

Finance

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 to take 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 helps in setting priorities and making informed decisions.

This is one of eight priority areas identified for a periodic SWOT analysis. Finance refers to the District's efforts to ensure its ability to fund operations, which ensures its ability to provide quality community services in a dynamic and sometimes adverse fiscal environment. The District is primarily funded through property taxes. Other sources of revenue include DNR timber, GEMT, and EMS ambulance billings revenue, investment interest earnings, reimbursements for services provided beyond the district, grants, donations, and bequests. The District's financial condition determines its ability to cover personnel costs (salaries, wages and benefits), along with operational cost for stations, equipment, capital improvements, and debt service, while maintaining a reserve fund for unforeseen events.

Strengths: What we and others perceive as our 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.

- A well-managed budget, consistent revenue streams, and effective cost control measures
- Transparent financial management
- Teamwork and collaboration between commissioners and administrators to maintain a balanced budget
- Utilization of state-of-the-art ESO management software
- Maintaining fiscal accountability for clean audits
- Strong community support (e.g. levy lid lift in 2019 and private donations)
- Proven ability to secure external funding for capital projects and training
- A protected \$500,000 reserve
- Capital assets, including: two well-equipped fire stations and an Administration Building; 2 ambulances; 2 engines; 3 tenders; a command car; a brush truck; a Genie lift; new training facilities; a 3,200-gallon diesel fuel tank; and a large generator for emergency power.
- Efficient resource allocation. Well maintained facilities and equipment
- Cooperation with neighboring fire districts, EMS providers, and other emergency services
- A well-informed knowledge base available from the county and state agencies

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

- Limited revenue sources - heavy reliance on property taxes, potentially vulnerable to market fluctuations
- Heavy reliance on timber tax which is subject to changes at the state leadership level and competing interests with environmental activists
- Uncertainty regarding annual GEMT and ambulance fee revenues due to potential legislative changes
- Aging equipment potentially requiring significant repair or replacement costs
- Cyber Security training
- Heavy dependence on the county to manage district finances

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 improve financial planning: long-term budgeting for future capital needs
- To utilize financial training offered by the county or state
- To access alternative funding sources (e.g. local campaigns, special events)
- To maximize revenue streams (careful monitoring, levies, participation in the RAC and other timber-related initiatives)
- To implement community fundraising initiatives for enhancements (i.e. special equipment and materials)
- To utilize Artificial Intelligence (AI) to help with workflow, data collection, report generation, and analyses, to create helpful graphics, to provide quick access to “hard knowledge,” for networking, and for making predictions and recommendations
- To utilize data analytics to optimize operations and reduce costs

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.

- Reliance on property taxes which can be impacted by economic downturns
- Reliance on timber tax, GEMT, and ambulance fee revenues
- Uncertainty regarding the reliability of DNR timber revenues
- Accessing available federal and state funding opportunities for equipment upgrades and training via grant writing
- The rising cost of equipment and maintenance, goods and services, insurance, etc
- The uncertainty of future health care and reductions in patient coverage by the insurance industry will continue to contribute to a major part of our emergency response load
- Susceptibility to economic fluctuations and inflation - funding constraints

- High-cost emergencies - potential for large, unexpected expenses related to major incidents
- Rising insurance costs
- Potential for unexpected large expenses related to aging equipment
- Understanding the process of how the county manages District funds

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, competition, or regulatory changes.

- Economic fluctuations - decreased property values leading to lower tax revenue
- Public opposition to funding - community resistance to tax increases for fire services
- Legislative changes - potential regulations affecting funding or operational requirements
- Natural disasters - large-scale emergencies causing significant financial strain
- Insurance cost increases - rising liability insurance premiums impacting our budget
- Insufficient reserves - sufficient to cover unanticipated drawdowns in times of crisis
- Unexpected emergencies requiring large expenditures
- Risks associated with malware infections and cyber-attacks
- Potential liabilities
- Potential mismanagement of financial resources, accidentally or intentionally

Proposed Finance goals:

1. Develop and begin to implement a long-term financial plan by December 2026, via a subcommittee, to include members of the community, to ensure the district's financial stability and sustainability, identifying and prioritizing various financial needs and sources of revenue.
2. By August 2026, begin educating the community regarding the need for a voter approved \$1.50 per \$1,000 AV levy lid lift, demonstrating the necessity for increased funding to meet current and future operational needs, maintain effective emergency response, and ensure the safety of our community, as the levy rate will have fallen below \$1.00 per \$1,000 of assessed value due to levy degradation.