

Governance

February 25, 2026

By conducting a thorough financial SWOT analysis, we can identify areas for improvement, prioritize strategic initiatives, and develop effective plans to ensure long-term financial stability and effective emergency response capabilities. The SWOT provides an opportunity for a closer look. It can help identify untapped areas for expansion or innovation. It can spot threats early to allow for proactive strategies. It can help give a realistic view of where things stand and where to go next. It can help in setting priorities and making informed decisions.

This is one of eight priority areas identified for a periodic SWOT analysis. Governance refers to the district's priority to ensure that its mission, core values, legal obligations, bylaws, policies and procedures, roles and responsibilities, strategic plan and its history are clearly documented and understood.

Strengths: What we and others have identified strengths, our capacities and unique capabilities - what we do well. Identified to assure that CCFPD4 is providing the services requested by the community and to ensure that its strengths are consistent with the issues it's facing.

- Management excellence - repeated state financial excellence awards.
- Leadership attentive to detail, collaborative, creative, and patient.
- Access to excellent, affordable legal services and risk management/insurance services.
- Significant experience, wide-ranging skill sets, and proven problem-solving skills.
- District's mission, core values, legal obligations, bylaws, policies and procedures, roles and responsibilities, strategic plan, and 70+-year history are all clearly documented/understood.
- A positive working relationship between the Chief and Board.
- Adherence to RCW 52 and WAC statutes and requirements.
- A history of integrity and reliability.
- Adaptability to changing situations and an ability to overcome obstacles.
- Knowledgeable instructors for commissioners. Active participation in conferences, seminars and workshops, and continuing professional education.
- A long history of community support.
- Active networking with other government agencies, community organizations, and private sector entities to address shared challenges and opportunities.

Weaknesses: To move progressively forward we must also identify areas where we function less than satisfactorily, poorly, or not at all, where we struggle or lack. These areas of needed improvement, including day-to-day issues, concerns, inefficiencies and complacencies that slow or inhibit progress, are not the same as threats.

- A tendency toward group think where dissenting opinions are not fully considered, or when commissioners defer to the majority without critically evaluating decisions.

- No succession plan in place for Fire Chief.
- Reluctance to return to the public for additional tax base (EMS levy or Lid Lift).
- No official emergency budget procedure in place for contingency budgeting if DNR timber, or GEMT revenue, or ambulance revenues are reduced or lost.
- Lack administrative depth to adequately administer grant funding without overburdening staff.

Opportunities: Trends that may positively impact the district and opportunities available to us. The focus is on existing service and on expanding and developing new possibilities both inside and beyond CCFPD4. How we might grow and continue to succeed.

- To seek greater direct community involvement in fire service decision-making.
- To look past pride, past practice, and past organizational inertia when facing life safety threats.
- To explore tailoring services based on specific community needs.
- To more deliberately orient newly appointed or elected commissioners.
- To access specialized training and grant programs.
- To share knowledge, understanding, perspectives, and goals with volunteers and community.
- To increase clarity regarding CCFPD4's role, responsibilities, and lawful authority.
- To explore the possibility of an expansion of District boundaries with an eye toward additional revenue streams.
- To continue to collaborate with neighboring fire commissioners and local agencies.
- To maintain focus on communication essential for maintaining public trust and ensuring accountability.
- To recommend actions designed to improve the mental and physical wellbeing of the District's workforce.

Challenges: Knowing the more general and internal challenges we face helps us make better informed and strategic decisions. These are internal obstacles or difficulties that we face in achieving goals. They can be related to internal resources, processes, or capabilities.

- To maintain a deliberate strategic planning process and to ensure greater clarity regarding projected needs, plans, and timelines – to help identify critical issues and address gaps.
- To identify and close knowledge gaps where they exist.
- Managing funding and resource allocation incorporating long range strategies.
- Forecasting in an unpredictable financial climate.
- Providing for optimal staffing levels through recruitment and retention.
- Adapting to changing wildland fire risks in the community.
- Balancing community needs and optimizing services against budget constraints.
- Ensuring proper training and equipment standards.
- Safety and risk compliance with OSHA, ISO, NFPA, federal, and state mandates, due to changing legislation.
- IT management, given the rapid pace of technological change.
- Uncertainty of future health care due to reductions in patient coverage by the insurance industry, potentially impacting District revenues.

- Allocating funding to expand training and update equipment.
- Increasing ongoing funding challenges in response to rising call volumes – anticipated need for paid volunteers and overnight station duty – funding.

Threats: External factors that could negatively impact our performance or success. They are largely, but not always, beyond our control and can include things like economic downturns or regulatory changes.

- Inadequate funding.
- Impacts stemming from a threatened \$1-2 trillion reduction in the federal budget in 2025
- Hiring pauses, layoffs, and firings of federal employees in 2025 (i.e. a reduction in the seasonal wildland firefighting workforce).
- Changes to FEMA’s disaster response programs, like the National Fire Academy and first responder training and outreach initiatives.
- Halts to the disbursement of grants and loans by federal agencies.
- The probability of increased 911 calls as it impacts our service capabilities.
- The reality of outside competing interests - volunteers’ family obligations, work (primary and secondary jobs), and commitments to other organizations (church, civic organizations)
- Staffing shortages due to recruitment and retention issues
- Threats of violence or harm (e.g. scene safety, active shooter incidents)
- Sudden and impactful natural disasters
- New fire safety codes or standards requiring significant adaptation – changing regulations and unfunded mandates
- Threats to Medicare and Medicaid with a potential reduction in ambulance fees and reimbursements.
- Changes to the freedom of information act and OPMA making fulfillment onerous.

Proposed Governance goals:

1. To conduct an annual review of the District’s Policies & Procedures Manual to ensure current applicability.
2. The revision and formal adoption of a “Background Information and District Data” document by the end of February 2026.
3. To identify areas in the budget (essential vs non-essential services) that could be cut or reduced in a catastrophic reduction-in-revenue-scenario, beginning October 2026.