

Agenda Memo	Item	Meeting Agenda	Meeting Date
K	Strategic Plan	Congress, Certificate Assembly, Degree Assembly	April 2024

*Proposed additions are in blue and underlined. Proposed deletions are in red and struck through.*

<b>Proposed Amendment(s) #:</b>	<u>K-1</u>	<b>Doc/Section:</b>	Strategic Plan Briefing Book
<b>Submitted by:</b>	Council of Governors (COG) and IFSAC Administration		
<p><b><u>Comments/Reason for proposal:</u></b></p> <p>At the 2023 Spring Conference, the IFSAC membership tasked the Council of Governors (COG) with meeting prior to the 2024 Spring Conference to create a strategic plan. From September through February, the COG, in collaboration with staff and a consultant, developed the attached Strategic Plan Briefing Book.</p> <p>This document is presented to the membership for approval in principle with the understanding that the top priority for the remainder of 2024 and 2025 will be to increase member engagement and that financial considerations for each strategy will require exploration.</p> <p>Information about the development process is provided in the opening letter of the attached Strategic Plan Briefing Book.</p> <p>We urge you to dedicate ample time to review the Strategic Plan Briefing Book thoroughly. This document includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An introductory letter explaining the development process.</li> <li>• Identity and Mission statements.</li> <li>• Strategic Objectives.</li> <li>• Strategies and strategy screens for each objective.</li> <li>• Final Reflections.</li> <li>• An appendix containing data illustrating member engagement and a sample tiered fee structure*.</li> </ul> <p>*Note: Members are not voting on the implementation of the tiered fee structure shown in the appendix. It serves only as a sample. Recommendations for fees are made by each assembly’s board to the COG for approval.</p>			



**STRATEGY BRIEFING BOOK**

**PREPARED FOR:**

**THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE  
INTERNATIONAL FIRE SERVICE ACCREDITATION CONGRESS**

**PRESENTED AT:**

**THE 2024 SPRING CONFERENCE  
SHERATON OKLAHOMA CITY DOWNTOWN HOTEL  
OKLAHOMA CITY, OKLAHOMA  
APRIL 3 - 6, 2024**

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• Sample “tiered” fee structure	

## FROM THE IFSAC MANAGER

On behalf of the Council of Governors, I'm pleased to submit this strategy briefing book to the IFSAC membership for its review and consideration.

At the 2023 Spring Conference, the IFSAC membership tasked the COG with meeting prior to the 2024 Spring Conference to create a strategic plan. Using a model developed by David La Piana of La Piana Associates,<sup>1</sup> we met every other week with a hired consultant, from September through February, to determine which strategies would best advance our work as a peer-driven, international accrediting body.

We began by crafting an identity statement that we felt captured the essence of IFSAC and reaffirmed our mission. We then examined the major trends and issues affecting IFSAC, their implications for the work we do, and how best to address those issues strategically and tactically. We then vetted each strategy using a strategy screen, a decision-making tool developed to validate the recommendations that are being presented for your review and consideration.

This briefing book is the compilation – and culmination – of the team's work. We look forward to having the benefit of your feedback and thought leadership as we determine, together, the right strategic path forward for IFSAC.

I'd like to take this opportunity to express my sincere thanks to those who served on the strategy task force. Representing the Certificate Assembly were John Cunningham, Lori Howes, Greg Palmer, and Tara Youngblood. Representing the Degree Assembly were Joel Billings, Josh Crisp, E. Rob Freese, and Casey Hall. Serving as public members were Bernie MacKinnon and Lee Silvi. Finally, thanks are due to Mollie Clakley, our parliamentarian, and to Callie Mars. We couldn't have done this without the dedication and commitment that each of these individuals brought to the table.

As always, please know how deeply grateful I am to you, our members, for all that you do day in and day out to enhance the professionalism of firefighters and emergency service personnel worldwide.



Eldonna M. Sadler  
Manager, IFSAC  
March 2024

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<sup>1</sup> David La Piana, *The Nonprofit Strategy Revolution: Real-Time Strategic Planning in a Rapid-Response World*. (New York: Fieldstone Alliance, 2008)

**WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE DO:  
OUR IDENTITY AND MISSION STATEMENTS**

The International Fire Service Accreditation Congress ensures the quality, integrity, and consistency of accredited programs for firefighters and emergency service providers worldwide to improve public and responder safety.

We accredit both certificate and degree programs using nationally and internationally recognized standards and support our members with a network of resources.

Our objective third-party evaluations help increase the professionalism, well-being, and safety of the graduates of IFSAAC-accredited programs.

Being peer driven makes us unique. Our strength comes from our diverse membership. We are recognized for our expertise, for our unwavering commitment to standards, and for the dedication of our international membership and staff.

We will honor our past by staying true to our mission. We will ensure our future by remaining peer-driven, growing our membership, increasing member engagement, and remaining fiscally responsible.

**OUR MISSION**

*To ensure the quality, integrity, and consistency of accredited programs  
for firefighters and emergency service providers worldwide.*

**KEY TRENDS, EMERGING ISSUES AND  
THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR IFSAC**

**ISSUE #1:**

As a peer-driven organization, IFSAC depends on the engagement of its members to achieve its programmatic and strategic objectives. For the past five years, IFSAC has struggled to recruit site visit team members, mentors, and committee members. The demands on volunteers' time and the costs of travel are increasing. There also is increased turnover as many of IFSAC's longest-serving members retire and new members join the organization without a clear understanding of the expectations for membership.

**Implications**

If IFSAC cannot fill the site visit teams needed to accredit current members, it will be unable to meet the expectations of current members, much less grow membership. Time and cost may be barriers to serving on site visit teams. IFSAC's ability to remain a peer-driven organization will depend on having enough participants who are willing to do the work.

**The "Big Questions"**

What must IFSAC do to engage and re-engage members to serve on accreditation site teams and fill other assignments? What incentives might be offered for members to participate? Can IFSAC reduce barriers to participation? Should the degree and certificate assemblies adopt a hybrid program evaluation model?

**THE STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE:  
*Increase Member Engagement***

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**ISSUE #2:**

IFSAC has an estimated 14% market penetration of U.S degree programs and an estimated 82% penetration of U.S. and Canadian certificate programs.

**Implications:**

Expansion of U.S. and Canadian certificate programs is limited. The growth opportunities are in the U.S. and Canadian degree programs.

**The "Big Questions"**

Should IFSAC focus its expansion efforts on increasing degree program members in the U.S. and Canada? Should IFSAC consider acquiring another entity to increase access to degree programs? Should the focus be on increasing certificate programs outside of the U.S. and Canada? Does IFSAC have the member and staff capacity to do both?

**THE STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE:  
*Increase market share.  
Capture the remaining certificate market in the U.S. and Canada and  
increase degree program memberships in the U.S. and Canada.***

### **ISSUE #3:**

IFSAC is a global organization with a presence in 17 countries on five continents. To date, international growth has been organic, rather than intentional or strategic.

#### **Implications**

Given the high degree of market penetration for certificate programs in North America, IFSAC's long-term growth will depend upon expansion beyond the U.S. and Canada

#### **The "Big Questions"**

What will IFSAC need to do so international growth is strategic, rather than organic? On which country and/or continent should IFSAC focus? What are the jurisdictional restrictions and/or educational systems within the chosen area of focus? Does IFSAC have sufficient member engagement and staff capacity to grow internationally?

#### **THE STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE:**

*Grow the international market in an intentional way.*

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**INTERNATIONAL FIRE SERVICE ACCREDITATION CONGRESS  
STRATEGIES-AT-A-GLANCE**

<i>Trend/Issue</i>	<i>Strategic Objective</i>	<i>Strategic Response</i>
<p>As a peer-driven organization, IFSAC depends on the engagement of its members to achieve its programmatic and strategic objectives. For the past five years, IFSAC has struggled to recruit site-visit team members, mentors, and committee members. The demands on volunteers' time and the costs of travel are increasing. There also is increased turnover as many of IFSAC's long-serving members retire and new members join the organization without a clear understanding of the expectations for membership.</p>	<p>Increase member engagement.</p>	<p>Institute a "tiered" membership fee structure to incentivize member engagement.</p>
<p>IFSAC has an estimated 14% market penetration of U.S degree programs and an estimated 82% penetration of U.S. and Canadian certificate programs.</p>	<p>Increase market share. Capture the remaining certificate market in the U.S. and Canada. Increase degree program memberships in the U.S. and Canada.</p>	<p>Develop an intentional, focused, and relationship-based marketing program targeted to the remaining certificate market and untapped degree program market in the U.S. and Canada.</p>
<p>IFSAC is a global organization with a presence in 17 countries on five continents. To date, international growth has been organic, rather than intentional or strategic.</p>	<p>Grow the international market in an intentional way.</p>	<p>Transition to a "branch"-based operational model.</p>



## **STRATEGY SCREEN**

*(The strategy screen is a decision-making tool that is used to determine whether to pursue a programmatic or strategic opportunity. It is not necessary to answer “yes” for each of the criteria. What’s important is to demonstrate that each of the criteria has been considered. Please see pp. 9 - 13.)*

IFSAC will pursue programmatic and strategic opportunities that:

- Are consistent with our identity and mission statements.
- Are aligned with our strategies.
- Will help build and broaden our reach and increase the number of institutions we serve.
- Will be fiscally responsible and sustainable.
- Will have a positive impact on our members and those they serve.
- Can be implemented given our existing capabilities, staff capacity/expertise, and technology infrastructure.
- Will complement our existing programs and increase our ability to meet the existing and emerging needs of our members.
- Have a high likelihood of being accepted by membership.
- Will enhance diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- Will enhance our brand.

**OBJECTIVE:  
INCREASE MEMBER ENGAGEMENT.**

**STRATEGY:  
*Institute a “tiered” membership fee structure to incentivize member engagement.***

<i>Criterion</i>	<i>Comments/Rationale</i>
Is consistent with our identity and mission statements.	Yes. Increasing member engagement will help ensure the quality, integrity, and consistency of accredited programs; reinforce IFSAC’s role as a peer-driven organization; and sustain growth.
Will help build and broaden our reach and increase the number of institutions we serve.	Unsure. IFSAC membership is not required, and some members consider the current fee structure to be high. We will need to reinforce to members who are engaged that fees for their institutions <b>would not</b> increase and that new members would be offered the lowest “introductory” fee. We also will need to demonstrate how fees are being and will be used. By increasing member engagement, IFSAC will be able to serve more members.
Will be fiscally responsible and sustainable.	Yes. Increasing fees for non-participating members should result in additional revenue long-term, assuming there is no significant loss of current members.
Will have a positive impact on our members and those they serve.	Unsure. Members will need to recognize the value to their organizations of increasing their participation and engagement.
Can be implemented given our existing capabilities, staff capacity/expertise, volunteer capacity, and technology infrastructure.	Yes. However, implementing a new fee structure that offers incentives based on level of engagement will require that current tracking systems be modified.
Will complement our existing programs and increase our ability to meet the existing and emerging needs of our members.	Perhaps. Some members still are not going to participate, and the increased fees may result in their leaving IFSAC. At the same time, if we can engage more members, we will increase our capacity to conduct site visits, thus meeting members’ existing and emerging needs.
Has a high likelihood of being accepted by membership.	Unsure. May depend on how effectively the “case for support” is made. Members who are currently engaged would see no increase and should support a new fee structure for those who are not engaged.
Will enhance diversity, equity, and inclusion.	Does not apply.
Will enhance our brand.	Yes, assuming we can engage more members and conduct more site visits, we will strengthen our position as a peer-driven organization.

**OBJECTIVE:  
INCREASE MARKET SHARE.  
CAPTURE THE REMAINING CERTIFICATE MARKET IN THE U.S. AND CANADA.**

***STRATEGY:  
Develop an intentional, focused, and relationship-based marketing program targeted to  
the remaining certificate market in the U.S. and Canada.***

<i>Criterion</i>	<i>Comments/Rationale</i>
Is consistent with our identity and mission statements.	Yes. Increasing the number of accredited certificate programs will help ensure the quality, consistency, and integrity of those programs.
Will help build and broaden our reach and increase the number of entities we serve.	Yes. By capturing the remaining certificate market, we will expand our reach by increasing the number of entities served.
Will be fiscally responsible and sustainable.	Perhaps. Having more members will result in additional revenue. However, additional marketing costs may be incurred which could increase IFSAC's financial obligations.
Will have a positive impact on our members and those they serve.	Perhaps. If we don't achieve our first objective – to increase member engagement – we will not have the capacity to conduct additional site visits. If site visits are delayed or postponed, members will be negatively impacted.
Can be implemented given our existing capabilities, staff capacity/expertise, volunteer capacity, and technology infrastructure.	Perhaps. While we currently have the staff and volunteer capacity to add more members, we may not have the bandwidth to support those additional members long term. New members should be added in a planned, intentional way so we can determine the demands on staff and volunteers. We also may need to engage outside marketing expertise.
Will complement our existing programs and increase our ability to meet the existing and emerging needs of our members.	Yes.
Has a high likelihood of being accepted by membership.	Yes. There are no downsides for current members, assuming we can increase current member engagement and continue to meet member expectations.
Will enhance diversity, equity, and inclusion.	No/Does not apply.
Will enhance our brand.	Yes, particularly if we can capture most of the remaining market.

**OBJECTIVE:  
INCREASE MARKET SHARE.  
INCREASE DEGREE PROGRAM MEMBERSHIPS IN THE U.S. AND CANADA.**

**STRATEGY:  
*Develop an intentional, focused, relationship-based marketing program targeted to the untapped degree program market.***

<i>Criterion</i>	<i>Comments/Rationale</i>
Is consistent with our identity and mission statements.	Yes. Increasing the number of accredited degree programs will help ensure the quality, consistency, and integrity of those programs.
Will help build and broaden our reach and increase the number of institutions we serve.	Yes. By adding more degree programs, we will expand our reach by increasing the number of institutions served.
Will be fiscally responsible and sustainable.	Perhaps. Having more members will result in additional revenue. However, additional expenses for staffing and marketing may be incurred which could increase IFSAC's financial obligations. The increased expenses cannot exceed revenues.
Will have a positive impact on our members and those they serve.	Perhaps. If we don't achieve our first objective – to increase member engagement – we will not have the capacity to conduct more site visits. If site visits are delayed or postponed for new and existing members, there will be a negative impact.
Can be implemented given our existing capabilities, staff capacity/expertise, volunteer capacity, and technology infrastructure.	Perhaps. While we currently have the staff and volunteer capacity to add more members, we may not have the bandwidth to support those additional members long term. New members should be added in a planned, intentional way so we can determine the demands on staff and volunteers. We also may need to engage outside marketing expertise.
Will complement our existing programs and increase our ability to meet the existing and emerging needs of our members.	Yes, this strategy would complement our existing programs. However, our ability to meet members' existing and emerging needs will depend on staff and volunteer capacity.
Has a high likelihood of being accepted by membership.	Yes. There are no downsides for current members, assuming we can increase current member engagement and continue to meet member expectations.
Will enhance diversity, equity, and inclusion.	No/Does not apply.
Will enhance our brand.	Yes. Capturing an increased share of the market for degree programs will strengthen the brand.

**OBJECTIVE:  
GROW THE INTERNATIONAL MARKET IN AN INTENTIONAL WAY.**

**PROPOSED STRATEGY:  
*Transition to a “branch”-based operational model.***

<i>Criterion</i>	<i>Comments/Rationale</i>
Is consistent with our identity and mission statements.	Yes. Transitioning to a “branch”-based model will increase IFSAC’s reach worldwide.
Will help build and broaden our reach and increase the number of institutions we serve.	Yes. However, IFSAC will need to be conscious of how and where branches will be established.
Will be fiscally responsible and sustainable.	Depends on whether the additional revenues that are generated would offset the additional expenses incurred (travel, cultural competency training, staffing, marketing, etc.).
Will have a positive impact on our members and those they serve.	Perhaps. Current members will need assurance that the level of support they currently receive will not be reduced. New and current international members would have more flexibility and ability to manage their own affairs.
Can be implemented given our existing capabilities, staff capacity/expertise, volunteer capacity, and technology infrastructure.	No. Will require more staff and perhaps staff who have different expertise. May also require increased technology infrastructure and increased volunteer capacity. May also require increased training for staff and volunteers regarding cultural differences and cultural competency.
Will complement our existing programs and increase our ability to meet the existing and emerging needs of our members.	Yes, the branch model would complement existing programs and increase the ability to meeting the needs of international members.
Has a high likelihood of being accepted by membership.	Unsure. May have a high likelihood of not being accepted, depending on when and how the strategy is introduced.
Will enhance diversity, equity, and inclusion.	Yes. Would add more members from different cultures and different perspectives.
Will enhance our brand.	Yes. Would strengthen IFSAC’s position as a worldwide organization.

## FINAL REFLECTIONS...

The Council of Governors believes that the strategies being recommended will enable IFSAC to respond to members' needs in an intentional, focused, and sustainable way for the foreseeable future. We must balance our aspirations with reality, however. Our success depends not simply on having a solid plan of action, but on our ability to successfully *implement* that plan, given the current capacity of staff and volunteers and the existing workload.

Toward that end, we are asking that the membership approve this plan in principle *with the understanding that the top priority for the remainder of 2024 and 2025 will be to increase member engagement and that financial components for each strategy will need to be explored.*

The COG will work with the staff and others to develop a tactical implementation plan for increasing member engagement specifically and will begin laying the groundwork so we can pursue all our strategies over the next several years.

We welcome your thoughts on the proposed path forward.

**APPENDIX**

**A POSSIBLE MODEL FOR A TIERED DUES STRUCTURE:<sup>2</sup>**

*The following is simply an illustration of a possible model for a tiered dues structure to incentivize member engagement. Any decisions that are made regarding a new fee structure would not take effect until July 2026, assuming the COG’s approval of recommendations from the Boards of the Degree and Certificate Assemblies.*

**WHY CONSIDER A TIERED DUES STRUCTURE?**

IFSAC’s ability to remain a peer-driven organization will depend on having enough members who are willing to do the work. If members are unwilling to serve on site visit teams, IFSAC will be unable to accredit current members, much less new members.

To illustrate level of engagement:

In 2022, there were **76** Certificate Assembly member entities. However, **only one-third of these entities** (25) provided personnel for site visits. Given that site visits require three people per site team, on average, the 18 site visits conducted in 2022 could have used personnel from **at least 20 more CA** member entities. In 2023, there were **78** CA member entities, only **23** of which provided site visit personnel. Yet, the 17 site visits that were conducted required at least 51 team members.

***This situation is unsustainable.*** IFSAC must increase member engagement if it wants to remain peer-driven, grow membership, fulfill members’ expectations, and maintain its brand.

<b>DEGREE ASSEMBLY</b>			
<b>Tier I</b>	<b>Tier II (10% inc.)</b>	<b>Tier III (25% inc.)</b>	<b>Tier IV (40% inc.)</b>
<b>\$1,980</b>	<b>\$2,180</b>	<b>\$2,475</b>	<b>\$2,800</b>
Would apply to current members who serve on a site visit team within 24 months and attend a scheduled regular meeting within 12 months. Also would apply to new, first-time members for three consecutive annual membership cycles.	Would apply to members who attend at least one scheduled regular meeting and actively serve on one committee or task group within a 12-month period or as a program evaluation team reader or admin reviewer.	Would apply to members who attend one scheduled regular meeting within a 12-month period.	Would apply to members who choose not to engage in any way.
<b>CERTIFICATE ASSEMBLY</b>			
<b>Tier I</b>	<b>Tier II (10% inc.)</b>	<b>Tier III (25% inc.)</b>	<b>Tier IV (40% inc.)</b>
<b>\$2,500</b>	<b>\$2,750</b>	<b>\$3,125</b>	<b>\$3,500</b>
Would apply to current members who serve on a site visit team within 24 months and attend a scheduled regular meeting within 12 months. Also would apply to new, first-time members for three consecutive annual membership cycles.	Would apply to members who attend at least one scheduled regular meeting and actively serve on one committee or task group within a 12-month period or as an admin reviewer.	Would apply to members who attend one scheduled regular meeting within a 12-month period.	Would apply to members who choose not to engage in any way.

<sup>2</sup> Fees would be adjusted by each assembly depending on membership category and voting status.