



ACCREDITATION TIPS

FIRE DEPARTMENT STRATEGIC PLANS AND COMMUNITY MASTER PLANS: *ARE THEY THE SAME?*

This handout will compare and contrast the components and functions of a community master plan and a fire department strategic plan with specific emphasis related to accreditation requirements within Category 3.

The Community Master Plan

Master plans can be described as overarching frameworks for how a community develops over a period of time. In many cases, a master plan addresses how parcels of land, massing, building heights, types, relationships, circulation of people and vehicles, recreation use, and the layout of streets are accomplished. These types of plans have enough detail to predict outcomes but also allow a certain degree of flexibility to meet challenges and are a whole-community concept. Where detail and clarification are needed for individual plan components, parks for example, a separate plan or subset may be developed.

Master plans can cover a longer period of time, sometimes spanning 30 years or more.

The Fire Department Strategic Plan

The fire department (or agency) strategic plan is a specific and detailed document that addresses the identified needs of public safety and is driven through a lens of response capability and community risk reduction using the accreditation model. Agency strategic plans focus on goals, objectives, and outcomes identified through assessment and feedback from the community and the personnel providing service. The strategic plan goes into greater detail on the processes needed to achieve each goal and objective and these details include teams assigned, benchmarks and timelines, funding, reporting relationships, and Fire and Emergency Services Self-Assessment Manual (FESSAM) performance indicator crosswalks, among others.

Make Objectives SMART

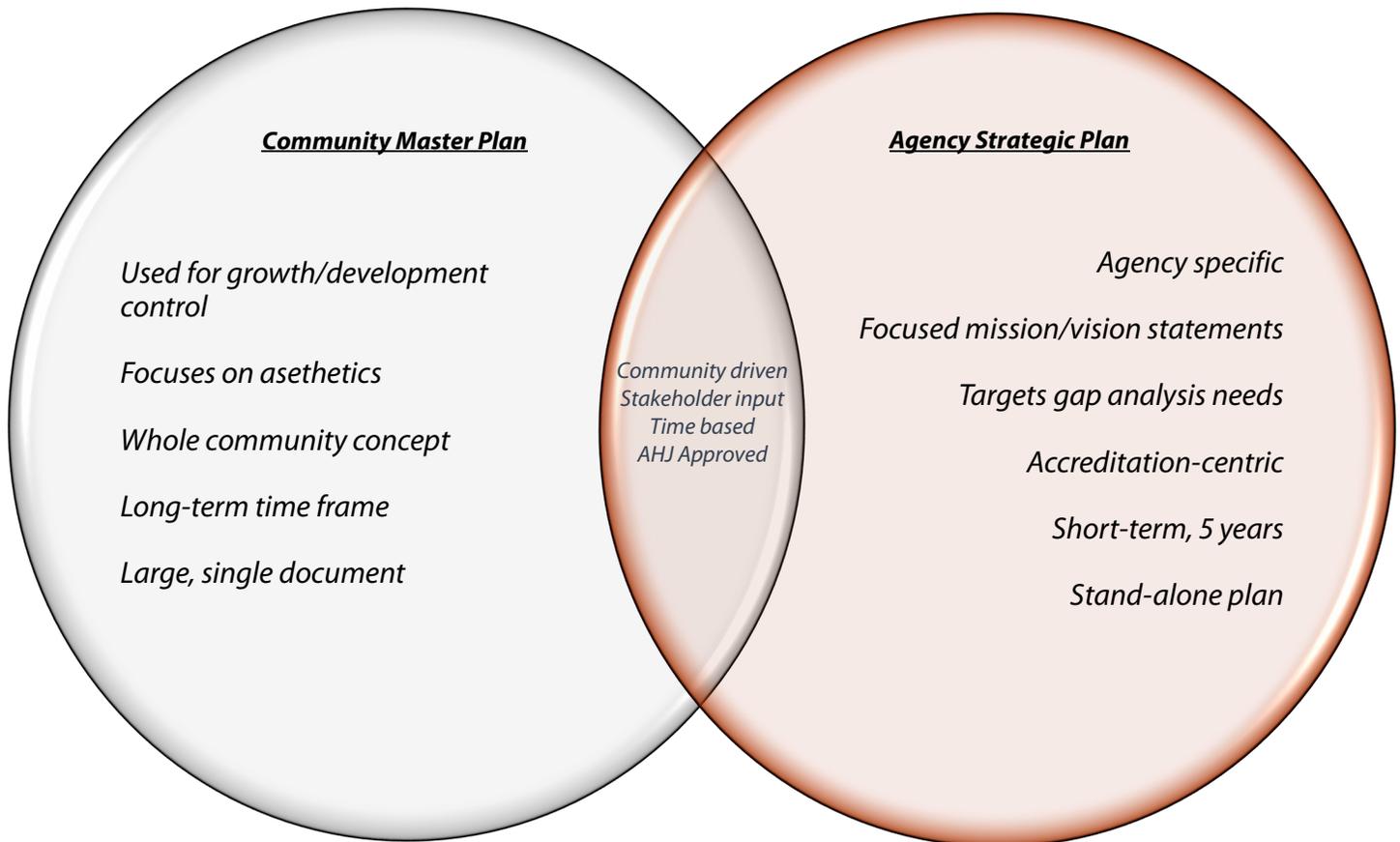
- S- Specific**
- M- Measurable**
- A- Action Oriented**
- R- Realistic**
- T- Time Based**

Category 3

The requirements for an agency to have a strategic plan are detailed in Category 3, *Goals and Objectives*, of the FESSAM and the information in Category 3 is essential to ensure success. The agency plan is a result of stakeholder input, is reviewed by your authority having jurisdiction, and is evaluated at least annually. The overall planning and monitoring processes are formalized and led by designated personnel. When the plan is developed, an environmental scan and external resources (if needed) are included when identifying the particular goals and objectives. Finally, when the plan is completed, internal stakeholders are educated on the goals and objectives and the plan is published. It is important to understand that the presence of a community master plan, or even a business plan, may not satisfy the Category 3 requirements, particularly if those plans do not specifically mention the agency or have assigned goals.

What's the difference?

This illustration compares and contrasts the community master plan and the fire department strategic plan:



Both types of planning are important, but the emphasis within the accreditation model speaks to a plan that meets the overall goals, objectives, and needs of the agency and its mission.

Questions to Consider when Analyzing Current Plans

For the Community

- Does my community have a master plan?
- What type of plan(s) does my jurisdiction use?
- Is the agency mentioned in the plan?

For the Agency

- Does my agency have its own plan, or do you use the jurisdiction's plan?
- If you have your own plan, does it support the overall community plan?
- Are there any goals in the master plan that you need to include in your agency plan?
- Do any of my goals and objectives conflict with the AHJ plan?
- Has your plan been reviewed by the AHJ or other community stakeholders?

For the Planning Team

- Have you considered all available external resources to support your plan?
- If you are mandated to follow a non-agency plan, have you considered developing some type of strategic process that uses the accreditation model?
- If you provide service to more than one community, have you considered reviewing their plans to see where and how you fit into the picture?
- Have you developed the process to educate your agency personnel on the specific goals and objectives?
- Have you developed the methods to measure progress and identify gaps?

"A goal without a plan is just a wish"

Antoine de Saint-Exupery

"By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail"

Benjamin Franklin

The existence of some type of guiding plan is an accepted norm within community development and management. When considering your agency's strategic plan, think of it as a customized internal roadmap that shows you the best route to get to your desired state.

Copyright © 2020 by the Center for Public Safety Excellence®, Inc., Chantilly, Virginia. All rights reserved.