



National Association of Emergency and Elected Officials

2023-2026

Strategic Plan



Last Updated January 7, 2023



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Leadership Message

Letter from the President

January 7, 2023

NAEFO members,

It is my pleasure to introduce the updated NAEFO Strategic Plan. I want to thank my predecessors who have formulated NAEFO strategic plans, beginning with Brian McMahan who formulated the initial Strategic plan in September 2007. Thanks to Past President Mark Kreutzer and Emergency Services Consulting International for their work on updating and formatting the original plan in 2012. And thanks to Past President Candy McCullough, Missouri's Ken Schmalbeck, Illinois' Mike Dillion, and Executive Director Monte Olsen who has worked with me on this current version of our strategic plan for 2023 - 2026.

This updated plan expresses our guiding principles for the next three years. It defines our goals to increase our membership numbers nationwide as well as engagement of our members. Our plan includes providing networking and educational opportunities to enhance the abilities of those who govern and manage emergency response organizations.

We have a wide range of responsibilities including managing finances, making administrative policies, representing and protecting citizens and taxpayers as well as personnel of various emergency response organizations. With a wide range of duties, we share a responsibility to be informed and engage our governing bodies to support us in providing quality emergency services, relative to our community's needs and financial limitations.

I am proud of the work we do and hope this update will inspire you to engage in the implementation of our current Strategic Plan and work to achieve a unified voice in achieving our shared goals.

As current President, I call on the Board of Directors and all NAEFO members to embrace the mission and act accordingly to implement this Strategic Plan to grow our organization as well as secure the future of quality emergency response services nationwide.

Again, thank you to all who have helped with the Strategic Planning for NAEFO since 2007.

Sincerely,

Bruce Suenram
President, NAEFO 2022 - present



Strategic Planning Process

In order to properly formulate current strategic initiatives, the planning team met to evaluate the external and internal organizational environments. The team reviewed the Strategic Plan as last updated in 2020, including the Vision, Mission, and Guiding Principles; as well as performing a SWOC (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Challenges) Analysis.

The findings from the SWOC appear below:

STRENGTHS

It is important for any organization to identify their strengths in order to assure they are capable of providing the services requested by customers, in this case NAEFO membership, and to ensure that strengths are consistent with the issues facing the organization. Often, identification of organizational strengths leads to the channeling of efforts toward primary needs that match those strengths. Through a consensus process, the organization's strengths were identified.

- NAEFO represents an under-represented group
- Longevity
- Persistence
- Committed core that recognizes a need
- Strong state associations where they exist
- Organizational structure in place

WEAKNESSES

Performance or lack of performance within an organization depends greatly on the identification of weaknesses and how they are confronted. For any organization to either begin or to continue to move progressively forward, it must not only be able to identify its strengths but also those areas where it does not function well or not at all.

- Lack of membership
- Weak financial resources
- Pacific Northwest oriented
- Inability to retain members
- Lack of staff with association management expertise
- Lack of advocacy and coalition management expertise, including the lack of a national presence
- Members and potential members may not understand the value



- Lack of commitment and follow through by the Board
- Lack of membership engagement

OPPORTUNITIES

Many things exist as unrealized opportunities for an organization. The focus of opportunities is not solely on existing service, but on expanding and developing new possibilities both inside and beyond the traditional service area. Many opportunities exist, and every weakness presents an opportunity.

- New members are out there
- Testimony for / against national legislation
- Join national organizations to influence legislation, regulations and policies
- Find and enter into partnerships to enhance NAEFO effectiveness
- Better use of technology
- Association management
- Engage with association and advocacy management organizations
- Higher ratio of emergency officials to fire chiefs and chief administrators
- Other associations may be able to help gain footing
- Broaden membership to include other emergency services agencies, e.g., emergency medical services districts, ambulance districts, emergency services districts

CHALLENGES

There are conditions in the internal and external environment that are not under the organization's control. However, by being aware of them, the organization can develop plans and programs to either mitigate the issue or respond when a challenge becomes reality. By recognizing possible challenges, an organization can greatly reduce the potential for loss.

- State associations don't exist in a majority of the states
- Emergency services organizations in significant parts of the US are non-profit organizations instead of special purpose local governments
- Officials of emergency services organizations misunderstand the need to have a voice heard, especially at the national level
- Mergers and consolidations may reduce membership
- Apathy
- Goals of other organizations may conflict with NAEFO's priorities



PRIORITIZED ISSUES

The planning team prioritized the issues to arrive at the top two or three focus areas in each SWOC category. Clear focus on these will help match Strengths with Weaknesses and Opportunities with Challenges and develop plans to respond to each. These represent issues that should be addressed in the near-term.

- Strengths
 - Strong state associations
 - Organizational structure in place
- Weaknesses
 - Low membership
 - Pacific Northwest oriented
 - Lack of commitment and follow through by the Board
 - Lack of membership engagement
- Opportunities
 - Join national organizations to influence legislation, regulations and policies
 - Partners exist to enhance effectiveness
- Challenges
 - Emergency services organizations in a significant part of the US are non-profit organizations instead of special purpose local governments
 - Apathy
 - Goals of other organizations may conflict with NAEFO priorities



Our Organization

Board of Directors

Bruce Suenram, President (Hamilton Rural Fire District)

Marvin Hill, Vice President (Barrington Countryside Fire Protection District)

Monte Olsen, Secretary (Western Cass Fire Protection District, Director, retired)

Kenneth Schmalbeck, Treasurer (Black Jack Fire Protection District, Director)

Candy McCullough, Immediate Past President (Vashon Island Fire and Rescue Fire)

Marvin Hill, Illinois State Director (Illinois Association of Fire Protection Districts)

Scott Barthelmass, Missouri State Director (Missouri Association of Fire Protection Districts)

Bonnie Jones, Montana State Director (Montana State Fire Trustees Association)

Jay Cross, Oregon State Director (Clackamas Fire District #1)

Texas State Director (vacant)

Gerry Gustafson, Washington State Director (Graham Fire and Rescue, Director)

Orlanda Smith, Director-At-Large (Black Jack Fire Protection District, Director)

Monte Olsen, Director-At-Large (Western Cass Fire Protection District, Director, retired)

Staff

Monte Olsen, Executive Director Locum



Standing Committees

ByLaws Committee

Communication Committee

Conference and Education Committees

Legislative Committee

Membership Committee

Sponsorship Committee





Planning for Change

Vision

The National Association of Emergency and Fire Officials in a forward thinking national organization that speaks with a unified voice for all elected fire officials for the purpose of influencing legislation, policies, and regulations relating to the fire service.

Mission

'To represent and inform emergency and fire officials of national issues and provide assistance to state associations.'

Guiding Principles

- *Integrity in our performance*
- *A high regard for public trust*
- *Voicing diverse opinions but acting cohesively*
- *Careful evaluation of issues and the proposal of thoughtful solutions*
- *Fiscal responsibility*
- *Respecting fire service traditions without inhibiting progress*
- *Appreciation for the contributions of those who volunteer with NAEFO*
- *The willingness to face challenge and the ability to act*



Strategic Goals

Goal 1 – Membership

Strategically increase membership reflecting a national presence

A major issue for NAEFO over the past few years is a dwindling membership base. In the current economic climate, association's and individual budgets have been cut affecting the attendance at conferences and membership dues for associations.

In addition to increasing the overall membership base, NAEFO is focused on adding members in strategic areas and regions that will demonstrate a national presence as well as create interest for other potential members. A strong unified voice, addressing important national, state and member issues will be the best reflection of the Vision statement.



Objective 1-A: Conduct current and former member research to analyze current needs and reasons members have left the association.

Priority: High (critical)

Timeline: Short Term (1 - 12 months)

Responsibility: Membership Committee

Critical Tasks:

- Continue to maintain a list of all current and past members
- Create list of questions for current members
 - Current issues and hot buttons
 - Why did they decide to join NAEFO
 - What is the expectation of value from their membership
- Create list of questions for past members
 - Current issues and hot buttons
 - Why did they decide to leave the association
 - What is the expectation of value from a membership
 - What would it take to have them come back as members
- Ascertain medium for contact, e.g., in person, via telephone, online survey
- Assign best contact for the given situation
- Create a log for contacts made and follow up timelines

Performance Indicators:

- Understanding of the issues current members need help with
- Further definition of current member expectations of membership benefits
- Understanding why former members have left
- Formal or informal commitment of former members to re-evaluate membership

Outcomes:

Research process is initiated that will provide the value proposition (what NAEFO can uniquely deliver to members) for current members and how communication of membership benefits may bring former members back to the association.



Objective 1-B: Target recruiting of new members in strategic locations to demonstrate a national presence and attract others.

Priority: High

Timeline: Short (1 – 12 month)

Responsibility: Membership Committee

Critical Tasks:

- Use NAEFO membership to define target states membership including: Utah, Colorado, Arizona, Florida, New Jersey, New York, and California
- Research the unknown states from the NAEFO membership map to define whether a district or state association structure
- Assign appropriate person to network with decision makers in target states
- Invite target states to the national conference and include enticements, e.g., speaking opportunities, free or reduced registration fees
- Create a log for contacts made and follow up timelines

Performance Indicators:

- The membership map is completed to remove the unknown designations from those states listed as such
- Contact target states and have an expectation of meeting, whether at the NAEFO conference, or at their own state association meetings

Outcomes:

To best manage marketing resources, targeting of new members will be organized along the lines of the target states – states without an organization to provide a voice for elected officials of emergency services agencies. Additional states will be added as current membership numbers rise.



Goal 2 – Congressional Fire Service Institute Membership (National Advisory Committee)

To fulfill our Vision of being a unified voice to influence legislation, policies and regulations, NAEFO will seek a seat at the table on the National Advisory Committee

An important component of realizing the Vision of NAEFO is national presence. NAEFO cannot offer a compelling benefit to membership without the ability to act as a resource to elected officials on the matters that impact their agencies the most. Providing valuable insight into issues, along with their thoughtful solutions, include the ability to be part of the National Advisory Committee that impacts legislation, policies and regulations that most affect the fire service.

NAEFO has initiated the process to become a part of this national conversation and needs to put the pieces in place to provide for that formal recognition as a member of the Congressional Fire Service Institute.



Objective 2-A: Meet national presence requirement by increasing members geographically.

Priority: High

Timeline: Short (1 – 12 month)

Responsibility: Membership Committee

Critical Tasks:

- Use target states established in prior goal and membership map update
- Identify the most effective way to encourage participation, e.g., free membership or continued reduced membership for a set period of time
- Establish a second-tier of targeted states
- Ask targeted states to provide a statement about membership benefits to attract others

Performance Indicators:

- Targeted states are contacted
- Three of the six target states have been brought into the association by the end of 2026
- Target states will commit to communicating the benefits of memberships

Outcomes:

NAEFO will increase membership in important geographic areas to fulfill the requirement of diversity during the CFSI application process. Additionally, other states will be added that include significant populations to best reflect the strength in numbers for a unified voice.



Objective 2-B: Contact representatives at the Congressional Fire Service Institute to understand the application process and additional requirements.

Priority: High

Timeline: Short (1 – 12 month)

Responsibility: President and Executive Director

Critical Tasks:

- Renew the communications surrounding the application process and criteria for CFSI selection
- Communicate goal to join CFSI and ask new member states to provide testimonials on the importance of the appointment
- Informally discuss application process with CFSI leadership to ascertain any intangibles which would strengthen the application when submitted.

Performance Indicators:

- Conditions listed by CFSI are identified and a checklist of tasks to perform are created
- Task list is completed

Outcomes:

The NAEFO Board is aware of the application process and additional requirements for joining CFSI. NAEFO is prepared to remove any remaining roadblocks until appointment. NAEFO will be prepared to submit the application when additional states join.



Objective 2-C: Demonstrate to CFSI that an organizational structure is in place.

Priority: High

Timeline: Short (1 – 12 month)

Responsibility: President and Executive Director

Critical Tasks:

- Promote the ‘Elevator Speech’ that articulates the Vision, Mission, and Guiding Principles, and to demonstrate the need for inclusion of the unified voices of NAEFO within CFSI
- Distribute strategic plan to current members and target members
- Keep the website and social media updated to reflect current organizational events
- Document history including wins and accomplishments
- Prioritize a list of major legislative, regulation and political issues
- Find a rallying issue and communicate the message

Performance Indicators:

- Recognition and acceptance of NAEFO by member organizations and national entities
- Members asking for the NAEFO stance on current issues
- Members requesting additional support on their own individual initiatives

Outcomes:

NAEFO will be able to provide the components of a fully integrated organizational structure to the CFSI decision makers to further advance the idea that the unified voices of NAEFO need to be heard in this venue.



Goal 3 – Organizational Structure

Strengthen the NAEFO organizational structure

An appropriate organizational structure is critical to executing on the Vision and Mission of NAEFO. Without the foundational pieces in place, NAEFO will lack relevancy and importance to members and other national organizations. Due to the constrained resources of the association, this requires creativity in setting the organizational presence. NAEFO will identify the correct balance of partnering and volunteerism to create the structure required to remain a viable organization.



Objective 3-A: Retain an Executive Director.

Priority: Medium

Timeline: Ongoing

Responsibility: Board of Directors

Critical Tasks:

- Maintain a position description
- Continually evaluate which Executive Director duties can be performed by others
- Continually evaluate the level of effort required for remaining duties
- Network for potential volunteer, gratis services, commission opportunities

Performance Indicators:

- Position description updated from time to time
- Low turnover without significant periods without an Executive Director

Outcomes:

The services of an Executive Director will be retained balancing duties with Executive Director availability with some duties assigned to others as appropriate.



Objective 3-B: Find partnerships to recognize and promote NAEFO.

Priority: High

Timeline: Ongoing

Responsibility: President, Executive Director, and Sponsorship Committee

Critical Tasks:

- Create the value proposition – how is NAEFO uniquely qualified to deliver services to members
- Identify acceptable partners that can help further the value proposition without direct competition
- Request partners to recognize and promote NAEFO via website links, and speaking engagements

Performance Indicators:

- Two potential partners will be identified
- Partners will be contacted
- Joint marketing opportunities will be found

Outcomes:

Partners will work with NAEFO to create joint strategies which further NAEFO's cause. Partners will advocate for NAEFO in its absence.



Objective 3-C: Institute formal advocacy and coalition management at the national level.

Priority: High

Timeline: Short (1 – 12 months)

Responsibility: Executive Director and Board of Directors

Critical Tasks:

- Create the value proposition for potential individuals and organizations that provide advocacy and coalition management – how is NAEFO’s future advantageous to these individuals and organizations
- Identify individuals and organizations that are interested in building a long-term relationship providing NAEFO with advocacy and coalition management
- Implement formal advocacy and coalition management

Performance Indicators:

- Creation of a request for proposal-type document
- Identification of individuals and organizations providing advocacy and coalition management
- Discussions and solicitations with individuals and organizations providing advocacy and coalition management
- Implementation of formal advocacy and coalition management

Outcomes:

NAEFO will have formal advocacy and coalition management which furthers NAEFO’s cause and helps NAEFO members fulfil the mission of its members and emergency services organizations.

NAEFO will be better poised to institute a formal advocacy presence in Washington, D.C. (Objective 3-D).



Objective 3-D: Institute formal advocacy presence at the national level.

Priority: Medium

Timeline: Medium (12 – 24 months)

Responsibility: Executive Director and Board of Directors

Critical Tasks:

- Establish formal advocacy and coalition management (Objective 3-C)
- Create the value proposition for potential individuals and organizations that provide an advocacy presence in Washington, D.C. – how is NAEFO’s future advantageous to these individuals and organizations
- Identify individuals and organizations that are interested in building a long-term relationship of providing NAEFO an advocacy presence in Washington, D.C.
- Implement a formal advocacy presence in Washington, D.C.

Performance Indicators:

- Establishment of formal advocacy and coalition management (Objective 3-C)
- Creation of a request for proposal-type document
- Identification of individuals and organizations providing an advocacy presence in Washington, D.C. that would be a good fit for NAEFO and these individuals and organizations
- Discussions and solicitations with individuals and organizations providing an advocacy presence in Washington, D.C.
- Implementation of a formal advocacy presence in Washington, D.C.

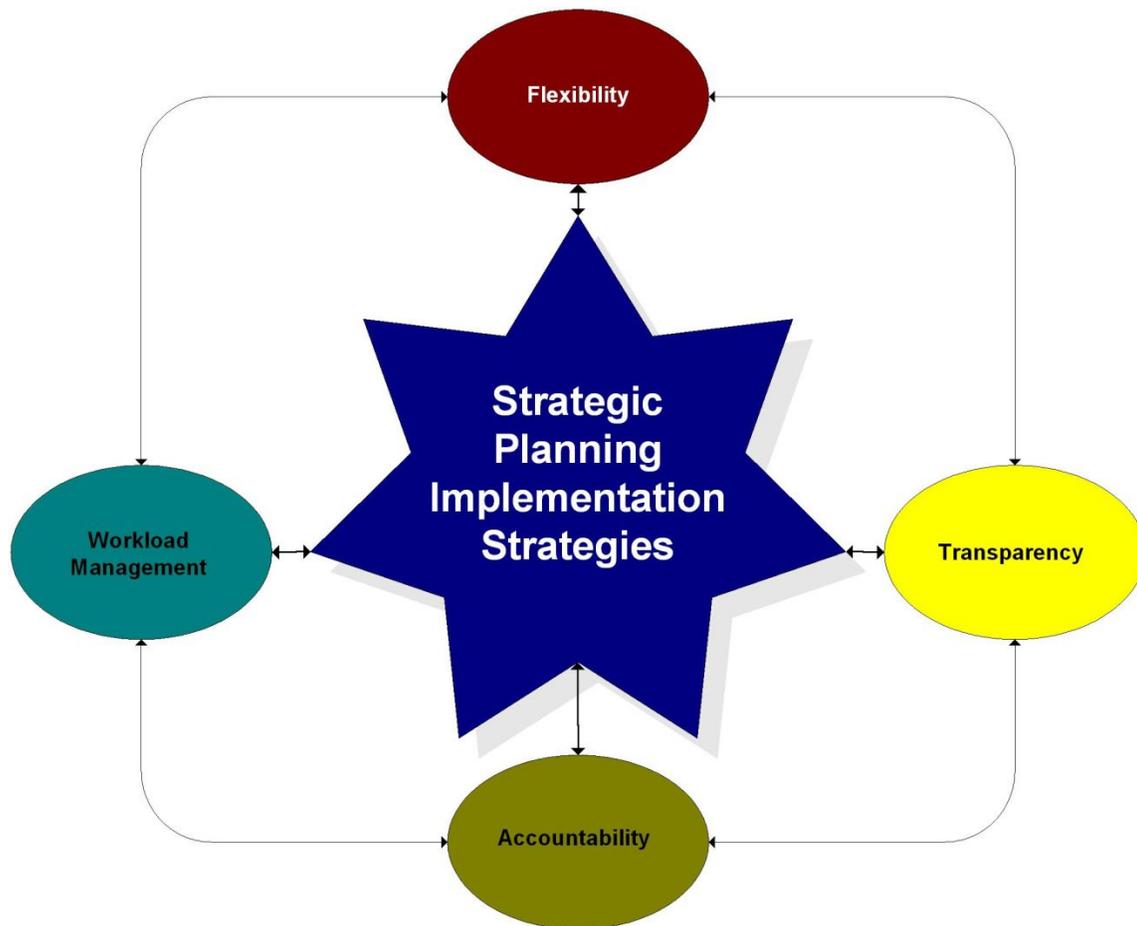
Outcomes:

NAEFO will have a formal advocacy presence in Washington, D.C., which furthers NAEFO’s cause and helps NAEFO members fulfil the mission of its members and emergency services organizations.



Implementation Methodology

The key to the success of a strategic plan is its implementation. A successful implementation methodology (strategies) includes assigned responsibilities for the overall management of the plan; ensuring that there is accountability at all levels; the incorporation of the accomplishment of goals, objectives, and critical tasks into individual performance appraisals; routine reporting of the status of the plan; organizational and community reporting, and the regular updating of the plan and its content.





Timeline

Timelines are in each objective

