May 2026

Washington Fire Chiefs Association

2026-2029 Strategic Plan

Prepared by: Public Entity Advocates, a subsidiary of WHA

Table of Contents

Executive Summary 2
The 5 Strategic Goals (2026–2029) 2
Headline Objectives & Targets (Illustrative) 3
90-Day "Quick Wins" 4
Implementation & Governance 4
Immediate Next Steps (for Board Action) 5
Mission Statement 6
Vision 6
Values 7
SWOT Analysis 8
Strategic Areas 9
SMART Goals 10
Strategic Aims, Key Initiatives, & Success Criteria 10
Membership Services 11
Professional Development 13
Financial Stability 15
Board & Staff Development 17
Advocacy & Legislation 19
Strategy Execution Process 21

Executive Summary

Context & Purpose

On April 29–30, 2025, WFC convened a two-day, facilitator-led strategic planning session with the Board, staff, section leaders, and key partners in Olympia. The purpose was to reaffirm WFC's mission/vision/values, assess the operating environment, and set a focused 3-year agenda with measurable goals, owners, and timelines. The work built on pre-reads, live facilitation, and committee breakouts aligned to SMART goal design.

Facilitation Approach

- **Day 1:** Purpose of WFC; refresh of mission, vision, values; environmental scan (strengths/weaknesses/opportunities/threats); synthesis of 5–7 strategic issue areas.
- **Day 2:** Convergence on top goals; committee breakouts to frame objectives, milestones, support needs, and success measures; alignment and next steps.

What We Heard (Themes)

- **Strengths:** Legislative engagement; professional staff; subject-matter expertise; strong external collaborations.
- **Challenges:** Limited staffing/capacity; website and calendar accessibility; need for gap analyses; communications consistency.
- **Risks/Threats:** Brand fragmentation/splintering; consolidation dynamics affecting dues; relevance and visibility in a digital era.
- **Opportunities:** Executive development; a searchable SME/resource hub; data sharing/analytics across agencies; technology-enabled communication.

The 5 Strategic Goals (2026–2029)

1. **Membership Services** — Provide responsive, high-value support, resources, and networking that strengthen member effectiveness and engagement. Priorities include a mobile-friendly communications hub, a searchable SME/resource repository, expanded peer learning, professional support, and a voluntary data-sharing framework to drive benchmarking and funding advocacy.
2. **Professional Development** — Sustain and enhance discipline-specific education; identify gaps and partnerships; and formalize executive pathways Eg (new chiefs'

tract, succession support, mentorship network, and peer support for senior leaders).

3. **Financial Stability** — Complete a strategic-plan analysis with costings to meet objectives; diversify revenues and manage dues impacts from mergers/consolidations via periodic review.
4. **Board & Staff Development** — Build capacity through service review, workflow/software efficiency checks, and a needs assessment; strengthen unity with regional groups. Develop succession plans with clear role definitions, vacancy advertising, bylaws alignment.
5. **Advocacy & Legislation** — Elevate brand identity, consistency, and relevance, formalize legislative governance, role, and cadence. Expand external coalitions for a unified agenda.

Headline Objectives & Targets (Illustrative)

- **Comms Hub:** Launch a unified, mobile-friendly platform.
- **Resource Center:** Maintain an integrated SME/SOG repository.
- **Peer Learning:** Increase participation in networking/summits by offering regional meetups and additional opportunities.
- **Data Sharing:** Explore partnership opportunities to establish a standardized framework.
- **Education:** Sustain section specific offerings each year; survey members and partner models to launch enhanced tracts.
- **Executive Pathways:** Operationalize new-chiefs tract; mentor network; and senior-leader peer support with measured uptake and satisfaction.
- **Finance:** Deliver plan costings by 09/01/2026; define diversified revenue options annually.
- **Governance:** Complete capacity assessment; adopt recommendations; codify succession and role clarity in bylaws/policies.
- **Advocacy:** Provide timely legislative updates; establish board-level legislative chair; expand formal partner calendar and joint priorities annually.

90-Day "Quick Wins"

To build momentum while larger systems are scoped:

1. **Communications/Brand:**
    - Publish a consistent **events/legislative** calendar.
    - Draft a "membership toolkit" to include onboarding, benefits, and key association processes.
2. **Governance/Capacity:**
    - Stand up **Goal Owner** working groups with Board guidelines finalize Responsible, Accountable, Consulted, and Informed.
    - Continuously monitor **capacity/efficiency** such as services, software, workflows.
3. **Education/Leadership:**
    - Explore the **New Chiefs** conference track at the 2026 WFC Conference.
4. **Finance:**
    - Begin **gap-analysis** inventory of goal-linked costs; compile Western Fire Chiefs Association (WFCA) revenue survey questions.

Implementation & Governance

- **Structure:** Create cross-functional **Goal Committees** led by named Board/staff owners; Executive Director supports integration and resourcing. Progress reviewed at Board Meetings with a public dashboard summary.
- **Cadence:**
    - **2026:** Comms hub build; capacity assessment; finance analysis; legislative cadence formalized.
    - **2027:** Resource center management; executive pathways operational; early revenue pilots; dues structure review cycle begins.
    - **2028:** Data-sharing framework; scale peer learning; evaluate and refresh plan inputs.

Immediate Next Steps (for Board Action)

1. **Approve** the Strategic Plan and Gantt Chart.
2. **Set** the Board Meeting reporting and success dashboard framework.
3. **Launch** the shared dashboard.
4. **Communicate** progress early and often—celebrate completions, not just effort.

Mission Statement

Providing leadership through service, education and advocacy.

Vision

Our Members

To provide an exceptional member experience as passionate professionals, with care and understanding.

Our Vendors

To develop the highest level of trust through effective communication and collaboration.

Our Industry

To be recognized as innovative fire service leaders and active in our state and federal legislative systems.

Our Finances

To act as good stewards and develop sustainable finances for the future.

Our Staff & Board

To foster a culture of support, promoting professional and personal growth and aspirations.

Values

Trust

The shared confidence among members that leaders and peers will communicate honestly, act ethically, maintain confidentiality, demonstrate dependable leadership, and collaborate professionally in support of shared fire service goals and positive public safety outcomes.

Collaboration

The active partnership among members to share knowledge, resources, experience, and leadership in a professional and respectful manner to advance shared fire service goals, strengthen regional relationships, and improve public safety outcomes.

Accountability

The commitment of members to uphold professional standards, fulfill responsibilities, act with integrity, and take ownership of decisions and actions in support of the Association's mission, shared fire service goals, and public safety outcomes.

Integrity

The consistent commitment of members to act honestly, ethically, professionally, and transparently in all decisions, relationships, and actions while upholding the values of the fire service and maintaining public trust.

Service

The dedication of members to support one another, strengthen the fire service, and serve their communities through leadership, professionalism, collaboration, and a commitment to public safety and organizational excellence.

SWOT Analysis

The **SWOT** distills WFC's **internal strengths** and **gaps** alongside the **external opportunities** and **risks** shaping our **environment**. By pairing **strengths** with **opportunities**, we surface **offensive plays** that expand **member value** and **impact**; by linking **weaknesses** to **threats**, we define **defensive priorities** to protect **capacity**, **brand**, and **finances**. The result is a **clear**, **shared view** of where to **focus**, how to **allocate resources**, and which **initiatives** to advance first.

Internal	**Strengths**	**Weaknesses**
	• Legislative Engagement • Professional Staff • External Collaboration • Subject Matter Experts • Quality of Education Offerings • Coordinated Advocacy • Subject Matter Experts • Subsection Support & Growth • External Collaboration	• Staffing Level for WFC • Time Requirement for Primary Positions • Subsection Alignment • Board Meeting Format • Website Accessibility • Communication & Calendar • Gap Analysis – Lack of Identity
External	**Opportunities**	**Threats**
	• Road Map – Lid Lifts/Levies • Subject Matter Experts & Resource Page • Data Sharing • Private & Public Partnerships • Executive Development • Leverage Technology	• Mergers & Consolidations Impacting Revenue • Splintering & Fracturing • Distance & Geography • Relevance & Branding • Association Funding • Behind in Technology • Overextended • Succession Planning

Strategic Areas

Strategic Areas	Description	Goal Areas
MEMBERSHIP SERVICES	*Provide responsive, high-value support, resources, and networking that strengthen member effectiveness and engagement*	1. Communication & Leverage Technology 2. Develop Member Resource Database with SMEs & Shared Tools 3. Increase Engagement Through Networking Events & Peer Learning 4. Create Data-Sharing Framework Across Fire Agencies
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	*Delivering relevant education and leadership training that equips current and future fire service leaders for excellence*	1. Education 2. Executive Development, Mentorship, & Support (Coaching)
FINANCIAL STABILITY	*Ensuring a robust and nimble fiscal foundation through sound stewardship, diversified revenue, and strategic budgeting*	1. Financial Gap Analysis 2. Revenue Model Diversification 3. Mergers, Consolidations, & Annexation (Manage the Impact)
BOARD & STAFF DEVELOPMENT	*Building leadership capacity and organizational strength through governance excellence, role clarity, and professional growth*	1. Organizational Capacity & Staffing 2. Organizational Unity 3. Succession Planning
ADVOCACY & LEGISLATION	*Championing fire service priorities through proactive legislative engagement, public policy leadership, and member advocacy tools*	1. Organizational Identity & Relevance 2. Legislative Engagement 3. External Collaboration

SMART Goals

Strategic Aims, Key Initiatives, & Success Criteria

A SMART goal clearly states **what** will be achieved, **how much** progress defines success, **who** owns delivery, **why** it matters, and **by when** it will be completed. Each goal is **Specific** (focused on one outcome), **Measurable** (with a numeric target and data source), **Achievable** (realistic given people, budget, and constraints), **Relevant** (aligned to the strategic priority and stakeholders' needs), and **Time-bound** (with a firm deadline and interim milestones). For every goal, we identify the baseline, target, owner(s), dependencies, risks, and reporting cadence, then track results using objective indicators (e.g., adoption rates, cycle times, satisfaction scores). Progress is reviewed regularly, and if a goal trends off-track, we adjust scope, resources, or timelines to ensure accountable, evidence-based execution (e.g., "Increase X from Y to Z by DATE").

Membership Services

Provide responsive, high-value support, resources, and networking that strengthen member effectiveness and engagement.

1 Communication & Leverage Technology

Sponsor: Brooks

Strategic Aim: By Q4 2025, launch a centralized, mobile-friendly communication platform (app or portal) to streamline updates, event info, and resource sharing for all WFC members.

Key Initiatives	**1. Evaluate current communication gaps**
	2. Research and select vendor
	3. Develop and launch the platform
	4. Train board and members on use

Success Criteria: WFC members are actively using mobile-accessible communication platforms that consolidate news, event registration, SME contacts, and resource updates. Survey annually to assess members needs and wants.

2 Develop Member Resource Database with SMEs & Shared Tools

Sponsor:

Strategic Aim: Create and maintain an accessible digital repository of subject matter experts (SMEs), model SOGs, and shared resources that increases members use annually.

Key Initiatives	**1. Identify and categorize SMEs by specialty**
	2. Collect SOGs, toolkits, and best practices
	3. Build searchable database hosted on WFC site

Success Criteria: A searchable, secure online resource center is fully integrated into the WFC website, offering member-submitted SOGs, policy templates, and direct contact info for vetted SMEs in areas like wildland fire, recruitment, and DEI. Most departments in the state report using this resource at least once per year for policy development, collaboration, or training reference.

3

Increase Engagement Through Networking Events & Peer Learning

Sponsor: Brooks

Strategic Aim: By end of 2027, increase member participation in statewide networking or peer-sharing events through annual regional meetups and/or a virtual summit per year.

Key Initiatives	**1. Host 4 regional meetups annually (in person)**
	2. Launch annual virtual member summit with rotating themes (e.g. DEI, mental wellness, command strategies)

Success Criteria: WFC successfully hosts four well-attended regional events annually and one high-impact virtual summit. Member engagement is measurably higher, as shown by an increase in event attendance, expanded inter-agency collaboration, and positive post-event evaluations. The calendar is now populated year-round with peer-led opportunities for connection and learning.

4

Create Data-Sharing Framework Across Fire Agencies

Sponsor: Brooks

Strategic Aim: 2028, implement a voluntary data-sharing framework with the Western Fire Chiefs Association that includes incident benchmarks, staffing data, and response metrics.

Key Initiatives	**1. Convene data task force to define key metrics**
	2. Select platform (PowerBI, FirstWatch, ESO, etc.)
	3. Develop data governance and security policy
	4. Conduct member onboarding/training

Success Criteria: A secure, standardized data platform is in place, aggregating incident response times, staffing levels, and other key performance indicators across more than half of Washington's fire agencies. The data is used in real-time dashboards and annual benchmarking reports that guide policy, funding requests, and operational improvements. Participating departments report value in data-informed decision-making and operational comparisons.

Professional Development

Delivering relevant education and leadership training that equips current and future fire service leaders for excellence.

1 Education

Sponsor: Brooks

A **Strategic Aim A**: Sustain and enhance targeted education offerings through association, section and committees.

Key Initiatives	**1. Engage with Board liaison and section/committee leaders to identify relevant disciplines specific offerings annually**
	2. Support at least a discipline specific offering annually
	3. Provide guidance and resources to sections and committee leaders to standardize processes

Success Criteria A: Consistent, relevant and sustainable educational offerings that meet the needs of all members.

B **Strategic Aim B**: Identify gaps and opportunities for enhancement to educational offerings.

Key Initiatives	**1. Evaluate other state and regional educational programs and delivery models**
	2. Pursue strategic partnerships for content development and delivery
	3. Build delivery models and timelines for new educational offerings

Success Criteria B: Enhanced relevant educational programs that provide value added training and educational tracks.

2 Executive Development, Mentorship, & Support (Coaching)

Sponsor: Brooks

A **Strategic Aim A**: Implement a forum for senior leadership (3,4, and 5 bugles) development.

Key Initiatives	**1. Partner with existing higher education institutions for content delivery and potential credit offerings**
	2. Advocate for certification pathways through existing development tracks
	3. Establish a standing "New Chiefs" track for the annual conference

Success Criteria A: Consistent path for equipping and developing new and aspiring senior leaders.

B **Strategic Aim B**: Develop and facilitate a mentoring network for new and aspiring senior leaders.

Key Initiatives	**1. Solicit for well-qualified mentors**
	2. Provide a forum for connecting aspiring leaders with mentors
	3. Transition participants to mentoring roles for sustainability

Success Criteria B: Consistent path for equipping and developing new and aspiring senior leaders.

C **Strategic Aim C**: Develop a peer support network for senior leaders (3,4, and 5 bugles).

Key Initiatives	**1. Evaluate and leverage existing resources to create a connectivity path**
	2. Disseminate and market resources to members
	3. Evaluate usage and modify resource offerings

Success Criteria C: All senior leaders are well supported and have ready access to confidential resources.

Financial Stability

Ensuring a robust and nimble fiscal foundation through sound stewardship, diversified revenue, and strategic budgeting.

1 Financial Gap Analysis

Sponsor: Brooks

Strategic Aim: Conduct a financial gap analyst to meet the 2026-2029 strategic plan.

Key Initiatives	**1. Identify objectives that will require financial support**
	2. Develop an estimated cost for each those objective
	3. Report gap funding needs to the Board
	4. Hypothesize potential fundings sources

Success Criteria: Develop an estimated cost projection for each objective and potential revenue sources in the 2026-2029 strategic plan.

2 Revenue Model Diversification

Sponsor: Brooks

Strategic Aim: To research and analyze new revenue streams for the WFC.

Key Initiatives	**1. Conduct a Western Fire Chiefs Association survey requesting venue resourcing data**
	2. Research data from the ASAE on recommended revenue streams for associations
	3. Explore joint ventures with partnership states, including conferences, trainings, and other joint ventures
	4. Explore joint public-private partnership ventures as a fiscal resource

Success Criteria: Define revenue sources to meet and exceed the future needs of the association including gap analysis and inflation.

3 Mergers, Consolidations, & Annexation (Manage the Impact)

Sponsor: Brooks

Strategic Aim: Review membership dues structure and impacts of mergers and consolidations.

Key Initiatives	**1. Create a technical advisory group to review membership structure**
	2. Identify organizations similar in funding structures and surveys to determine how they navigate mergers, consolidations, and annexations
	3. Develop a schedule to consistently evaluate the membership dues structure

Success Criteria: Create a stable and sustainable membership structure, which has a predictable and consistent cadence of review to ensure relevance and stability.

Board & Staff Development

Building leadership capacity and organizational strength through governance excellence, role clarity, and professional growth.

1 Organizational Capacity & Staffing

Sponsor: Brooks

Strategic Aim: Develop and launch a comprehensive branding and outreach strategy that increases awareness of the organization's identity and relevance, resulting in an increase in membership inquiries over the previous year.

Key Initiatives	**1. Review and evaluate WFC services**
	2. Evaluate internal processes and software applications to gauge efficiency
	3. Conduct a formal capacity needs assessment to provide recommendations to the Board

Success Criteria: Board adoption of recommendations for effective and efficient organization.

2 Organizational Unity

Sponsor: Brooks

Strategic Aim: Foster board, peer association, and external relationships.

Key Initiatives	**1. Representative(s) from both sections and the WFC Board attend each other's meetings**
	2. Align our legislative priorities, presenting a united front between groups
	3. Ongoing outreach to include welcoming new fire chiefs and explaining relevance of the WFC

Success Criteria: Stable and supportive relationships between the WFC and other Fire Chief groups.

Succession Planning

Sponsor: Brooks

3 **Strategic Aim**: Review and modify the by-laws to make sure there is succession planning included and uniformity throughout the association.

Key Initiatives	**1. Advertise vacancies and implement a more structured application process**
	2. Create clear role definitions
	3. Explore/create a 2nd Vice President position on the board for planned succession (like the IAFC)

Success Criteria: Cleary defined succession within the role of the Board, providing a stable and experienced Board, implementing the set model throughout the association.

Advocacy & Legislation

Championing fire service priorities through proactive legislative engagement, public policy leadership, and member advocacy tools.

1 Organizational Identity & Relevance

Sponsor: Brooks

Strategic Aim: Develop and launch a comprehensive branding and outreach strategy that increases awareness of the organization's identity and relevance, resulting in an increase in membership inquiries over the previous year.

Key Initiatives	**1. Conduct a gap analysis to identify areas where outreach efforts can be increased**
	2. Create a membership toolkit to show association relevance and membership benefits
	3. Create better separation between the fire chiefs and fire commissioners

Success Criteria: Better engage with current members and create a toolkit to show the relevance and benefits of being a WFC members.

2 Legislative Engagement

Sponsor: Brooks

Strategic Aim: Continue a high level of direct engagement with state and local legislators – as measured by meetings, testimony, and written communications -ensuring at least bi-monthly updates are provided to association members.

Key Initiatives	**1. Review bylaws to set the legislative chair as a standalone position on the Board**
	2. Create a standalone position on the board for the legislative chair (like Western Fire Chiefs Rep)
	3. Create a platform or process for updating members on legislative updates

Success Criteria: Create efficiencies in board duties for legislative engagement and create a process for better information flow out to the membership.

3 External Collaboration

Sponsor: Brooks/Doty

Strategic Aim: By January of each year, increase formal partnerships with external associations (e.g. commissioners association, state council, SFMO, WSFFA, AWC, etc.) and participate in joint meetings to enhance alignment on key public safety legislative priorities.

Key Initiatives	**1. Identify stakeholders at the regional level for the legislative process**
	2. Set a meeting schedule for the stakeholder group
	3. Set a more unified legislative agenda with fire service stakeholders

Success Criteria: Create an environment of increased collaboration with fire service stakeholders to put forth a more unified legislative agenda.

Strategy Execution Process

Commented [KM1]: Re-work with workflow process

The strategy execution process defines what needs to be done, by whom and by when. Sponsors are ultimately responsible for achieving a strategic goal. Champions are assigned specific strategic initiatives and given the support, including training and coaching, to facilitate effective cross functional work. Champions will meet regularly to coordinate their efforts, learn effective ways to engage others, and report progress on their assignments. The strategy execution process includes the following components:

1. **Selection:** Identify the right sponsors and champions for each of the strategic initiatives. Ensure that Sponsors and Champions are willing and able to perform their function for the assigned period.
2. **Training:** There is ongoing training for Sponsors and Champions on how to define objectives, lead effective initiatives, build collaborations across Divisions, and measure progress on assignments.
3. **Teams:** The temporary task forces working on strategic initiatives are called Teams. Teams are temporary task forces assigned to a strategic initiative with the knowledge and experience necessary to accomplish the tasks.
4. **Planning:** There is ongoing planning to define, scope, assign and review the work done by the Teams. Sponsors provide a high-level plan, while the tactical plans are set by the Champions under the Sponsor's oversight.
5. **Assignments:** Each Team works on accomplishing a well--defined assignment within a set time frame to produce specific deliverables.
6. **Reporting:** Champions conduct regular progress review and deliver an account of their assignment to the Sponsor and the entire leadership team. This includes reporting measurable impact of the strategic initiative on improved operational efficiency, quality, customer satisfaction, safety, and productivity.

The strategy execution process becomes a key developmental experience for the Champions. They commit up to 15% of their time for a period of a year to advance strategic objectives. After the period of a year, a new group of Champions will be selected to the role. Former Champions can act as mentors to new Champions.