

FY 2011-
FY 2015

Grand Rapids Fire Department Strategic Plan



Putting the Pieces Together

Updated June 2013



Fire Chief's Message

I am extremely pleased to present the first formally published strategic plan for the Grand Rapids Fire Department. This document marks a formal paradigm shift in the way the GRFD approaches change management. Gone are the days of being reactive to the external environment and economic forces that surround us. Over the past several years our organization has had to adapt quickly to maintain our service level to the citizens of Grand Rapids and surrounding communities. All of this took place amidst significant budgetary and personnel cuts, but through the hard work of our employees, the GRFD has been successful in the face of adversity!

The City of Grand Rapids is currently undergoing a large scale transformation, literally looking at every conceivable service delivery method to achieve maximum positive outcomes, tempered by the need to remain fiscally responsible. This level of efficiency cannot be achieved without a vision of where the city is headed and how each individual department's actions support the initiative. The City of Grand Rapids has published a sustainability plan, which we currently play an integral role in meeting the public safety outcomes. Our internal strategic plan will assist us in reaching those stated goals.

The strategic planning process has provided us a template for self-evaluation, reflection and transformation. We held in-depth command staff meetings, distributed a survey department wide, contacted neighborhood and business associations and finally compressed all of the information into a few targeted outcomes. This plan will carry us into the future as a lean, focused and efficient organization that I am proud to lead.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Laura L. Knapp".

Fire Chief Laura Knapp



Process Overview

The strategic planning process for the department formally started in June of 2010 with weekly meetings between the Strategic Planning Office and the Fire Chief, however, the roots of GRFD's planning go back decades. In 1983, the department contracted John T. O'Hagan, former FDNY chief and commissioner, to study the organization. In 1995, an organizational needs inventory was conducted by Growth Through People, Inc., a local consulting firm. Fast forward to 2004 when a city facilitated planning process was undertaken, including a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis. In 2005, an employee opinion survey was conducted by a graduate student at Western Michigan University. Although many changes have taken place as a result of the past studies, a common theme was present in all of them: lack of vision of where the department is going.

In 2005, the GRFD officially started the accreditation process through the Center for Public Safety Excellence. One of the components of this program is an adopted, published strategic plan; in addition to a comprehensive risk assessment, self assessment and standards of cover. Previous to this endeavor, the vast majority of decisions were budgetary based and reactive in nature. The strategic planning process started out as a way to meet the criterion laid forth by the accreditation process, but quickly became important for a multitude of other reasons. Significant budgetary cuts left the department in a state of shock, with personnel layoffs, elimination of capital improvements, and the prospect of additional negative forces on the horizon. It was decided that amidst all of the turmoil, that this was the best time for the GRFD to formally adopt a strategic plan; to be the guiding light for our organization and align with the city's transformation efforts.

In early September 2010, the command staff and the strategic planning officers held frequent meetings to review earlier surveys, identify our current needs and look to the future in regards to planning. Numerous ideas were discussed, including our current mission, vision and goal statements that were authored by a group of GRFD employees during the early 2000's. A COWS (Challenges, Opportunities, Weaknesses, and Strengths) analysis was performed and internal survey was drafted based on Mark Wallace's book, "Strategic Planning for the Fire Service". In October, an internal survey was placed on SharePoint for all GRFD employees to participate in. It was decided by the command staff that the survey should be voluntary, and was completed by 36.2% of the possible respondents.

The focus then shifted to the external customers to ensure that we are aligned with their desires for the area. The City of Grand Rapids has established a proactive working relationship with Grand Valley State University to form the Transformation Research and Analysis Team. City departments post their research projects onto a dedicated SharePoint site and are assigned a student and an advisor to oversee the external customer research. The GRFD elected to utilize this process to reach as many potential respondents as possible. Neighborhood and business associations were targeted to ensure feedback from the most engaged members of the community. The GRFD command staff met on June 2, 2011 and June 9, 2011 to review all data and discuss the long term needs of the organization and how they align with the employee, citizen and city input. The culmination of the above is the first formally published strategic plan for the fire department, which brings the GRFD one step closer to excellence!



Mission Statement

The GRFD will provide the highest level of service to our community through a commitment to excellence.

Vision Statement

The GRFD strives to be an accredited national fire service leader that aligns with community needs and provides a secure work environment for its members. This is accomplished by diverse partnerships, increased adaptability, fluid communication, complete transparency and a preventative mindset towards all endeavors.

Value Statement

The GRFD is committed to doing what is right through:

Honesty

Integrity

Loyalty

Teamwork

Excellence



COWS Analysis

Challenges

- Fiscal Climate
- Morale
- Management
- Lack of Media Accuracy
- Citizen Support/Public Perception
- Personnel Resources
- Changing Fire Service
- Inexperienced Workforce
- Lack of Interoperability
- EMS Service Challenged
- Politics
- Unknown Community Desires

Opportunities

- EMS Service Delivery
- Consolidation
- Media Relationships
- Coordination with Other Agencies
- Diversification of Services
- Private Sector Partnerships
- Increase Workforce Diversity
- City Support
- Local 366 Relationship
- Community Involvement
- Leadership
- Revenue Streams
- Dispatch

Weaknesses

- Resistance to Change
- Seizing Empowerment
- Lack of Vision
- Officer Development/Leadership
- Planning
- Negative Culture
- Proper Utilization of Resources
- Accountability
- Equalization of Workload
- Community Involvement
- Lack of Consistency
- Integration of Specialty Response

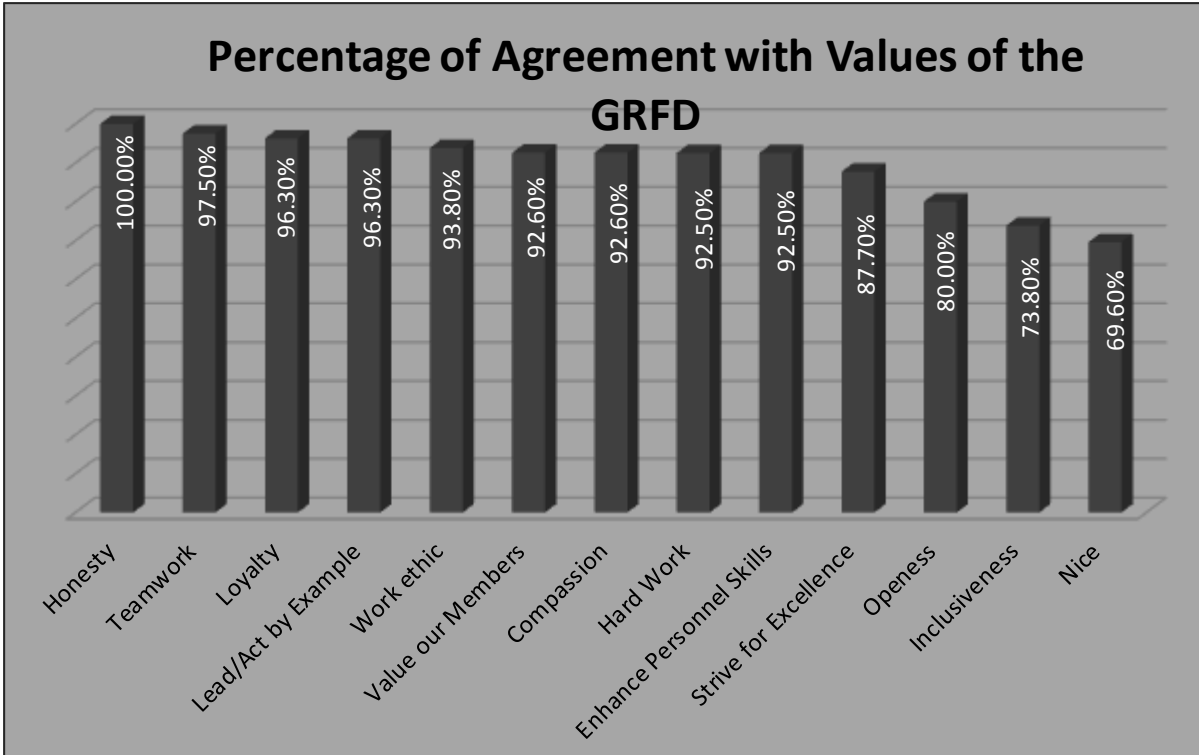
Strengths

- Unified Command Staff
- Desire to do the right thing
- Equipment/Apparatus
- Regional Training Center
- EMS Delivery
- Desire to Improve
- Emergency Response
- Grants
- Educated Workforce
- Workforce
- Union/Management Relationship

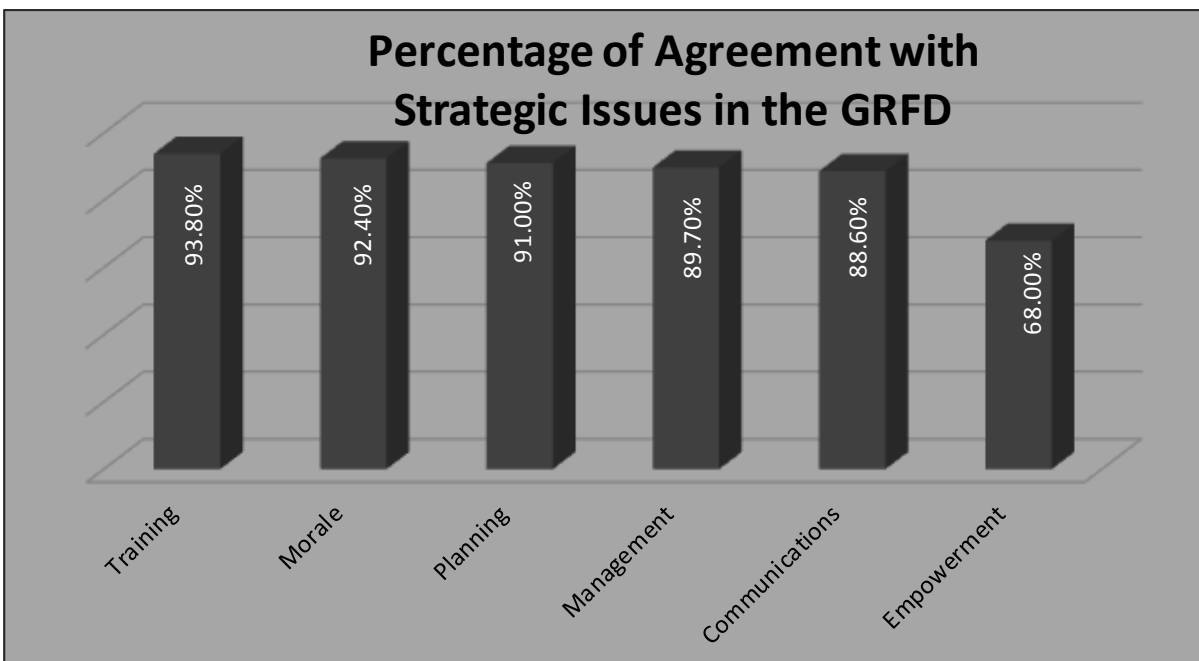


Internal Survey

One of the greatest insights during the command staff meetings was the identification of the values that were important to them as both individuals and fire chiefs. These values were placed in the internal survey of our fire department, with the overwhelming majority of values being highly agreed upon. This valuable information will help to guide the organization’s goals, while aligning with our values.



Other important information gleaned were strategic issues identified by the command staff and rated by our personnel. As you can see, all six major themes rated in varying degrees of importance.



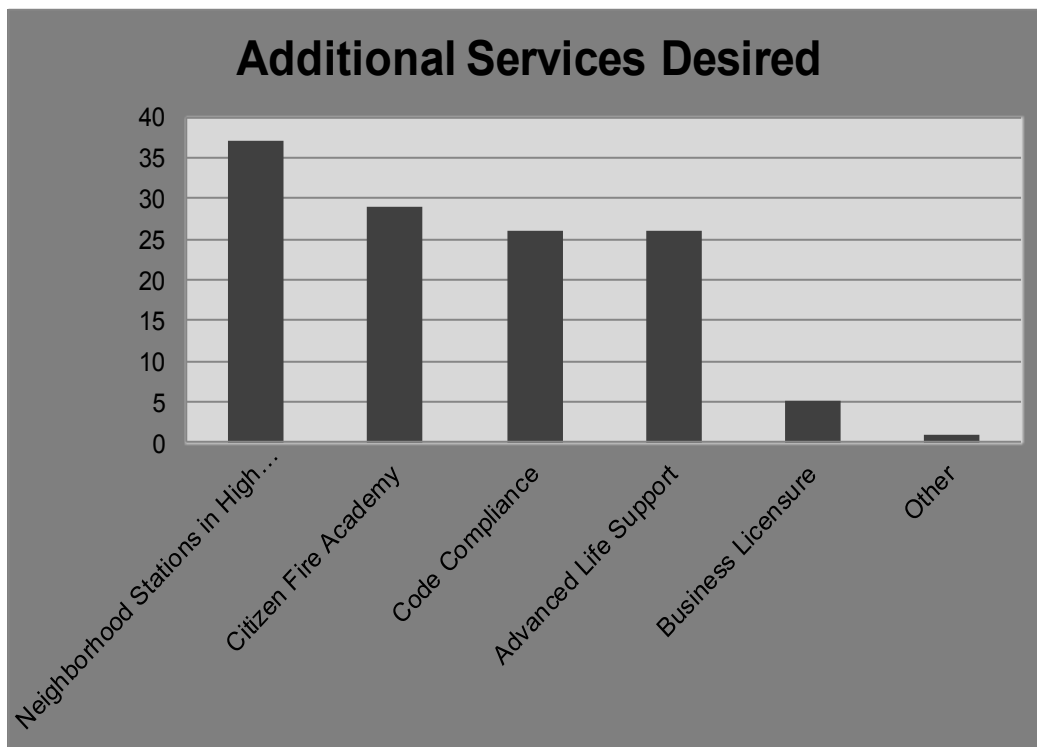
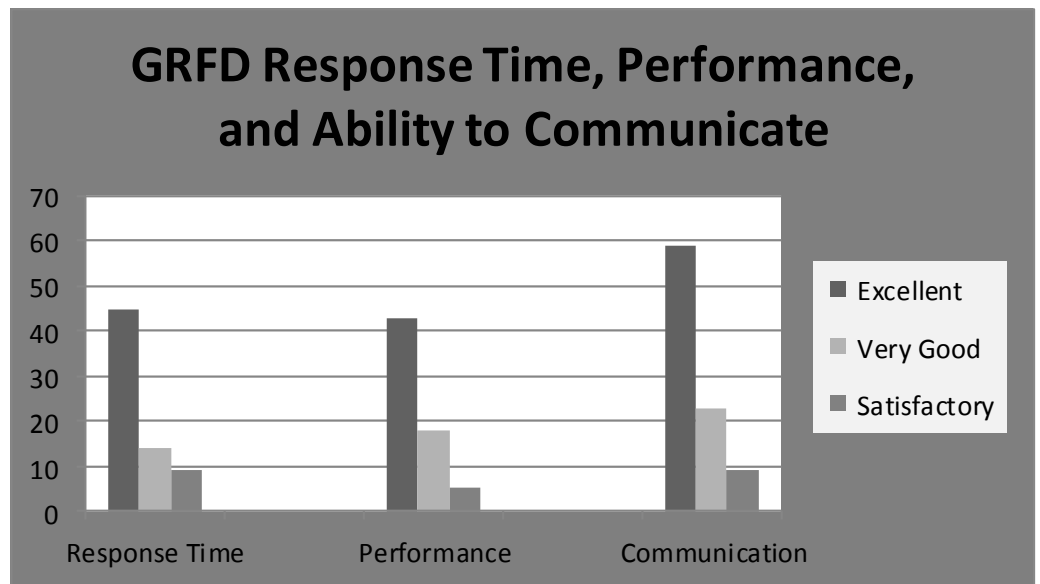


External Survey

Throughout this strategic planning process, the common theme has been to ask. Ask our personnel, ask our city leaders and most importantly, ask our customers what type of fire department they desire. This external survey was the first time the GRFD had sought this amount of feedback from the community.

In collaboration with Grand Valley State University's Transformation Research and Analysis Team, the GRFD was able to collect 129 surveys, with 48% of the respondents having some type of formal emergency or non emergency contact with the department. This data was collected from April 18th, 2011 through May 16th, 2011, and targeted neighborhood associations throughout the city, giving a wide cross section of socio-economic backgrounds, education levels, ethnicity and ages.

Overall, the citizens rated the department very high in regards to response time, performance and the ability to communicate.



Moving beyond the normal survey questions relating to satisfaction of service levels, we asked about additional services the respondents would like to see offered. The results will be incorporated into our long range planning.



Outcomes

The outcome portion of this strategic plan is the culmination of various groups' input from throughout the community. We have taken into consideration the City of Grand Rapids sustainability plan, feedback from the City's transformation team, internal issues and goals, as well as external stakeholder input. The current challenges are not unique to Grand Rapids. The overriding theme for the next five years in the GRFD is transformation; to look at how operations are conducted, to incorporate best practices from the fire industry and to emerge as a strong, progressive and effective department amidst the economic turmoil surrounding us. To accomplish these transformational outcomes, the following targets will be our driving force and have been established utilizing the SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and time bound) methodology.

After in-depth discussions at the command staff meetings, it was decided that all strategic issues for the GRFD could be condensed into three core areas: Fiscal Diversity, Organizational Transformation and Workforce Operations. The progress of these will be tracked on a quarterly basis with annual updates to the strategic plan which utilizes the following format:

Legend		
	Not Started	
	In Process	
	Completed	

Outcome 1- Fiscal Diversity

Many of the issues facing the GRFD today are rooted in the fiscal crisis facing the city. It was decided that diversification of our funding is crucial to remaining flexible and sustainable, regardless of the external forces. Partnerships, sponsorships and enhanced services will all be explored to ensure the continued safety of our community and security for our members.

Owner	Administrative Deputy Chief	
Target 1.1	Identify and pursue five alternative sources of funding by December 31st, 2013	
	Task 1.1A	Research other federal non-AFG funding streams.
	Task 1.1B	Research state level funding opportunities.
	Task 1.1C	Research local and private funding opportunities.
	Task 1.1D	Compile list of available funding sources that GRFD qualifies for.
	Task 1.1E	Identify and pursue selected funding sources.

Owner	Strategic Planning Office	
Target 1.2	Research enhanced services and complete a risk/benefit analysis with draft implementation plan by the completion of FY 2013 (June 30, 2013)	
	Task 1.2A	Identify enhanced services that can be provided by the GRFD.
	Task 1.2B	Perform a feasibility study on the identified services.
	Task 1.2C	Incorporate ICMA report recommendations.
	Task 1.2D	Gain approval from Fire Chief and City Management for selected identified services.
	Task 1.2E	Acquire necessary funds for projects.
	Task 1.2F	Draft implementation plan for approved selected services.
	Task 1.2G	Administer plan and measure outcomes.

Owner	Fire Chief	
Target 1.3	Comply with City of Grand Rapids transformation plan fiscal requirements by completion of FY 2015 (June 30, 2015)	
	Task 1.3A	Perform comprehensive budget analysis on potential funding reductions.
	Task 1.3B	Research alternative service delivery methods to provide comparable service levels and outcomes.
	Task 1.3C	Draft A3's.
	Task 1.3D	Present A3's and gain City approval.
	Task 1.3E	Write operational plan for each approved A3.
	Task 1.3F	Execute the plans and measure outcomes.



Outcome 2- Organizational Transformation

To remain a successful fire and rescue organization, change is inevitable. Innovative changes must take place in a coordinated effort to achieve the desired outcomes and truly renovate our organization.

Owner	Strategic Planning Office	
Target 2.1	Evaluate new suppression technology and draft implementation plan by December 31st, 2014	
	Task 2.1A	Research new suppression technology.
	Task 2.1B	Study integration of technology with GRFD.
	Task 2.1C	Select appropriate methods for implementation.
	Task 2.1D	Secure funds for selected methods.
	Task 2.1E	Write operational plan for designated concepts.
	Task 2.1F	Construct appropriate SOGs, training manual documents, and memos as necessary.

Owner	Strategic Planning Office	
Target 2.2	Complete operational plan to achieve strategic outcomes by December 31st, 2012.	
	Task 2.2A	Identify the functional areas and programs within the department and their associated personnel.
	Task 2.2B	Establish process for tracking planning progress.
	Task 2.2C	Train program managers individually according to the operational plan.
	Task 2.2D	Measure operational plan outcomes on a quarterly basis.

Owner	Administrative Deputy Chief	
Target 2.3	Increase the frequency, accuracy and quality of internal and external communications through various means including a public information officer by December 31st, 2012	
	Task 2.3A	Evaluate current communication methods and their effectiveness.
	Task 2.3B	Draft potential counter-measures for identified deficiencies.
	Task 2.3C	Standardize and formalize public information duties.

Owner	Strategic Planning Office	
Target 2.4	Implement organization wide and program specific measurements to gauge our performance and enhance our marketability by December 31, 2012	
	Task 2.4A	Identify one key performance indicator (KPI) for each functional area and program within the department.
	Task 2.4B	Ensure accurate data for measurement of KPI.
	Task 2.4C	Incorporate KPI into the operational plan tracking process.

Owner	Strategic Planning Office	
Target 2.5	Maximize current resource effectiveness by matching risk to resources through a standards of coverage process by June 30, 2013	
	Task 2.5A	Review of current deployment including description of community served, services provided, existing performance goals and community expectations.
	Task 2.5B	Update Risk Assessment data and utilize GIS to map hazards.
	Task 2.5C	Measure current system performance using historical data.
	Task 2.5D	Define Baseline and Benchmark performance standards.
	Task 2.5E	Formulate recommendations based on completion of SOC.
	Task 2.5F	Submit to Fire Chief for Approval.
	Task 2.5G	Submit to City Management for Approval.
	Task 2.5H	Incorporate into regularly updated planning process.

Owner	Strategic Planning Office	
Target 2.6	Continue to align with the accreditation process administered by the Center for Public Safety Excellence and submit required documents by June 30, 2014	
	Task 2.6A	Maintain Applicant Agency Status.
	Task 2.6B	Submit Proper Forms and Fees to become Candidate Agency.
	Task 2.6C	Complete updating Strategic Plan.
	Task 2.6D	Complete Self Assessment Manual.
	Task 2.6E	Complete Standards of Coverage.
	Task 2.6F	Gain Fire Chief's Approval on all documents.
	Task 2.6G	Submit all documents to CPSE and begin peer review process.

Owner	Administrative Deputy Chief	
Target 2.7	Increase public and private partnerships by December 31st, 2012	
	Task 2.7A	Identify key areas where partnerships are possible throughout GRFD.
	Task 2.7B	Contact potential partners.
	Task 2.7C	Develop potential projects in conjunction with willing agencies.
	Task 2.7D	Administer project as collaborative effort.

Owner	Fire Marshal/EMS Coordinator	
Target 2.8	Shift focus of organization towards prevention and preparedness efforts to ensure a proactive approach to all hazards-mitigation by June 30, 2013	
	Task 2.8A	Perform baseline analysis of current service level demands and risks.
	Task 2.8B	Identify key areas where prevention will have largest positive impact.
	Task 2.8C	Develop programs to address identified areas.
	Task 2.8D	Secure funding from various sources to establish program.
	Task 2.8E	Implement risk based prevention efforts.
	Task 2.8F	Monitor progress and adjust programs as necessary.
	Task 2.8G	Once initial programs are running, address the next most severe risk categories.

Owner	Fire Chief	
Target 2.9	Continue to focus efforts on internal and external consolidation by June 30, 2014	
	Task 2.9A	Explore areas of possible internal consolidation/position realignment.
	Task 2.9B	Draft proposal and organizational charts for chief approval.
	Task 2.9C	Incorporate ICMA report recommendations into process.
	Task 2.9D	Implement internal changes.
	Task 2.9E	Implement external changes.
	Task 2.9F	Monitor pre and post consolidation metrics.



Outcome 3- Workforce Operations

The success of any organization hinges on the talent and effort of their workforce. A personnel centric organization that is successful provides the proper platform, empowerment and resources for their employees to succeed.

Owner	Administrative Deputy Chief
Target 3.1	Institute a committee to address departmental issues such as morale and suggest appropriate countermeasures by December 31st, 2012
Task 3.1A	Draft memo to department inquiring for interest in committee.
Task 3.1B	Write documents outlining purpose, scope and authority of group.
Task 3.1C	Allocate resources to ensure success of committee.
Task 3.1D	Monitor key metrics to track progress.

Owner	Fire Chief
Target 3.2	Shift appropriate personnel into the training division to accomplish needed workforce operations for the department, city and regional training center by December 31st, 2012
Task 3.2A	Identify key attributes for new positions and draft job description.
Task 3.2B	Receive job description approval from civil service board.
Task 3.2C	Ready workspace and technology requirements at training center.
Task 3.2D	Open application process and test for potential candidates.
Task 3.2E	Complete promotional process and promote two personnel.

Owner	Fire Chief
Target 3.3	To ensure continuity in the organization, a succession management plan will be developed and implemented by completion of FY 2013 (June 30, 2013)
Task 3.3A	Research successful succession management plans.
Task 3.3B	Construct draft version of GRFD succession management plan.
Task 3.3C	Gain approval from command staff.
Task 3.3D	Incorporate into all facets of organization including mentoring and promotional process.
Task 3.3E	Train organization on aspects of plan.

Owner	Training Chief
Target 3.4	Define and implement annual training requirements to comply with mandated hours as laid forth by regulatory agencies with all tracking to take place in Firehouse RMS by December, 31st, 2012
Task 3.4A	Identify minimum legal training requirements for all disciplines.
Task 3.4B	Formulate GRFD minimum training requirements and expected operational capabilities for all personnel and disciplines.
Task 3.4C	Gain approval from command staff.
Task 3.4D	Build all requirements into Firehouse RMS.
Task 3.4E	Implement process to convey information in a frequent manner to all employees.

Owner	Training Chief
Target 3.5	Increase regional training center efforts including academies, simulators and hosting national level courses by completion of FY 2013 (June 30, 2013)
Task 3.5A	Assess previous RTC classes, attendance, revenue and other measures.
Task 3.5B	Develop plan to increase RTC efforts without impacting GRFD training.
Task 3.5C	Gain approval from Fire Chief and schedule classes a year in advance.

Owner	Training Chief
Target 3.6	Partnerships will be established with higher education facilities to provide various levels of certificates and degrees by December 31st, 2013
Task 3.6A	Identify potential higher education partnerships in Grand Rapids area.
Task 3.6B	Develop courses/programs for various position levels.
Task 3.6C	Integrate into succession management plan.
Task 3.6D	Secure funding/discounts for GRFD personnel.
Task 3.6E	Obtain feedback from participants to incorporate into future course offerings.

GRFD Strategic Plan Scorecard

Department Area Responsible	Targets			Tasks		
	Number	Complete	Percentage	Number	Complete	Percentage
Fire Chief	4	1	25.00%	22	13	59.09%
Administrative Deputy Chief	4	0	0.00%	16	7	43.75%
Training Chief	3	0	0.00%	13	6	46.15%
Fire Marshal/EMS Coordinator	1	0	0.00%	7	6	85.71%
Strategic Planning Office	6	2	33.33%	35	21	60.00%
GRFD Total	18	3	16.67%	93	53	56.99%