

Category 1: Governance and Administration

For purposes of this category, governance is defined as the recognition of the authority that allows an organization or agency to legally form and operate. In fulfilling this responsibility, the legal entity that oversees this formation process reflects the public interest, protects the agency from undesirable external interference, determines basic policies for providing services, and interprets the agency's activities to its constituency. Administration is defined as the activities that carry out the implementation of the policies established by the authority having jurisdiction. In fulfilling this responsibility, the agency or organization carries out the day-to-day operations.

The legal entity and governing authority define the duties and responsibilities of the agency in an official policy statement. An organization's charter or local or state/province general statutes likely contain an agency's official policy statement.

The chief executive or chief fire officer should provide staff leadership in developing policy proposals for the legal civil authority having jurisdiction so those officials can take action to implement public policy based upon knowledgeable input from public safety leadership. Keeping an elected governing board and/or high-ranking individual informed on all matters affecting the agency and delivery of emergency services is the primary responsibility of agency leadership.

It must be recognized that other organizations participate in the governance of the agency, such as the state/provincial and federal governments through legislation, regulations, and funding procedures, and other organizations through associations and bargaining units. The governing board coordinates all these diverse interests to set the direction of the agency.

The agency administration exercises responsibility for the quality of the agency through an organized system of planning, staffing, directing, coordinating, and evaluating. The agency administration is entrusted with the assets and is charged to uphold its mission and

programs, to ensure compliance with laws and regulations, and to provide stability and continuity.

For many volunteer fire service organizations, the governing board is within the municipal or county government and is the executive/legislative body for municipal or county governance, some elected directly by the public, such as special districts. In the absence of a municipally appointed fire chief or chief executive officer, for purposes of accreditation, the duly elected or appointed volunteer fire chief shall be the individual responsible for the criteria and performance indicators.

In many city or county municipal organizations a separation of powers exists that give the governing body legislative responsibility while giving administrative responsibility to a strong mayor or city manager. The chief fire officer/chief executive officer in such organizations generally reports directly to the mayor, manager, or designee. It is vital that the leadership of every agency understand who sets policy for the government structure they are working in and their role in implementing that policy.

Criterion 1A: Governing Body

The governing body and/or agency manager is legally established to provide general policies to guide the agency, approved programs and services, and appropriated financial resources.

Summary:

The City of Meridian was incorporated in 1903 as a legally established charter city in the state of Idaho to provide its citizens with a full suite of public services, including public safety. Title 5 of the City Code of Meridian, Idaho provides for the establishment of the fire department and designation of the Fire Chief. The code legally establishes the Meridian Fire Department to operate and provide emergency services. The City Code designates the Fire Chief as an appointed position to perform all functions, powers, and duties to provide fire and life protection services and enforce all ordinances related to fire prevention, fire suppression, and the elimination of fire hazards as well as administer the Fire Department budget.

Performance Indicators:

CC 1A.1 The agency is legally established.

Description

The City of Meridian is legally established as a municipality by the State of Idaho as of August 1, 1903. The city's charter sanctions the mayor's scope of executive authority and legal power. The City of Meridian employs a strong mayor-council form of government. The mayor is the city's chief executive and the city council is the city's primary legislative body. The city council adopts the official City Code of Meridian that creates the city's authority to establish and provide emergency services as a fire department and appoint a fire chief under Title 5, Chapter 1, Section 5-1-1 and 5-1-2.

Appraisal

The City of Meridian's form of government has successfully created long-term stability and a plan to evaluate how fire department resources are used, and how those uses align with the priorities of the community. The annual budgeting process includes a 10-year Comprehensive Financial Plan to establish both short-term and long-term guides for capital, operating, and personnel expenditures. Currently, the city has zero debt on its books, eliminating the extra debt interest expense to city tax payers. The city's budget process and annual program appraisals have demonstrated that the fire department's ability to achieve the long-term strategic goals of the community.

Plan

The City of Meridian will continue to conduct weekly city council meetings and workshops that are open to the public and occur at the Meridian City Hall Chambers. The purpose of these meetings will be to adopt the fire department budget and for appropriating the resources required to fund the department's plan of services and facilities. City council will continue to update the city code, however no changes to the city charter are anticipated.

References

- Meridian Code of Ordinances, Title 5, pg. 1

- Certificate of Municipal Incorporation
- City of Meridian Comprehensive Financial Plan, pg. 11-15

CC 1A.2 The agency has a methodology in place for recognizing and reacting to changes in legal requirements of local, state/provincial and federal governments (i.e., inspection reports, regulatory references, meeting minutes and legal opinions).

Description

The Meridian Fire Department identifies the need to comply with all legal requirements in the various program areas of the department. The fire chief meets twice per month with all department directors, including the City Attorney, to collaborate across citywide programs to ensure compliance with policies, procedures, rules and regulations established by the City of Meridian. The department and the city have established policies that are compliant with local, state, and federal laws. The Meridian Fire Department is also a member of ACCESS, the Ada County/City Emergency Services System. ACCESS is a Joint Powers Agreement collaborative effort between multiple Ada County public safety entities established to ensure consistency across the local response system, as well as adherence to licensing requirements. The city's attorney and Ada County District Attorney regularly attend scheduled ACCESS meetings to address and provide legal opinions to changes in legal requirements of local, state, and federal governments.

The fire department also has members that are involved at the local, state, and national level in a variety of organizations including the International Association of Firefighters, the International Association of Fire Chiefs, the Western Fire Chiefs Association, the Idaho Fire Chiefs Association, the Southwest Idaho Fire Chiefs Association, and the Fire Department Safety Officers Association. Membership and participation in the various associations allows members from throughout the organization the ability to stay apprised of changes in legal requirements across all programs to ensure legal compliance.

Appraisal

The Meridian Fire Department has complied with legal requirements of local, state, and federal agencies. The regular meetings with city administration, including the City Attorney, have worked well. Department members' participation in various professional associations has also aided in developing a network of relationships, and formal (as well

as informal) streams of communication to address and respond to emerging issues related to local, state, and federal laws.

Plan

The department will continue to monitor legal requirements through the regularly scheduled meetings and continued participation in professional associations.

References

- ACCESS Joint Powers Agreement
- Director Meeting Agenda
- Director Meeting Minutes

1A.3 The governing body of the agency periodically reviews and approves services and programs.

Description

The City of Meridian has an established process for reviewing and approving fire department services and programs. The mayor's chief of staff meets with department directors, including the fire chief, every two weeks. The chief of staff manages the agenda, runs the meetings, and handles important follow-up items. The standing agenda includes strategic plan updates, policy review, and budget updates. The fire chief also provides quarterly updates to city council at regularly scheduled meetings. Additionally, the city maintains the City of Meridian Strategic Plan that is available on all director's desk tops that can be accessed and updated in real time. In turn, the fire chief meets monthly with the fire department executive team to focus on operational planning, business planning, organizational culture, recruitment, retention, training/professional experiences, long-range facility planning, and overall system delivery. The city council ultimately reviews and approves any large-scale program changes or additions through the defined budget process.

Appraisal

The department has recognized that due to the dramatic growth that both the city and the department have seen, the executive team needs to meet more often to discuss programs and needs. Communications between the department and the mayor's chief of staff have provided regular updates to the strategic plan as well as any policy, operational, or program changes.

Plan

As part of the 10-year vision planning process, the executive team will discuss how to better communicate program needs and updates on a regular basis. The chief will continue to meet regularly with the mayor's chief of staff to communicate any department updates, and will regularly attend city council meetings and work through the budget process to address any program changes.

References

- Director Meeting Agenda
- Director Meeting Minutes
- Strategic Plan Progress Report 06.27.2023
- Meridian Fire Strategic Plan – workflow
- Executive Team Meeting Agenda 06.14.23

1A.4 The role and composition of various policymaking, planning and special purpose bodies are defined by the governing body in an organizational chart.

Description

As demonstrated by the City of Meridian Leadership Organization Chart, the city council is responsible as the governing body for the overall policymaking and planning activities for the city. This includes adoption of the mayor’s budget and appropriating resources required to fund the city’s plan of services and facilities. The city council, mayor, and department directors review monthly performance by the city’s departments and approve significant changes throughout the year.

The mayor directs the various department directors, including the fire chief, in developing and submitting proposed programs and budgets to the city council. The fire chief leads the fire department in managing the budget within the policy parameters set by the city council. The mayor and the fire chief can recommend significant changes as required by policy.

At the program level, the Fire Chief is appointed to perform all functions, powers and duties as the head of the fire department. Management of the day-to-day operations of the fire department is illustrated in the department’s organizational chart.

In the early 1950’s the Meridian Rural Fire Protection District (MRFPD) formed a special purpose partnership with the City of Meridian to better protect and serve the citizens of Meridian and the citizens in the surrounding rural area. A percentage of the Meridian Fire Department budget is funded by this partnership. The MRFPD is governed by three elected district commissioners who are included in the department’s organizational chart.

Appraisal

The configuration and roles of the diverse governing bodies within the City of Meridian have been clearly defined and accurately reflected the workflow of the city. The fire department’s organizational chart has provided real-time visibility and a high level of transparency to the community as changes occur. The joint venture with the MRFPD has proven to be very beneficial to the City and that partnership continues today.

Plan

The city's organizational chart will be updated by the mayor's office when changes occur. The fire department's organizational chart will continue to be updated in real-time by the administrative services division manager to help the organization maintain a high level of accountability and transparency. This approach will allow the community to monitor the department as changes occur. As the city continues to expand, the department will continue to work with the MRFPD to plan and budget for the future fire protection service needs of the surrounding community.

References

- MFD Organizational Chart 08.02.23
- City of Meridian Leadership Organizational Chart

1A.5 The governing body or designated authority approves the organizational structure that carries out the agency's mission.

Description

Changes to the organizational structure is outlined under Title 1, Chapter 8, of the Meridian City Code that states that the mayor, with consent of the city council, shall appoint department officials, including the fire chief. Additionally, the mayor, with consent of city council, may add or change other appointed positions as necessary to effectively operate the city. The Comprehensive Financial Plan and budgeting process is the medium that city council and the mayor use to carry out the city's mission based on the recommendations of the individual departments within the City.

Appraisal

The city's organizational structure and the organization structure of the fire department has been approved and accepted by the mayor and city council. The process has worked well and has helped the city and fire department respond quickly to the rapid growth and development of the community.

Plan

The department's organizational structure will continue to be reviewed and approved through the budget process when changes are need. The organizational charts will continue to be published by the administrative services division manager on the city's public facing web page to provide a high level of accountability and transparency.

References

- MFD Organizational Chart 08.02.23
- City of Meridian Leadership Organizational Chart
- City of Meridian Strategic Plan 2021-2025

1A.6 The governing body adheres to an approved conflict of interest policy that is applicable to the governing board members and staff.

Description

The City of Meridian has approved Standard Operating Policy and Procedure 6.18 for the purpose of establishing standards regarding conflict of interest as it applies to employees and others acting on behalf of the city. The policy and procedure declare that members and staff should be free from actual or perceived conflicts of interest to assure the public that all transactions of the City are not compromised by a lack of independent judgement, objectivity, or fairness.

Appraisal

The city has had a conflict of interest policy and procedure for many years. The City of Meridian Human Resources department has been responsible for administering the standard operating policies and procedures, including the conflict of interest policy. The department does have a few related staff members in the fire department and the human resources department has a completed nepotism form on file for each known case, and has not found any real or perceived conflict of interest.

Plan

The department will continue to adhere to and monitor for any conflict of interest in accordance with adopted city-wide policy. Any changes to the current policy will be communicated with staff through the human resources department.

References

- Standard Operating Policy 6.18 Conflict of Interest
- Standard Operating Procedure 6.18 Conflict of Interest
- Screen Shot – HR email regarding conflict of interest and nepotism

1A.7 A communication process is in place between the governing body and the administrative structure of the agency.

Description

The City of Meridian has an established process for communicating between the governing body and the fire department. The chief of staff for the mayor's office oversees the communication process by scheduling meetings with department directors, including the fire chief, every two weeks. The chief of staff establishes the agenda, runs the meetings, and handles important follow-up items. The standing agenda includes strategic plan updates, policy review, and budget updates. The fire chief participates in work sessions with city council at regularly scheduled meetings, on the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th Tuesdays of the month, to provide department level updates to the council and to the public. Annually, each city council position is assigned to a city department as a liaison.

Appraisal

The communication process between the fire department and city leadership has been adequate. The working relationship between fire administration, city management and city council has been productive and positive. The implementation of the liaison program has also improved the development of major projects, personnel issues, and budget planning.

Plan

The fire chief will continue to meet with senior staff and the mayor's office in planned meetings. In the fire chief's absence, the deputy chief of administration will be appointed to serve as proxy to ensure a continuity of operations and communication.

References

- Director Meeting Agenda
- Director Meeting Minutes
- Resolution No. 23-2366 - City Council Liaisons
- City Council Meeting Agendas and Minutes

Criterion 1B: Agency Administration

The organizational structure aligns with or supports the agency's mission, purposes, goals, strategies, and objectives.

Summary:

The fire chief is responsible for the overall administration, purpose, and mission of the Meridian Fire Department. An organizational chart is established to identify the internal structure of the department, to represent the roles and responsibilities that have been identified, and to support specific goals, strategies, and objectives of the department. The administrative services division manager and three deputy chiefs report directly to the fire chief to align the goals and objectives of the fire department in three distinct program areas, including prevention, community risk reduction, operations, and administration.

Performance Indicators:

CC 1B.1 The administrative structure and allocation of financial, equipment and personnel resources reflect the agency’s mission, goals, objectives, size and complexity.

Description

The administrative structure of the Meridian Fire Department has been established to support the department’s mission “to protect and enhance our community through professionalism and compassion.” Under the fire chief, the fire department has identified major areas of responsibility to achieve the agency’s mission, goals, objectives. The department is structured to provide focus to key areas including operations, administration, and community risk reduction, and to mirror the agency’s mission, goals, and objectives based on its size and complexity.

The operations branch is directed by a deputy chief who oversees three battalion chiefs, the EMS division, and the training division. The prevention branch oversees the inspection and investigation divisions of the department. The administration branch is divided into two sections: the administrative services division manager manages administrative support personnel who provide service to all other programs and divisions. The deputy chief of administration oversees the administrative responsibilities for the operations and resource management of the fire department. The deputy chief of administration directs the logistics division, the division of health and safety, community risk reduction, and the accreditation process.

Appraisal

The agency’s administrative structure has been regularly updated. The recent reorganization of the fire department has been beneficial toward improving the organization’s ability to manage growth. The fire department has made significant changes to the administrative structure to respond to the changing needs of the organization.

Plan

The department will continue to use the current administrative structure to support the mission, goals, and objectives of the organization. The agency will continue to monitor and evaluate the performance of the organizational structure by surveying staff and incorporating their views into the executive team's 10-year strategic vision planning for the fire department.

References

- MFD Organizational Chart 08.02.23
- Meridian Fire Department Strategic Plan 2022-2024, pg. 22
- Meridian Fire Department Mission, Vision, Principles

1B.2 Personnel functions, roles, and responsibilities are defined in writing and a current organization chart exists that includes the agency's relationship to the governing body.

Description

The City of Meridian Human Resources Department and the fire department's administrative services division manager work closely together to maintain written job descriptions for each position of employment within the city's fire department. Each written job description correlates with a distinct role clearly identified in the organization chart to illustrate how each personnel function aligns within the appropriate section or division. The organizational chart is reviewed at least annually, and is updated in real-time as changes are made to accurately provide a high level of transparency to the community as changes occur. The classification of each job description reflects the level of responsibility of the job within the fire department. To ensure that employee classifications are applied consistently and lawfully, city council has approved Standard Operating Policy and Procedure 3.1 - Employee Classification. A signed job description is kept on file by human resources at the time of hire, rehire, promotion or reclassification.

Appraisal

The City of Meridian has a clearly defined explanation of the city's general employee classification and review criteria. The city began using the Decision Band Method Handbook to classify job positions and pay in 2022. The city also has adequately defined, in writing, job descriptions that outline the functions, roles, and responsibilities of specific positions in the fire department. Collective Labor Agreement between City of Meridian and Meridian Firefighters IAFF Local 4627 have defined union-represented roles including firefighter, engineer, and shift, training, and prevention captains.

Plan

The human resources department will conduct a full review of each job description and classification every three years and will conduct individual reviews as needed. The fire department's organizational chart will continue to be updated in real-time by the administrative services division manager to help the organization maintain a high level of accountability and transparency.

References

- Standard Operating Policy 3.1 - Employee Classification
- Standard Operating Procedure 3.1 - Employee Classification
- Fire Chief Job Description
- Firefighter Job Description
- The Decision Band Method Handbook and Manual
- Screen Shot - HR email regarding job description review and classification
- MFD Organizational Chart 08.02.23
- Collective Labor Agreement between City of Meridian and Meridian Firefighters IAFF Local 4627, Article 1, pg. 1-2