipment and Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus components to improve firefighter safety and compliance with evolving standards.

Objective 3.3.4: Expand capabilities by identifying and acquiring new tools or technology that support operational efficiency and safety.

Goal 3.4: Strengthen Logistics, Procurement, and Asset Management Practices

Objective 3.4.1: Transition to a new centralized asset management system for tracking apparatus, equipment, Personal Protective Equipment, and technology lifecycle status.

Objective 3.4.2: Develop supply chain resilience strategies to mitigate delays, shortages, and vendor dependency.

Objective 3.4.3: Conduct annual audits to ensure compliance with National Fire Protection Association standards and local/state regulations.

Objective 3.4.4: Increase department-wide visibility of inventory availability, replacement schedules, and budget impacts through transparent reporting tools.



Strategic Focus Area 4: Organizational Communication, Culture, and Collaboration



Goal 4.1: Enhance Transparent and Consistent Community Engagement

Objective 4.1.1: Re-establish multimedia productions and create consistent storytelling platforms.

Objective 4.1.2: Offer internal training in public communication at all ranks.

Objective 4.1.3: Expand recruit-level and incumbent Community Risk Reduction education.

Objective 4.1.4: Conduct and evaluate annual community feedback surveys.

Objective 4.1.5: Enhance public-facing dashboards and Community Risk Reduction updates.

Goal 4.2: Strengthen Internal Communication, Collaboration, and Culture

Objective 4.2.1: Develop and identify formal communication processes that capture, retain, and standardize internal communication.

Objective 4.2.2: Expand digital dashboards.

Goal 4.3: Strengthen and Support a Culture that is Value-Driven

Objective 4.3.1: Align Standard Operating Procedures and leadership messaging with organization values.

Objective 4.3.2: Strengthen Trust through Consistent Accountability and Fairness.

Objective 4.3.3: Clearly articulate VBFD's cultural expectations, including professionalism, respect, accountability, and ethical leadership, across all ranks.



Acknowledgements

Fire Department Senior Staff would like to thank the Strategic Plan Workgroup for their time, insight, and energy to support the development of our Strategic Plan. Their commitment to thoughtful discussion, honest feedback, and collaborative problem-solving strengthened this process and ensured the plan reflects the needs and priorities of our department and community. We are grateful for their dedication and the professionalism they brought to this important work.

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