

Small Group Work Activity

Executive Summary

CEW #3 • April 29, 2026



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On April 29, more than 20 attendees participated in the third BFPD *Planning for a Safer Future* community engagement workshop held at Reed-Custer Elementary School. The session provided attendees with a deep dive into Fire/Rescue, staffing, and finances. Following the presentation, participants worked together in **three groups** to complete the following tasks:

Task #1

Now that your group has an understanding of BFPD finances and priorities, decide how you will fund them. Your group has \$100 to spend across all the items listed below. Your group may spend your \$100 in any combination you like, but you may not spend more than \$100.

- ☐ Address increasing demand for fire and emergency medical services.
- ☐ Hire more full-time firefighter/paramedics.
- ☐ Improve BFPD salaries to be on par with competing districts.
- ☐ Replace old apparatus and equipment.
- ☐ Update aging facilities.
- ☐ Add apparatus to better protect large areas without a water supply.
- ☐ Secure stable funding for emergency services now and in the future.

Task #2

Now that you have spent your \$100, tell us about the decisions you made.

Task #3

Finally, after reviewing the financial projections related to replacing aging equipment and adding staff to meet NFPA standards, what questions does your group have about exploring options to fund each of those scenarios with a tax increase?

In reviewing the discussion across all three groups, a clear and consistent theme emerged: participants are most interested in understanding how staffing, funding stability, and equipment investments work together to support reliable emergency response.

Across **all three groups**, staffing rose to the top as a priority area. Participants repeatedly emphasized the importance of having enough personnel to respond effectively, with one group noting, *"It doesn't matter if you have updated equipment if you don't have staffing to run the calls."* This reflects a shared understanding that people are the foundation of service delivery, and many participants expressed interest in learning more about staffing levels, hiring needs, and how those align with growing EMS demand.

Closely tied to this, **two of the three groups** highlighted the importance of securing stable, long-term funding. One group put it simply: *“If we secure funds the rest can be addressed.”* Participants showed strong curiosity around funding mechanisms—such as grants, referendums, and taxes—and how those tools can support both immediate needs and long-term planning.

Equipment and apparatus also stood out as key areas of interest. **All three groups** allocated funding toward replacing or maintaining equipment, signaling a shared recognition of its role in maintaining service quality and safety. Participants expressed interest in understanding how equipment investments impact response capabilities and insurance ratings, with one group noting the importance of maintaining equipment *“to respond and keep ISO down.”*

Compensation and retention surfaced as another important theme, with **multiple groups** allocating funding to salaries. Participants connected competitive pay directly to attracting and retaining skilled personnel, highlighting a desire to better understand how compensation compares across districts and how it supports workforce stability.

Interestingly, **two of the three groups** chose to allocate little or no funding toward facility upgrades, suggesting that participants generally view current facilities as adequate. As one group explained, updates were seen as *“more cosmetic than necessary.”* This points to a shared inclination to prioritize operational readiness over physical infrastructure.

Across the board, participants also expressed an appreciation for the complexity of balancing priorities. All three groups described the challenge of distributing limited resources, with one noting the difficulty of *“trying to spread out the spending and determine what deserves more money than others.”* This reflects a thoughtful and engaged approach, with participants eager to better understand trade-offs and decision-making frameworks.

Summary of Consensus

- Staffing and personnel capacity are the most important foundation for effective emergency response.
- Stable, reliable funding is essential to support all other priorities.
- Maintaining and replacing equipment is widely viewed as critical to service quality and safety.
- Competitive salaries play a key role in attracting and retaining skilled personnel.
- Participants recognize the importance of balancing resources across multiple priorities.