IDENTIFYING THE ESSENTIAL COMPONENTS FOR A STRATEGIC PLAN
TO PROVIDE BILINGUAL/MULTILINGUAL ASSISTANCE FOR FIRE
DEPARTMENT SERVICES

EXECUTIVE DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

The problem was that the Oakland Fire Department did not have a strategic plan to provide bilingual/multilingual assistance for fire department services in a community in which at least 20% of residents were non-English speaking. Not having a strategic plan to provide bilingual/multilingual assistance for fire department services to non-English speaking residents could lead to negative impacts in the level and quality of services. These negative impacts could compromise citizen safety, well-being and result in serious consequences.

The purpose of this applied research project was to identify the essential components for a strategic plan to provide bilingual/multilingual assistance for fire department services.

In conducting this research the author utilized descriptive and action research methodologies to answer these research questions:

1. What are other comparable Fire departments doing to provide bilingual/multilingual assistance for fire department services in their communities?
2. What are other organizations doing to provide bilingual/multilingual assistance for services provided in their communities?
3. What components are necessary for developing a strategic plan?
4. What are the unique characteristics about strategic planning for establishing a bilingual/multilingual assistance program for fire department services?
The procedures used in this applied research project included, a feedback instrument survey of 10 comparable fire departments in California, a comprehensive review of applicable literature and interviews with four local subject matter experts.

The results indicated the importance of strategic planning and the need to establish bilingual/multilingual assistance for fire department services.

Recommendations made were to develop a strategic plan to provide bilingual/multilingual assistance for fire department services and to utilize the essential components for strategic planning that were identified specific to the fire services including components for addressing bilingual/multilingual assistance. See Appendix C.
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INTRODUCTION

Over the last twenty years, the ethnic diversity of the United States population has continued to grow at a rapid rate.

Although the United States does not have an official language policy at the Federal government level, in August 2000, President Clinton issued Executive Order 13166. Executive Order 13166 directed federal agencies to break down language barriers by implementing consistent standards of language assistance across agencies and among all recipients of federal financial assistance.

Prior to Executive Order 13166, various state government agencies instituted legislation that required certain state, county and local government agencies to provide language assistance by having personnel that could speak languages other than English and by providing program materials in various languages.

For example, in 1973, the State of California enacted Dymally-Alatorre Bilingual Services Act (amended 1975). Various language advocacy groups have described this act as an excellent visionary statement of policy at the state level, with respect to using languages other than English. The act requires that state, county and local governments ensure that they provide information and services in the various languages of their constituents. Specifically, when state and local agencies serve a “substantial number of non-English speaking people.”

Fire departments protect lives, property and provide for a safer community. Therefore, it is critical that Fire department services are conducted in a manner that provide for effective communication between the first responders, residents and businesses.
As fire departments move toward the next millennium, strategic planning will allow managers to identify and anticipate change (FEMA, 1995). When preparing for change, good planning will allow a department to build flexibility into its future and to prepare for change.

The problem is that the Oakland Fire department does not have a strategic plan to provide bilingual/multilingual assistance for fire department services in a community in which at least 20% of residents are non-English speaking.

The purpose of this research study is to identify the essential components for a strategic plan to provide bilingual/multilingual assistance for fire department services. Descriptive and action research will be used to answer these research questions:

5. What are other comparable Fire departments doing to provide bilingual/multilingual assistance for fire department services in their communities?

6. What are other organizations doing to provide bilingual/multilingual assistance for services provided in their communities?

7. What components are necessary for developing a strategic plan?

8. What are the unique characteristics about strategic planning for establishing a bilingual/multilingual assistance program for fire department services?

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

The City of Oakland is a metropolitan city in the San Francisco Bay area. Oakland is also known for its culturally diverse population. Since 1996, Oakland has
received statewide recognition as one of the most culturally diverse cities in California. Oakland residents speak over 100 non-English languages and dialects.

The Oakland Fire Department is responsible for providing a multitude of services to a community of approximately 390,000 people. These services include fire suppression, airport rescue fire fighting operations, emergency medical services, hazardous materials responses, swift water rescue operations, heavy rescue / confined space rescue operations, fire investigation, plan checks, hazardous materials regulatory inspections and fire code compliance inspections for various building occupancies. Additionally, a variety of public safety education programs are offered to residents, non-profit organizations and businesses.

At the present time, one of the greatest challenges that face the Oakland Fire Department is being able to meet the needs of an ever changing, multi-cultural population by providing bilingual/multilingual assistance for non-English speaking residents and businesses in the delivery of fire department services. The department does not have a strategic plan to address bilingual/multilingual assistance, which could lead to negative impacts in the level and quality of services provided to non-English speaking residents and businesses.

Because fire departments provide public safety services, a delay in the delivery of services or delivery of inaccurate services, could result in serious consequences.

The Oakland Fire Department recognizes the critical need to provide bilingual/multilingual assistance for non-English speaking residents and businesses to ensure equal access in the delivery of quality fire department services.
The Oakland Fire Department also acknowledges that bilingual-multilingual assistance needs are going to significantly increase in the future. The recent U.S. Census 2000 results indicated that in Oakland approximately 20% of households speak languages other than English at home. Additionally, the Department of Finance recently issued projections of California’s demographic future, indicating that by year 2006, the Hispanic population would become the largest racial/ethnic group in Southern California and by year 2021 it would become the largest racial/ethnic group in the state as a whole.

This study is important to the United States Fire Administration for two reasons. First, the research findings, results and recommendations of the study will identify the essential components of a bilingual-multilingual assistance strategic plan. Establishing these components will provide a contribution towards one of the Executive Fire Officer Program’s Statement of Purpose, “transforming fire and emergency services organizations to reflect the diversity of America’s communities.” Second, as the demographic composition of the United States continues to become more ethnically diverse, the recommendations contained in this study can assist fire departments in other states that are in the beginning stages of providing bilingual-multilingual assistance to non-English speaking residents and businesses in their communities.

This applied research project is relevant to the Executive Development course in the areas of professional development and service quality. By identifying the essential components for a bilingual-multilingual assistance strategic plan, a more professional, comprehensive approach and program can be developed to provide enhanced service quality to non-English speaking residents and businesses.
This research project relates to United States Fire Administration operational objective “to promote within communities a comprehensive, multi-hazard risk reduction plan led by the fire service organization” (NFA, 2002, p. II-2). This objective is met by advocating bilingual/multilingual assistance for non-English speaking residents and businesses that will ensure comprehensive risk reduction programs along with providing planning tools to decrease language barriers.

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

There were three literature review objectives. The first objective was
to gather and review pertinent information about strategic planning and strategic planning models. By accomplishing this objective, research question number three, “What components are necessary for developing a strategic plan?” and research question number four, “What are the unique characteristics about strategic planning for establishing a bilingual/multilingual assistance program for fire department services?” would be addressed. The information gathered would provide a basis for identifying the essential components.

The second objective was to identify any existing research in the fire services or conducted by other organizations related to providing bilingual/multilingual assistance to the non-English speaking populous. By accomplishing this objective the findings would be utilized to provide a framework for any additional research.

The third objective was to identify any published strategic plans or established programs that provide bilingual/multilingual assistance to the non-English speaking populous in the delivery of services. By accomplishing this objective, research question number one, “What are other comparable Fire departments doing to provide
bilingual/multilingual assistance for fire department services in their communities?”
would be addressed. Additionally, research question number two, “What are other
organizations doing to provide bilingual/multilingual assistance for services provided in
their communities?” would also be addressed. If examples were available, they would be
reviewed and analyzed to determine whether or not they could be adapted to meet the
needs of the Oakland Fire Department and to the field of fire services.

The literature review involved a search for pertinent information in published
research papers, textbooks, Internet articles, fire service trade journals, Executive Fire
Officer Applied Research Projects, magazines, newspapers and other periodicals.

**Strategic Planning Defined**

Goodstein, Nolan and Pfeiffer (1992) define applied strategic planning as “the
process by which the guiding members of an organization envision its future and develop
the necessary procedures and operations to achieve that future” (p.1). Strategic planning
is designed to help organizations respond effectively to their new situations. It is a
disciplined effort to produce fundamental decisions and actions shaping the nature and
direction of an organization’s activities within legal bounds. (Young, 1996).

Ross (1995) states, “strategic planning is a process of matching services and
activities with changed and changing environmental conditions” (p. 100).

Strategic planning is not a tool reserved for business and industry and was not
designed to help only for-profit companies and large not-for-profit enterprises. It has
evolved over the years into a mechanism all organizations-formal or informal, business or
non-business related, large or small, can use to increase success in whatever activities
they choose to pursue (Fire, 1996).
In summary, based on the literature review, strategic planning has a variety of definitions based up each author’s interpretation. There are common denotations in the definitions and they include describing strategic planning as a tool to help organizations successfully address their direction as it relates to current and future environmental changes.

**Strategic Planning in the Fire Services**

After a thorough literature review on the subject of strategic planning and strategic planning models, numerous textbooks and articles have been written that provide actual processes to achieve effective strategic planning in the public and private sectors. The emphasis in early literature including Gardner (1986), Ohmae, (1988), Mintzberg and Quinn (1996), and Gray (1996) was on models appropriate to the private sector. Later literature authored by Bryson (1995), the Federal Emergency Management Agency, United States Fire Administration (1995), Young (1996) and Wallace (1998) provided strategic planning models specifically for the public sector and the fire services.

In the September 1998, *Fire Engineering*, Wallace identifies the eleven recognized models or methods of strategic planning as follows:

1) Harvard Policy Model
2) Strategic Planning Systems
3) Stakeholder Management Approaches
4) Content Approaches/Portfolio Methods
5) Competitive Analysis
6) Strategic Issues Management
7) Strategic Negotiations
Most of models listed above are designed for and apply to the private sector. Gardner (1986), Ohmae (1988), Bryson (1995), Gray (1996), Mintzberg and Quinn (1996) and Young (1996) also discuss the various models in their writings and most of the published literature about strategic planning was written to assist for-profit organizations. Other than Wallace (1998), the various authors reviewed did not support or propose one model over another.

Wallace (1998) suggests “For strategic planning to be successful in the fire service, we need a model specifically designed by us for us. The Fire Department Strategic Planning Model is such a plan. I have reviewed, studied, tested and tried the other 14 models and took the best parts of each.” He states that his model is based upon his experience as a fire officer, fire chief and a researcher.

**Strategic Planning Components**

The components necessary for developing a strategic plan are dependent upon the strategic plan model chosen. Each model suggests its own process and components. The various authors reviewed promote planning processes that contain eight, ten or twelve major components, which are also referred to as “steps” by Wallace (1998).

The literature review and research also found that there are similarities between most models. There were three components or steps that were most frequently used in
most strategic planning models. These components were; creating a Vision Statement, creating a Mission Statement and conducting internal /external environmental assessments.

Each author underscored the importance and value of creating vision statements. Shellhammer (1996) states, “A Vision statement is important because it gives people a foundation that doesn’t change, during periods of change” (Shellhammer, 1996, p. 15). Wallace (1998) adds that a vision statement should occur early in the strategic planning process.

Creating mission statements was of equal importance. “The mission statement provides a sense of purpose for the entire department, giving members reason to excel. A clearly defined purpose provides a basis for everything from productivity to how conflicts are resolved” (Wallace, 1998, p.73).

Internal and external environmental assessments were also considered vital components of the strategic planning model by various authors. Duchane (1985) identifies that strategic planning efforts include an assessment of the environment or taking stock in terms of opportunity and constraint. Gardner (1986) defines these components as processes in which information is collected to help volunteers and staff identify changes in the organization’s operating environment that could become threats to its long-term viability or opportunities to fill new or unmet community needs and improve effectiveness. Finally, Wallace (1998) identifies the external assessment as, “…other factors beyond the ability of a fire department to control” (Wallace, 1998, p. 102). Conversely he describes the internal assessment as, “…the part of the environment that the organization itself can control, at least in part” (Wallace, 1998, p. 111).
Since the focus of this study and research was to identify components of a strategic plan for the fire services, further serious consideration was given to Wallace (1998) and his model, The Fire Department Strategic Planning Model. Wallace (1993) started with a basic eight-step process and added additional steps that he felt were needed to have a strategic plan for the fire services. Wallace has modified the components and processes offered by Bryson’s (1988) strategic planning model for public and non-profit organizations and Goodstein, Pifieffer and Nolan (1992) strategic planning model. Wallace describes his 12 “step” approach as a fire service specific model. The twelve steps are:

1) Identifying the Department’s values

2) Planning to plan strategically

3) Selecting and Recommending a Strategic Planning Process

4) Identifying the Department’s Mandates

5) Developing the Mission of the Department

6) Creating a Philosophy of Operations

7) Assessing the Opportunities and Threats of the External Environment

8) Assessing the Strengths and Weaknesses of the Internal Environment

9) Identifying the Strategic Issues of the Department

10) Creating Strategies for Strategic Issues

11) Creating the Department’s Ideal Future Through Proactive Futuring

12) Operational Planning from a Strategic Perspective
Wallace (1998) twelve components or steps in the Fire Department Strategic Planning model have been successfully implemented by his fire department in Golden, Colorado and by at least three other fire departments in the state of Colorado.

Research - Providing Bilingual/Multilingual Assistance to the non-English Speaking Populous

Providing bilingual/multilingual assistance to the non-English speaking populous in the United States and specifically in the fire services is a subject that has not been widely researched in contrast to the subject of strategic planning. There were only two research pieces that were identified that related to the subject matter. The two research papers were part of the Executive Fire Officer Program, Applied Research Projects. Both research projects were carefully reviewed. The term used in both projects was “bilingual” assistance rather than language assistance.

Williamson (1993) in his study utilized a descriptive research methodology to address his topic, *Que Paso? Has the fire service really understood the diverse cultural needs for bilingual fire prevention public education programs in the 21st Century?* His research study was to identify the usage of bilingual/multilingual fire prevention programs within the fire service. The research findings were based upon the responses from 62 survey respondents (fire departments), which were randomly selected chief executive fire administrators or public education officers throughout the U.S. Fire Service. The results included the following pertinent data:

- 27% of respondents indicated that 5-10% of their community’s population were non-English speaking;
15% of respondents indicated that 15-20% of their community’s population were non-English speaking;

20% of respondents indicated that 25-30% of their community’s population were non-English Speaking; and

22% of respondents indicated that 35-40% of their community’s population was non-English speaking.

This left 16% or 10 of the 62 respondents with communities that did not have a significant number, only 1-4% of non-English speaking residents.

Other significant data provided was that only 31% of the respondents or 19 respondents delivered bilingual Fire Prevention Programs in their communities (Williamson, 1993). The majority of the 19 respondents also provided multilingual Fire Prevention Programs in their communities.

Additionally, 58% of the respondents providing bilingual/multilingual fire prevention programs had been providing the services in their communities for four to six years, 16% had been providing services for one to three years, 16% for seven to ten years, and 10% for 10 years or more (Williamson, 1993).

This information was valuable in ascertaining the overall level of commitment by fire service organizations to provide bilingual-multilingual assistance to non-English speaking residents related to fire prevention programs.

Reed’s (1998) Applied Research Project, *Methods for Increasing Bilingual Communication (Spanish/English) in Coral Gables Fire-Rescue Department*, utilized an evaluative research methodology to identify different methods for increasing bilingual communication skills, specifically Spanish and English, in the Coral Gable Fire-Rescue
Department. The findings of this research were specific to the Miami-Dade and Broward County areas. Although Reed’s research was limited to two counties, his recommendations on the other hand, were broad. Reed recommended that, “A strategic plan needs to be developed to address methods of achieving the goal of Bilingualism in the fire services” (Reed, 1998, p. 18). Along with this recommendation, Reed suggested methods that should be considered to promote bilingualism in the fire services. The methods proposed were, to provide on-duty Spanish language training for fire personnel, the recruitment of bilingual community volunteers or employees to assist with bilingual training, to provide off duty Spanish training tuition reimbursements, to award preference points to job applicants who were bilingual once they pass the written portion of the fire services test, and to hire more bilingual employees.

Strategic Plans/Programs to Provide Bilingual/Multilingual Assistance in the Delivery of Services

There were four examples identified that related to providing bilingual/multilingual assistance strategic plans and/or programs in the delivery of services.

Of the four examples there was only one fire services example. Although not a very current example, an example worth noting. The article was about the Truckee Meadow Fire Protection District, which is located in Washoe County in northern Nevada. Mijanovich (1983), wrote an article that appeared in the Western Fire Journal which stated, “the Hispanic population is Nevada’s largest ethnic minority and the largest non-English speaking group…” (Mijanovich, 1983, p. 42). Mijanovich further discusses that the need for bilingual fire safety
messages in Washoe County was obvious. Five percent of the population was linguistically isolated from receiving fire safety messages. The Bilingual Fire Safety Information Flow program in Washoe County began in 1982. Mijanovich (1983) adds, “This program reflects a design within the fire service, within Washoe County and within Nevada, for all public services to provide an adequate solution to the problems facing Hispanics and non-Hispanics alike” (Mijanovich, 1983, p. 43).

The literature review also disclosed a distinguished program developed by the U. S. Department of Education.

The U.S. Department of Education has established the Office of English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement and Academic Achievement for Limited English Proficient Students (OELA), formerly known as the Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Language Affairs. OELA mission’s is to provide national leadership in promoting high quality education for the nation’s population of English language learners (ELLs). The program provides funding opportunities and specific guidelines for public school districts to establish programs that will provide supportive bilingual/multilingual instruction to aid foreign students in their acquisition of English as a second language. Traditionally, the population has been known as limited English proficient students (LEPs). This exemplary federal program has a strategic plan that includes a vision statement, a mission statement, goals and objectives. Another noteworthy program found in the Education arena was the New York City Public Schools Bilingual Pupil Services Program (1997). The program provides students
with supportive bilingual instruction to aid their acquisition of English as a second
language. This program was established by using a strategic planning process.

The most significant “bilingual” services program was the State of
California program resulting from the implementation of the Dymally-Alatorre
Bilingual Services Act.

The Dymally-Alatorre Bilingual Services Act (act) was enacted in 1973, by the
California Legislature. “The act is intended to ensure that individuals who do not speak
or write English are not prevented from using public services because of language
barriers” (California State Auditor, 1999, p. 5).

The California State Auditor’s report (1999) describes, “The act requires state and
local agencies to ensure that they provide information and services in various languages
of their constituents. Specifically, when state and local agencies serve a “substantial
number of non-English speaking people, that is, 5% or more of the people served, they
must:

• Employ a “sufficient number of qualified bilingual staff in public contact positions.”
• Translate documents explaining available services into the language of their
constituents.

Qualified bilingual staff members are employees who have passed written or oral
examinations that certify their ability to speak, write and understand another language.
Public contact positions are those determined by state or local agencies in which
employees meet, contact, and deal with the public while performing the agency’s
function” (California State Auditor, 1999, p. 5).
The report (California State Auditor, 1999) provided the results and recommendations of a comprehensive audit that was conducted by the Auditor’s office at the request of the Joint Legislative Audit Committee. The audit was conducted to determine state agencies and local agencies level of compliance with the act. The report (California State Auditor, 1999) highlights included that after 26 years since the passage of the act:

- Most state agencies and local agencies were not aware of their responsibility to translate certain materials explaining services;
- State agencies had not fully complied with certain provisions of the act; 8 of 10 state agencies audited had not established procedures to periodically assess their need to provide bilingual services to their clients;
- Only 1 of the 10 state agencies translated materials explaining services in languages spoken by a substantial number of individuals they served;
- Although local agencies were exercising their discretion allowed under the act, the bilingual services they provided were not adequately meeting the clients’ language needs;
- The State Personnel Board (SPB) which is the agency responsible for providing technical assistance to state agencies was encouraged to do more to fulfill its responsibilities under the act;

The report (California State Auditor, 1999) also included the results of a comprehensive survey that was conducted. The Auditor’s office sent out approximately 160 surveys to counties and local agencies within California. A total of 147 survey
responses were received and the results tabulated. Some of the highlights of the survey results were that:

- 52% of counties and 79% of cities were not of aware of the Dymally-Alatorre Bilingual Services Act until they received the survey;
- 83% of local administrators stated that individual departments developed their own policies on bilingual needs and 90% stated that departments were responsible for assessing city/county’s need for bilingual staff;
- 57% did not have a city or county wide policy for providing bilingual services to residents;

Based upon the survey results, 53 local agency departments had identified needs to provide language assistance and translated documents in 33 languages, yet they did not offer any bilingual services in 19 of those languages and provide only limited services for the remaining 14 languages. The report concluded that the fact that some clients’ needs for bilingual services are not being met means they may not be receiving government services to which they are entitled.

Although, the California act has not been fully implemented by state, county and local agencies, it is the only State program in the United States that addresses the need to provide language assistance to non-English speaking residents.

**Literature Review Summary**

In summary, the literature review accomplished the three objectives. First, to gather and review pertinent information on strategic planning and strategic planning. Second, to identify any existing research in the fire services or conducted by other
organizations related to providing bilingual/multilingual assistance to the non-English speaking populous. Third, to identify any published strategic plans or established programs that provided bilingual/multilingual assistance to the non-English speaking populous in the delivery of services.

Furthermore, the literature review findings were central to this study. The findings have provided comprehensive and significant data, various perspectives, fundamental background information and inspiration to pioneer efforts that will support providing bilingual/multilingual assistance to the non-English speaking populace in the delivery of fire services.

The literature reviewed has influenced this applied research project in the following manner:

- it has provided a framework for the strategic planning process and identifying the key components or steps. The author of this research project can draw from what has already been said and done in these areas;
- it has clearly illustrated the need to focus on identifying the essential components or steps for a bilingual/multilingual assistance strategic plan for the fire services that could augment the research that exists on the subject; and
- it has demonstrated the absence of published literature about fire service and organizations’ strategic plans and comprehensive programs that specifically address bilingual/multilingual assistance for the non-English speaking populace in the delivery of services. This has provided the author of this research project with important insight and given additional ideas of how to effectively approach this applied research project.
Before any final assumptions can be made, the next logical step is to conduct a survey of comparable Fire departments within California. The survey will be used to determine if there are bilingual/multilingual assistance programs for the non-English speaking communities in comparable Fire departments with California. If these programs exist, the survey will gather information on why, when and how they were developed, as well as, identify if common program characteristics exist.

In addition, several interviews will be conducted with City of Oakland management representatives and Fire Department management. If time permits, other interviews will be conducted with local, county and-state organizations, to identify and gather information on other California-based bilingual/multilingual assistance programs.

**PROCEDURES**

The purpose of this applied research project was to identify the essential components for a strategic plan to provide bilingual/multilingual assistance for fire department services. The process to determine the answers to the research questions included researching materials available through the National Fire Academy’s Learning Resource Center (LRC), the San Francisco Public Library system, trade journals, the Internet and other relevant literary sources. A feedback instrument and interviews were also resources used to provide further explanation of all research question results and for obtaining historical data that would provide a research foundation.

Descriptive and action research methodologies were utilized to direct the applied research project and to find the answers to the following research questions:
1. What are other comparable Fire departments doing to provide bilingual/multilingual assistance for fire department services in their communities?

2. What are other organizations doing to provide bilingual/multilingual assistance for services provided in their communities?

3. What components are necessary for developing a strategic plan?

4. What are the unique characteristics about strategic planning for establishing a bilingual/multilingual assistance program for fire department services?

To address question #1, the researcher started with a literature review to determine if there were any published materials concerning fire services’ providing bilingual assistance for fire service programs. The researcher also conducted a convenience sample survey. A Feedback form was utilized to obtain data from 10 medium to large fire service organizations in California. The justification for the convenience sample was based upon the ethnic diversity of medium to large communities in California. Obtaining feedback from 10 fire services organizations would provide sufficient representation of “typical” fire services organizations for the purposes of this study. The researcher concluded the research for question #1 by also conducting two interviews. One interview was with one of the Oakland deputy fire chiefs and the second interview was with an administrator from the City of Oakland that was assigned to ensuring equal access of services for non-English speaking residents.

To address question #2, the researcher started with a literature review to determine if there were any published materials concerning other local, state and federal government bilingual/multilingual programs. Once the literature review was completed, one interview
was conducted with a California Assemblywoman concerning the implementation of the Dymally-Alatorre act.

To address questions #3 and #4, the researcher focused on the literature review. The literature review was conducted to help identify strategic plan models that were widely recognized; to determine if there were any strategic plan models related to the fire services; and to determine if there were any strategic plan models related to providing bilingual/multilingual services. Based upon the literature review findings, the researcher also conducted two interviews. One interview was with the Oakland Unified School District’s bilingual services program coordinator and the second interview was with Oakland’s Fire Chief.

Definitions of Terms

**Bilingual**
Able to speak two languages.

**Multilingual**
Able to speak more than two different languages; able to speak many languages.

**Language Assistance**
To aid or help with communication with a body of words and systems that is common to a people of the same community or nation.

**Strategic Plan**
A plan or method for achieving a goal.

**Literature Review**

Research and data collection began at the Learning Resource Center (LRC) at the National Fire Academy in Emmitsburg, MD. This initial literature review took place at the LRC during the first two week of August 2002. An exhaustive onsite literature search was conducted at the LRC and more than 30 published articles and Executive Fire Officer
Program Applied Research Papers were reviewed. Several applied research projects and fire journal articles that were relevant to this research project were photocopied at a local printer and brought back to Oakland, California for further review and research.

During the months of September and October 2002, additional literature review was conducted at the San Francisco Public Library using their computer system. A reference list was created of materials relevant to the research and the relevant materials were borrowed from the library. In November and December 2002, the Internet was also used as a resource. When using the Internet, the Google and MSN search engines were used. The two keywords for searches were bilingual services and strategic planning; Further searches were also conducted on the Internet using the keywords, bilingual fire services and fire services strategic planning. A reference list of applicable articles and materials was established and the relevant reports, newspaper articles and other information were printed for further literature review.

Once the literature reviews of books, journals, magazines, newspapers, research papers and Internet articles was completed, the methods recommended by the instructors from the Executive Development course were utilized. Each excerpt, paraphrase or quotation of relevance that was determined essential to the research questions was transcribed on a 3” x 5” index card, which was numbered with the individual reference source.

While there was an extensive amount of material available relating to strategic planning, very few sources related specifically to the fire service or non-profit organizations. Additionally, there was a very limited amount of materials available
related to bilingual services, strategic planning for providing bilingual services, and bilingual services/bilingual/multilingual assistance programs in the fire services.

The literature reviewed provided a descriptive and historical background regarding strategic planning in organizations and information concerning bilingual-multilingual services for various types of organizations. It also provided current information relative to strategic planning efforts and some bilingual program efforts that have been undertaken in the fire services. Moreover, the literature review played a significant role in the assessment leading to the conclusions and recommendations reached in the research project.

**Instrumentation**

The instrument used in this research consisted of a feedback form. Once the feedback form was completed, by use of action research, 10 medium to large fire departments were surveyed by phone beginning January 10, 2003. The 10 fire departments serve a total of 12.2 million people. The fire departments surveyed were all career fire departments.

The feedback form consisted of eight questions and was developed to assess bilingual/multilingual programs, how they were developed and what prompted the programs to be established (Appendix A). The feedback form also allowed respondents to provide additional comments concerning their bilingual services programs.

Within a four-week time period all phone surveys were completed. Once all the surveys were completed, the pertinent data from the eight questions was tabulated using Microsoft Excel software. The results were compiled on spreadsheets and three graphs/charts were developed to illustrate the results (Appendix B).
Interviews

After the surveys were completed, four interviews were arranged. There was one phone interview and three face-to-face interviews conducted. The purpose of the interviews was to ask two questions to the interviewees. The first question addressed the issue about providing bilingual/multilingual services to ensure quality service and equal access to services. The second question addressed developing a strategic plan to establish a bilingual/multilingual program. The interviews were conducted and completed over a four-week period.

ASSUMPTIONS AND LIMITATIONS

It was assumed that all respondents would answer the questions honestly and directly. It was also assumed that the respondents to the survey understood each question and had the knowledge and ability to answer them accurately.

There were three limitations that impacted the study. Time was a limiting factor because the project had a six-month completion timeframe established by the National Fire Academy. Due to various competing priorities at work, coupled with staffing reductions, the researcher was forced to request additional time to complete this research project.

Although the literature review was extensive, due to the research abilities of the author, research materials related to this applied research project might have gone undetected, which could have changed the results of the research.

The scope of the study was limited because the number of surveys conducted was limited to 10 medium to large fire departments in California.
Also, there were only four subject-related experts interviewed for this study due to time constraints.

RESULTS

The results of the research project came from the comprehensive examination of data from books, fire journal articles, periodicals, and Internet based reports, Executive Fire Officer Applied Research Projects, a convenience sample survey and interviews. The results of this study produced the essential components for a strategic plan to provide bilingual/multilingual assistance for fire department services (See Appendix C).

Question One

What are other comparable Fire departments doing to provide bilingual/multilingual assistance for fire department services in their communities?

The literature review provided the following results:

There was only one published article, Mijanovich (1983) that provided an example of an existing bilingual/multilingual assistance programs for fire department services. The Bilingual Fire Safety Information Flow program in Washoe County began in 1982. Two Applied Research projects were also identified. Williamson (1993) conducted research that provided significant data related to providing bilingual/multilingual Fire Prevention education programs. His survey results indicated that of 62 fire services respondents, there were only 31% of the respondents or 19 respondents that delivered bilingual Fire Prevention Programs in their communities. The majority of these respondents also provided multilingual Fire Prevention Programs in their communities. This data was representative of fire departments through out the United States. The second research paper, Reed (1998) studied a specific area,
the Miami-Dade and Broward County areas to determine if there were bilingual, specifically, Spanish-English assistance provided to residents for the effective delivery of fire services. Reed’s finding indicated that there were no programs established although there was a need.

The survey results provided the data that was obtained from 10 career fire departments that were medium to large departments, which represented communities in California with a total of 12.2 million people.

100% of the surveyed departments provide bilingual/multilingual assistance in the delivery of fire services.

Additionally, the chart in figure 1 illustrates the length of time the fire service bilingual programs had been in place in comparable fire departments in California.

**Figure 1**

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**Bilingual/Multilingual Capabilities in Comparable Fire Departments**

**Convenience Sample, n= 10**

**Length of Time that Bilingual Capabilities have been provided**

March 2003

- 70% 5 to 10 years
- 20% 1 to 4 years
- 10% 11 years
In summary, 70% of respondents had been providing bilingual/multilingual assistance programs for five to ten years; 20% of respondents had been providing bilingual/multilingual assistance programs for one to four years and 10% of respondents had been providing bilingual assistance programs for eleven years or more.

The interviews were conducted in February 2003, with Deputy Chief Ronald Carter, Oakland Fire Department and Deborah Liu, Oakland City Manager’s office. The interview with Deputy Chief Ronald Carter, Oakland Fire Department’s Personnel Officer was to inquire about the status of Oakland’s bilingual/multilingual assistance program for fire services. DC Carter stated, “A comprehensive program is necessary and has been the part of the recent firefighters’ union agreement negotiations” (DC Carter, interview, February 12, 2003). He indicated that a specific clause had been added in the Memorandum of Understanding concerning the need for bilingual/multilingual assistance in the City of Oakland and that incentive/premium pay would be provided for sworn employees who became “certified”. He added that prior to program implementation, a comprehensive plan needed to be developed to determine the program deliverables. DC Carter suggested that I interview Ms. Liu in the City Manager’s office since she had been hired to implement the City of Oakland bilingual/multilingual programs to ensure equal access to services.

The interview with Deborah Liu also provided significant findings and results. Ms. Liu had been recently hired by the City of Oakland to ensure that non-English speaking residents were being provided “equal access” to City of Oakland services. Her responsibilities included assessing City departments and providing technical support to ensure that Departments were complying with a local ordinance that was passed in April.
2001. Ms Liu added, “The city ordinance became the first in the state of California and possibly the nation that required essential services and materials be translated into languages spoken by at least 10,000 residents” (Deborah Liu, interview February 24, 2003). Ms. Liu was hired as the program manager for the new Office of Equal Access. Ms. Liu stated her assessment had been completed and she would be contacting departments to begin implementation of a citywide bilingual/multilingual assistance program. She has developed a plan for the citywide implementation that will be reviewed with Departments.

**Question Two**

What are other organizations doing to provide bilingual/multilingual assistance for services provided in their communities?

The literature review provided three published examples of bilingual/multilingual assistance for services provided. All three examples were from the public sector. The U. S. Department of Education, Office of English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement and Academic Achievement for Limited English Proficient Students (OELA), has developed a federal program to assist foreign students (U. S. Department of Education, Internet article, September 2002). The OELA provides funding and guidelines for bilingual/ multilingual instruction in the public schools to assist foreign students in learning English as a second language. The New York Public Schools Bilingual Student Program also had established a program that provides students with supportive bilingual instruction to aid their acquisition of English as a second language. The program was developed in the early 1970s by the Board of Education, (New York Public Schools, Internet article, September 2002). The last example was the State of California’s
implementation of the Dymally-Alatorre act. The Dymally-Alatorre was enacted in 1973, it was intended to ensure that individuals who do not speak or write English are not prevented from using public services because of language barriers” (California State Auditor, 1999, p. 5).

The interview with Assemblywoman Wilma Chan was scheduled as a telephonic interview due to her busy schedule. Assemblywoman Chan chairs the Assembly Select Committee on Language and Access to Government. Assemblywoman Chan’s office contacted the author and requested that the interview be conducted with her aide Thui Winn due to schedule conflicts. The phone interview was conducted on March 25, 2003, and with Ms. Winn. Ms. Winn stated that on August 28, 2002, there had been a legislative hearing to determine the status of State multilingual services. “At the hearing there was discussion of the status of program implementation at the State, County and local levels. There were four State organizations that were highlighted for their exemplary programs and several county/local government programs and initiatives were also recognized for their efforts”( Ms. Winn, phone interview, March 25, 2003).

The four organizations were the California Department of Motor Vehicles, the Department of Housing and Community Development, the Office of Human Rights and Community Relations, Department of Social Services and the Department of Mental Health. Additionally, county and local programs acknowledged for their programs were San Francisco Department of Health, Law Center for Families, National Linguistic and Cultural Services, Kaiser Permanente Medical Services. The City of Oakland was recognized for the passage of the bilingual ordinance and commitment to provide services and materials in various languages.
Question Three

What components are necessary for developing a strategic plan?

The literature review provided the necessary information to answer this question. An exhaustive review was conducted concerning published information and research about strategic planning and recognized strategic planning models. In each publication that was reviewed, the author addressed the issue of strategic planning. Out of the numerous publications that were reviewed, only two of the publications were designed with the not-for profit sector, or fire services in mind. Bryson (1995) addressed the non-profit sector and Wallace (1998) specifically addressed the fire services.

Wallace (1998) was the only author that approached the subject of strategic planning by offering a comparison of the various recognized strategic planning models and suggesting that his model, the Fire Department Strategic Planning Model was the best suited for the fire services because it to the best components from other models and added components that were not available but necessary to the fire services.

Based upon the findings, Wallace (1998) twelve steps for strategic planning were adopted for this research project as the essential components for strategic planning in the fire services and were integrated with the unique components that relate to providing bilingual/multilingual assistance in the fire services. Since this model had been tested by Wallace’s fire department and at least three other fire departments and implemented successfully, the model was the most viable option for this study.
**Question Four**

What are the unique characteristics about strategic planning for establishing a bilingual/multilingual assistance program for fire department services?

This question was challenging to address but the findings would serve as key factors of this research project. In the literature review, as previously indicated there was an extensive amount of published literature concerning strategic planning and the components necessary to establish an effective strategic plan. To identify unique characteristics related to establishing a bilingual/multilingual program, the strategic planning materials were reviewed thoroughly.

There was only one specific article, McNally (1997) that addressed bilingual/multilingual programs and strategic planning for the fire services. The one unique characteristic or component that was added to the list of various steps was the need to conduct a demographic analysis as part of the strategic planning process or steps. “A demographic analysis attempts to use data on populations to predict influences as to how people will think and act, what their needs and wants will be, and how organizations will be influenced by these factors as they relate to clientele and employees or members” (McNally, 1997, p.15). Other published articles related to strategic planning and bilingual services specific or unique approaches related to question 4, by adding a specific component defined as, an assessment of Access to Services. The Ventura Advisory Committee on Diversity, Strategic Plan, (2001, p. 5), the University of New Mexico, Strategic Plan (2001 and the Idaho Commission on Hispanic Affairs (1998) were examples were this component was included
To future address this question, the feedback instrument also included questions that would assist in determining what critical factors were instrumental in the establishment of the fire services bilingual programs and what planning tools were used to establish the programs.

The components for bilingual/multilingual services strategic plan that were used most frequently included by the 10 fire departments were, a vision statement, mission statement, planning, and a demographics analysis of the communities served.

An interview with Chief Simon was conducted on April 9, 2003. Chief Simon (2003) acknowledged the need for the bilingual/multilingual program to ensure the quality delivery of services to all community members. Additionally, Chief Simon emphasized, “It is essential to incorporate bilingual services into the fire department strategic plan. The demographics of the city and analyzing the future demographics are instrumental in developing a comprehensive program” (Chief Simon, interview, April 9, 2003).

Based upon these results, demographic analysis and access to services were identified as unique characteristics to address as part of the strategic plan for bilingual/multilingual assistance in the fire services.

**DISCUSSION**

Several significant findings came out of this research study. The quantitative research findings provided were, that although the U.S. Census statistics provide hard evidence that our cities and communities are culturally diversifying at an ever-increasing rate, that with the exception of California, currently, there were not many fire departments providing bilingual/multilingual assistance for fire department services.
Additionally, the use of strategic planning by fire departments, as indicated by the literature review and the survey results, is a tool that is just beginning to gain some recognition (Wallace, 1998). Moreover, the use of strategic planning for providing bilingual/multilingual assistance in the delivery of services is recognized based upon the literature review findings (Ventura Advisory Committee on Diversity, Strategic Plan, 2001) and the results of the feedback instrument surveys.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

The problem, as previously stated, was that the Oakland Fire Department does not have a strategic plan to provide bilingual/multilingual assistance for fire department services in a community in which at least 20% of residents are non-English speaking.

The purpose of this applied research project was to identify the essential components for a strategic plan to provide bilingual/multilingual assistance for fire department services.

Based upon the supporting information in the literature review, the results of the surveys and interviews, and the research presented in this study, the following recommendations are made to guide the Oakland Fire Department in addressing the problem:

1. The Oakland Fire Department should develop a strategic plan to provide bilingual/multilingual assistance in the delivery of fire department services.
2. The Fire Chief and the Fire Personnel Officer should lead the effort to develop a strategic plan to provide bilingual/multilingual assistance in the delivery of fire department services.

3. The Oakland Fire Department should work with the City of Oakland Equal Access Manager to obtain assistance in developing the strategic plan and to ensure compliance with the Ordinance.

4. The Oakland Fire Department should utilize the 14 steps that are identified as the essential components of a strategic plan for providing bilingual/multilingual assistance in the delivery of fire department services (Appendix C).

The implementation of the four recommendations will enable the Oakland Fire Department to better address current and future challenges, and to better serve all citizens in the City of Oakland.
REFERENCES


McNally, V. (1997, February). Demographics and strategic planning for the fire service. 

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APPENDIX A

SURVEY/FEEDBACK INSTRUMENT

This survey is part of the Executive Fire Officer Applied Research Project. Responding to any and all questions is VOLUNTARY.

Providing Bilingual/Multilingual Capabilities for Services Provided

Fire Department Name:__________________________________________

Approximate Population size of community:______________

1. Does your organization/Fire department provide bilingual capabilities for services rendered?
   _______ Yes
   _______ No

   If No, do you think you should? _______ Yes _______ No
   Why:______________________________________________________

   If you answered No to Question 1, you have completed the Feedback Instrument, thank you for your time.

2. Does your organization/Fire department provide multilingual capabilities for services provided?
   _______ Yes
   _______ No

   If yes, _______ 2-3 languages Specify:______________________
   _______ 4-6 languages Specify:______________________

3. How long has your organization/Fire department been providing bilingual/multilingual capabilities?
   1 to 4 years _______ 5 to 10 years _______ 11 years or more_____

4. Do you provide bilingual capabilities for all services?
   _______ Yes
   _______ No  If No, which services ___________________________

5. What results, benefits or outcomes do bilingual capabilities for delivery of services provide: Mark, if applicable, in rank order; 1= being of most value
   _______ lowered fire incident in target population areas
   _______ increased number of ethnic participants in programs
   _______ increased need for more bilingual employees
   _______ increased budget outlay to fund bilingual programs
   _______ increased service requests
increased customer service ratings
made no significant difference

6. What prompted your organization/Fire Department to provide bilingual/multilingual capabilities? Mark all that apply, in rank order. 1= most critical factor.
   — increase in ethnic fire fatalities
   — Public demand
   — Policy set by higher ups/mandate
   — Identified as meeting needs of demographics

7. What venue(s) did you use to develop your bilingual capabilities for your programs/services? Mark all that apply.
   — Organizational Strategic Plan
   — Development of Standard Operating Procedures
   — Other: Please Specify:____________________________________

8. What components/methods were used to determine and implement the level of bilingual/multilingual capabilities that your organization/Fire Department would establish? Mark all that apply.
   — Organizational Values
   — Planning to Plan
   — Mission Statement (What, Whom, How)
   — SWOT
   — External/Internal Environment Assessment
   — Vision statement
   — Action Plans
   — Performance Standard benchmarks
   — Short Term Planning
   — Long Term Planning
   — Other: Please Specify:________________________________________

Any Additional Comments:__________________________________________________________________________

Thank you for your assistance in this important research project.
APPENDIX B

Two Bar Charts illustrate survey results for:

1. Bilingual/Multilingual Capabilities Program Benefits Bar Chart

![Bilingual/Multilingual Capabilities Program Benefits Bar Chart](image)
2. Program Components for Implementation Bar Chart

Bilingual/Multilingual Capabilities for Comparable Fire Departments -
Program Components for Implementation
Convenience Sample, n=10
Ascending Rank Order, 1st Most Important
March 2003
APPENDIX C

ESSENTIAL COMPONENTS FOR A STRATEGIC PLAN FOR

BILINGUAL/MULTILINGUAL ASSISTANCE FOR FIRE SERVICES

1) Identifying the Department’s values
2) Planning to plan strategically
3) Selecting and Recommending a Strategic Planning Process
4) Identifying the Department’s Mandates
5) Developing the Mission of the Department
6) Creating a Philosophy of Operations
7) Assessing the Opportunities and Threats of the External Environment
8) Assessing the Strengths and Weaknesses of the Internal Environment
9) Identifying the Strategic Issues of the Department
10) Creating Strategies for Strategic Issues
11) Creating the Department’s Ideal Future Through Proactive Futuring
12) Operational Planning from a Strategic Perspective
13)* Conducting a Demographic Analysis
14)* Conducting an assessment of Access to Services

* = unique characteristics/components to address as part of the strategic plan for bilingual-multilingual assistance for fire department services.