



EL D O R A D O L A F C O

LOCAL AGENCY FORMATION COMMISSION

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Local Agency Formation Commission

Agenda Item #4:

Draft –

Countywide Fire Suppression and Emergency
Services

Municipal Services Review



Municipal Services Review

BACKGROUND

- ❑ Mandated by State law as precursor study before the Commission may establish an agency's sphere of influence
- ❑ Designed to give the Commission more specific information on an agency's performance
- ❑ The goal was for the Commission to have data that it can use to make informed decisions on matters that affect agencies or promote the Commission's goals of the efficient provision of services, the planned orderly growth of public agencies and the protection of agricultural resources



Municipal Services Review

BACKGROUND

- The report should comprehensively address the following factors:
 - (1) Infrastructure needs or deficiencies.
 - (2) Growth and population projections for the affected area.
 - (3) Financing constraints and opportunities.
 - (4) Cost avoidance opportunities.
 - (5) Opportunities for rate restructuring.
 - (6) Opportunities for shared facilities.
 - (7) Government structure options, including advantages and disadvantages of consolidation or reorganization of service providers.
 - (8) Evaluation of management efficiencies.
 - (9) Local accountability and governance.

Municipal Services Review

Methodology

- The Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR) was directed by statute (§56430) to prepare guidelines to assist LAFCOs in complying with the new service review requirements. The guidelines identify several possible goals and objectives for municipal service reviews to be achieved through written determinations in the nine required areas. These goals and objectives are as follows:
 - Promote orderly growth and development in appropriate areas with consideration of service feasibility, service costs that affect housing affordability, and preservation of open space, important agricultural land and finite natural resources.
 - Encourage infill development and direct growth to areas planned for growth in general plans.
 - Learn about service issues and needs.
 - Plan for provision of high quality infrastructure needed to support healthy growth.

Municipal Services Review

Methodology (cont'd):

- The Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR) was directed by statute (§56430) to prepare guidelines to assist LAFCOs in complying with the new service review requirements. The guidelines identify several possible goals and objectives for municipal service reviews to be achieved through written determinations in the nine required areas. These goals and objectives are as follows:
 - Provide tools to support regional perspectives or planning that address regional, cross-county or statewide issues and processes.
 - Develop a structure for dialogue among agencies that provide services.
 - Develop a support network for smaller or ill-funded districts that provide valuable services.
 - Provide backbone information for service provider directories or inventory reference documents for counties that do not have them.
 - Develop strategies to avoid unnecessary costs, eliminate waste, and improve public service provision.

Municipal Services Review

Methodology (cont'd):

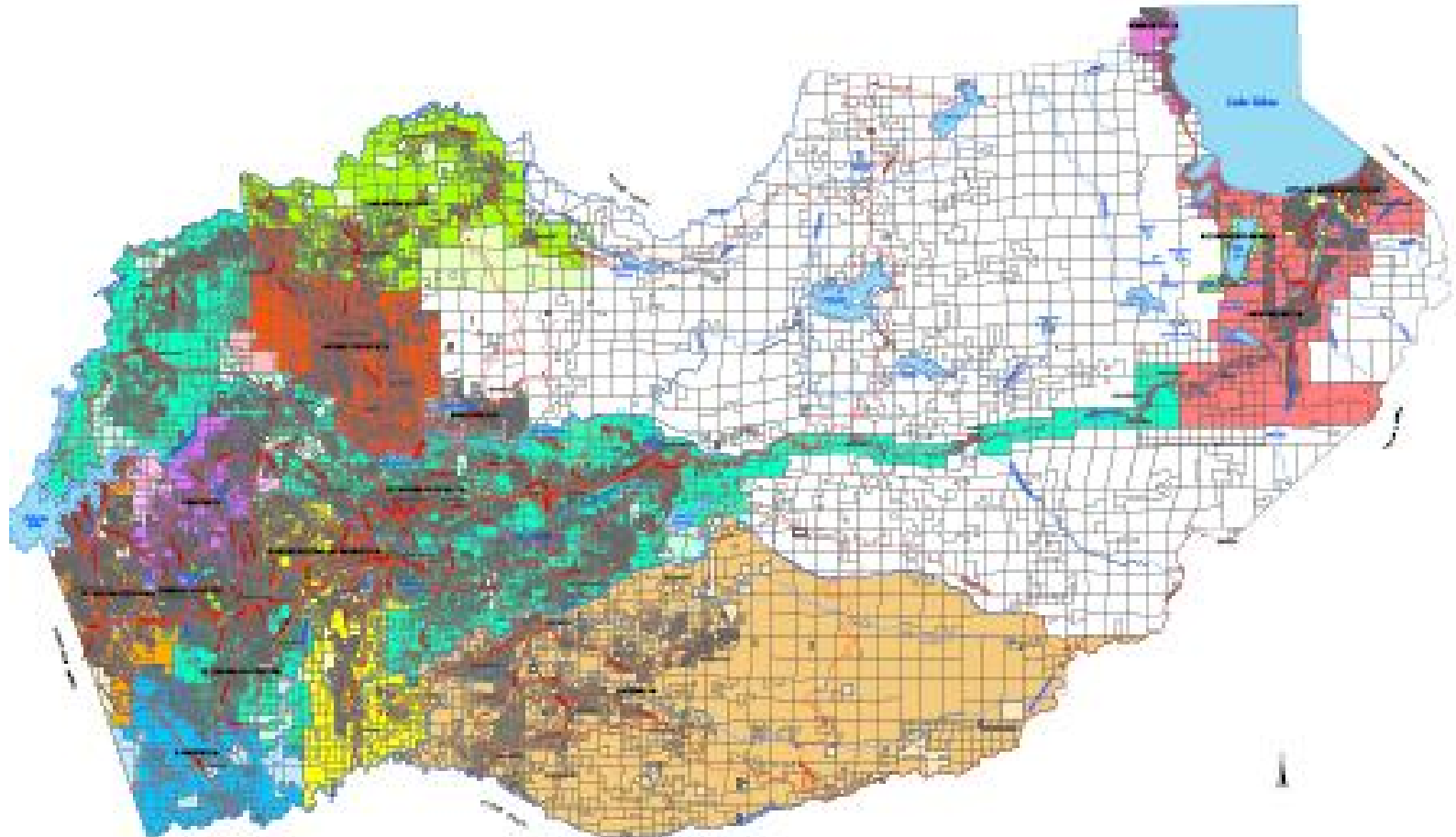
- The Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR) was directed by statute (§56430) to prepare guidelines to assist LAFCOs in complying with the new service review requirements. The guidelines identify several possible goals and objectives for municipal service reviews to be achieved through written determinations in the nine required areas. These goals and objectives are as follows:
 - Provide ideas about opportunities to streamline service provision through use of shared facilities, approval of different or modified government structures, joint service agreements, or integrated land use planning and service delivery programs.
 - Promote shared resource acquisition, insurance policies, joint funding requests or strategies.

Municipal Services Review

Methodology

- The study area for this service review contains all of El Dorado County, selected by the El Dorado Fire Chiefs' Association and its MSR Subcommittee
- A total of 14 local government agencies directly provide fire protection and emergency services within El Dorado County, although related agencies were also discussed in the study:
 - City of South Lake Tahoe
 - Diamond Springs/El Dorado FPD
 - El Dorado Hills CWD
 - Garden Valley FPD
 - Lake Valley FPD
 - Meeks Bay FPD
 - Pioneer FPD
 - Cameron Park CSD
 - El Dorado County FPD
 - Fallen Leaf Lake CSD
 - Georgetown FPD
 - Latrobe FPD
 - Mosquito FPD
 - Rescue FPD

MSR Service Area





Municipal Services Review

Methodology

- In addition to the potential uses identified in the OPR guidelines, El Dorado LAFCO will use the municipal service review information to:
 - Adopt legally valid spheres of influence for each of the fourteen direct providers of fire and emergency services and review/reaffirm the spheres of influence for County Service Area 3 and 7.
 - Provide substantial analysis and information necessary for the consideration of potential consolidation or other major reorganization efforts which may be considered in the future by fire and emergency service providers.
 - Provide substantial analysis and information to support informed decisions regarding annexations and/or reorganization applications which will be submitted to LAFCO in the future.

Fire Suppression and Emergency Services

Introduction:

- Enabling statutes established in State law give a variety of agencies the power to provide fire protection services and/or ambulance services.
 - Fire protection districts, community services districts, recreation and park districts, and county service areas are authorized to provide both (structural) fire protection and ambulance services.
 - County water districts, municipal water districts, and public utility districts are authorized to provide fire protection services.
 - Health care districts are authorized to provide ambulance services.
 - Cities provide a variety of public services including fire protection and ambulance.

Fire Suppression and Emergency Services

Background:

- Fire Protection and Emergency Services encompass a broad spectrum of functions and activities.
 - **Fire Prevention** – Fire service agencies are in the business of managing community risk. Increasingly, they fight fires by taking measures to prevent them. Regulation and code enforcement have become important tools in prevention and a substantial part of fire service.
 - **Emergency Services** – Fire protection agencies are considered “all risk” agencies and respond to various types of emergencies and perform a wide range of services. In addition to fire suppression, emergency services include vehicle accident response and extrication, medical aid, removal of victims from structural collapse, confined space rescue, swift water rescue, and hazardous material (hazmat) response “to protect people and the environment from the release of hazardous materials.”
 - **Medical Services** – Fire agencies have evolved to provide increasing, onsite, emergency medical services to the community. Every fire department is required to provide basic life support, which includes CPR; however; most offer Advanced Life Support services (ALS) that include EMT-B, EMT-I, EMT-D (defibrillator), EMT-II, and Paramedic. Increased emergency medical services require increased, regular training.

Fire Suppression and Emergency Services

Background:

- Fire suppression and emergency services agencies face many challenges in El Dorado County because of its topography, wildland/urban interface, historical development practices and high traffic pattern rates from local residents and tourists.
- The Insurance Services Office (ISO) is a private organization that supplies information that underwriters use to evaluate and price particular risks, including fire protection. ISO staff gathers information on individual properties and communities and, in turn, insurers use that information in underwriting personal and commercial property insurance, commercial liability and workers compensation policies. The ratings range from a score of 10 (no fire protection at all) to 1 (best fire protection possible).
- El Dorado County provides discretionary funding for fire protection and medical emergency services to designated fire protection districts. These agencies serve the more rural parts of El Dorado County, and suffered from a substantial reduction in property tax revenues following Proposition 13 and the Educational Revenue Augmentation Fund (ERAF) reductions of the 1990s and 2000s. The program is intended to assist fire providers achieve long term financial stability.



Fire Suppression and Emergency Services

Agency Background Information:

- The data on these narratives were compiled over the course of two years.
- Where possible, LAFCO staff updated the information prior to releasing the public review draft.
- Several chiefs either verified the information as current or requested updates to the data.



MSR Analysis

Infrastructure Needs and Deficiencies:

- *Purpose: To evaluate the infrastructure needs and deficiencies of a district in terms of capacity, condition of facilities, service quality, and levels of service and its relationship to existing and planned service users.*

MSR Analysis

Infrastructure Needs and Deficiencies:

- The principal facilities for fire protection are stations. There are 56 local agency fire stations in El Dorado County.
- Widespread facility needs and deficiencies characterize the majority of the fire districts, especially those with older stations and those serving more rural populations, but these agencies have or are developing long range building improvement plans to address problems.

MSR Analysis

Agency	Number of Stations	ISO Rating	
		Urban	Rural
Cameron Park CSD	2	5	9
City of South Lake Tahoe Fire Department	3	5	N/A
Diamond Springs/El Dorado FPD	6	5	8
El Dorado County FPD	17	5	8
El Dorado Hills CWD	3	3	8
Fallen Leaf Lake CSD	1	4	9
Garden Valley FPD	3	5	8
Georgetown FPD	5	5	8
Lake Valley FPD	3	5	8
Latrobe FPD	2	5	8
Meeks Bay FPD	2	N/A	5
Mosquito FPD	1	5	8
Pioneer FPD	6	5	9
Rescue FPD	2	4	8

MSR Analysis

Agency	Population	Number of Firefighters*	Firefighters per Capita
Cameron Park CSD	18,225	24.7	1:738
City of South Lake Tahoe Fire Department	23,609	42	1:562
Diamond Springs/El Dorado FPD	37,000	30.7	1:1,207
El Dorado County FPD	61,639	68.3	1:902
El Dorado Hills CWD	33,600	64.3	1:522
Fallen Leaf Lake CSD	500	9.3	1:54
Garden Valley FPD	8,000	14	1:571
Georgetown FPD	6,500	21.7	1:300
Lake Valley FPD	11,000	26.3	1:418
Latrobe FPD	900	10.2	1:89
Meeks Bay FPD	1,000	11.3	1:88
Mosquito FPD	1,600	10.8	1:148
Pioneer FPD	7,000	10.7	1:656
Rescue FPD	5,500	26.7	1:206

MSR Analysis

Infrastructure Needs and Deficiencies:

- Many fire districts, especially those in more rural areas or with limited budgets, noted difficulty recruiting and retaining paid personnel.
- Agencies that rely extensively on volunteers have indicated that volunteerism is declining. Likely explanations include changing demographics, a changing sense of community, housing trends and changes in the workforce/place.

MSR Analysis

Infrastructure Needs and Deficiencies:

- A common sentiment among several agencies is that revenues are sufficient for annual operations and purchases of lower cost items but are insufficient to fund large capital acquisitions, such as engines and water tenders.
- The levels of coordination between dispatch systems and between dispatch center and responding agency is remarkably high, to the point where it is seamless for the 911 caller. The deployment of the nearest available resource also ensures prompt response times.



MSR Analysis

Infrastructure Needs and Deficiencies:

- El Dorado agencies coordinate radio frequencies and channels to maintain communication among themselves and between agencies.
- Call data is tracked differently by the agencies, depending upon their local or internal needs, making it difficult to make valid, broad comparisons for all agencies.



MSR Analysis

Infrastructure Needs and Deficiencies:

- Calls rates related to fire (structure, non-structure and vehicle), for the most part, are decreasing.
- As a share of total calls, “Rescue Service” calls are increasing for agencies with, or adjacent to, water recreational areas.
- Several districts have a disproportionate ratios between “Mutual Aid Given” and “Mutual Aid Received”.

MSR Analysis

Infrastructure Needs and Deficiencies:

- ❑ Mutual aid greatly enhances services to the residents of the County because it guarantees that a response will be received by the closest available resource regardless of jurisdictional boundaries.
- ❑ On the other hand, while firefighters have an overall mutual respect for each other and an agency's mission may not directly address financial equity, costs are incurred during mutual aid calls.



MSR Analysis

Infrastructure Needs and Deficiencies:

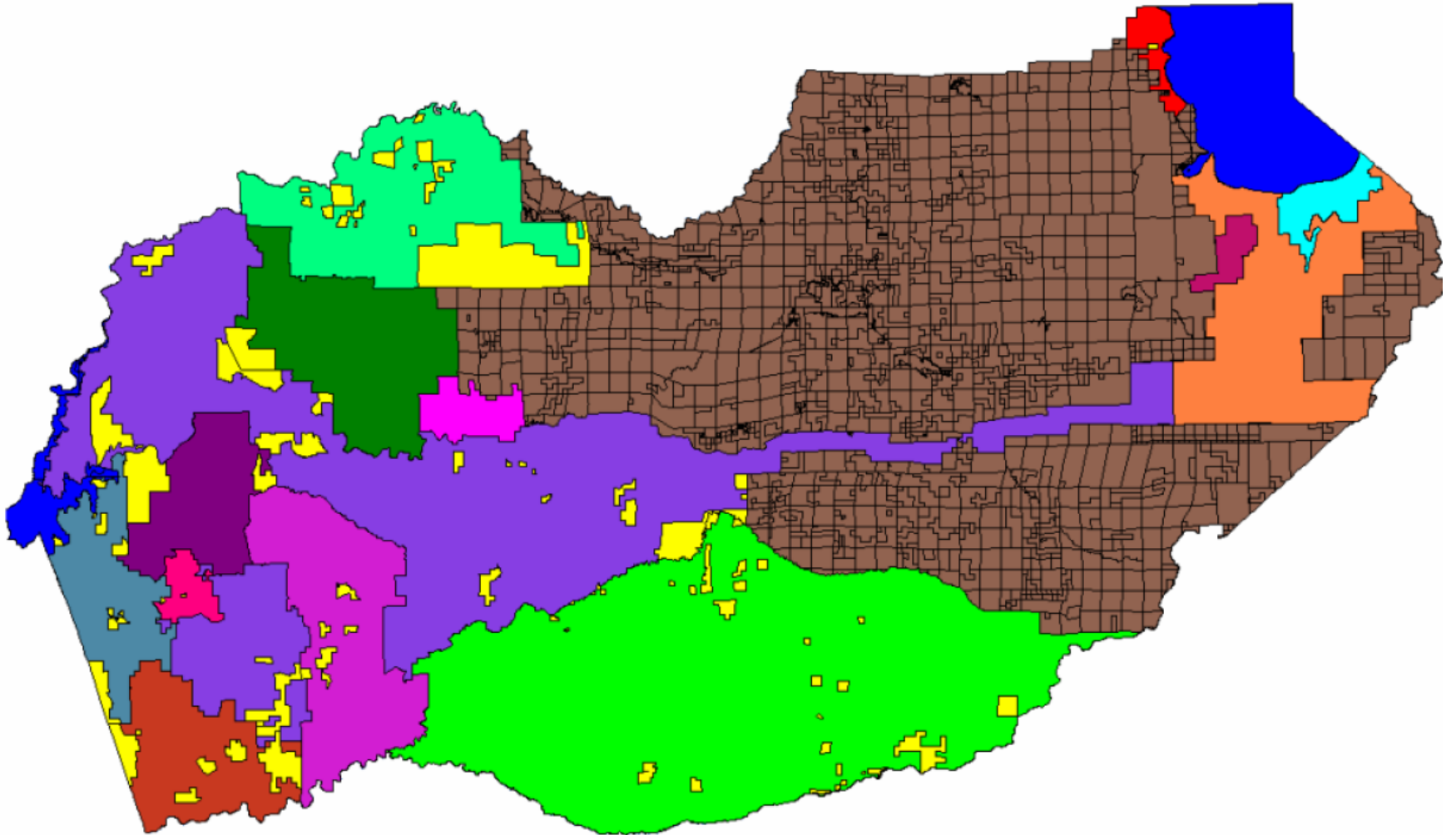
- These types of situations may warrant a review of service area boundaries to determine whether any adjustments are necessary. However, such a review will require that it be done in a methodical fashion and with proper buy-in to ensure that the adjustments are done for the right reasons: to remove fiscal inequity from a misalignment of service area and coverage and, most important of all, so that it is to the benefit of residents.

MSR Analysis

Infrastructure Needs and Deficiencies:

- Several districts have islands within their service areas that are encircled by the district's service area but are technically outside of it, becoming “holes” in the agency's finance streams: agencies will spend resources to provide service to the area but will not receive revenues to offset those costs.
- The same dynamics occur on developed parcels (or parcels slated to be developed in the near future) that are adjacent to, but outside of, fire districts.

Areas Outside of Agency Boundaries



MSR Analysis

Infrastructure Needs and Deficiencies:

Consequently, a dialogue needs to occur with County, district and LAFCO officials to discuss the following:

- Identify already developed parcels that are outside of a fire district;
- Identify the fire suppression agency best suited to provide service to the area;
- Identify a method for funding the LAFCO application into those districts;
- As part of the planning process, the County should adopt an ordinance (or enforce if the ordinance is already in place) requiring the annexation into a fire district as part of the planning process. This would ensure coverage, resolve inequitable fiscal issues for the district and that the landowner is responsible for any costs associated with the annexation.



MSR Analysis

Growth and Population:

- *Purpose: To evaluate service needs based on existing and anticipated growth patterns and population projections.*

MSR Analysis

Growth and Population:

- El Dorado County's population increased steadily between 1980 and 2000, growing by 70,487 people at an average annual growth rate of 3.2%.
- New housing unit demand is projected to be 32,000 by 2025, including pre-general plan existing commitments. Approximately 85% of this increase will be on the Western Slope.
- In addition to the projected growth, El Dorado County's population experiences significant seasonal increases due to tourism and agriculture.
 - While these visitors cause an increase demand for services such as medical and vehicular accident response and search and rescue, there is no commensurate increase in revenues available to provide those services.



MSR Analysis

Growth and Population:

- County growth is in a transition period, moving from mostly rural areas with low service needs to a more suburban pattern, especially in the western regions of the county.
- These higher population densities are associated with an increased need and/or demand for services and with an increased expectation of service at higher levels by newer residents.
- Citizens, especially those moving from more urban areas into less densely populated areas, may be unaware of any service level variation between urban and rural districts. This will lead to unmet expectations for service.



MSR Analysis

Financing Constraints and Opportunities:

- *Purpose: To evaluate factors that affect the financing of needed improvements.*

MSR Analysis

Financing Constraints and Opportunities:

- A successful financing plan for government services requires the right match between the type of expense and the source of funds. Types of expenses generally fall into one of three categories:
 - (1) acquisition of facilities and major capital equipment
 - (2) employee expense
 - (3) ongoing operations and maintenance..

- The largest sources of revenue for fire suppression and emergency services agencies are:
 - Property taxes
 - Development impact fees
 - Fire suppression and/or benefit assessments
 - User fees
 - Donations
 - County supplement fund

MSR Analysis

Agency	Number of Stations	County Supplement Fund	Impact Fees	Assessments	JPA Provider	Out-of-District Fees	Grants
Cameron Park CSD	21%		Yes		Yes		
Diamond Springs/EI Dorado FPD	11-13%		Yes		Yes		Yes
EI Dorado County FPD					Yes		
EI Dorado Hills CWD	17%		Yes		Yes		
Fallen Leaf Lake CSD		Yes		Yes			Yes
Garden Valley FPD	13%	Yes	Yes	Yes			
Georgetown FPD	11-12%	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Lake Valley FPD	15%			Yes	Yes	Yes	
Latrobe FPD		Yes	Yes				
Meeks Bay FPD	9%	Yes		Yes		Yes	Yes
Mosquito FPD	11-12%	Yes	Yes	Yes			
Pioneer FPD	9%	Yes	Yes				Yes
Rescue FPD	16%	Yes	Yes	Yes			Yes

MSR Analysis

Financing Constraints and Opportunities:

- Each of these revenue sources contains some restraints in an agency's ability to utilize it.
- To fund the infrastructure needed to support new residents and potential future annexations, agencies may need to utilize new financing mechanisms such as impact fees, grants, and partnerships.
- Many agencies, especially smaller ones, may not have skilled internal financial administrative staff or board members to prudently manage the various financial vehicles. Consequently, agencies must balance revenues against local needs, goals, money management capacity and long term planning and forecasting.



MSR Analysis

Cost Avoidance Opportunities:

- *Purpose: To identify practices or opportunities that may aid in eliminating unnecessary costs.*



MSR Analysis

Cost Avoidance Opportunities:

- Because the level of cooperation among fire agencies has increased over recent years, they are already in the process of exchanging best practices and sharing information that help the agencies reduce or avoid unnecessary costs.
- One cost that plagues certain districts is that they spend limited resources to train volunteer personnel only to have those qualified volunteers leave.
- The biggest, and most cited, cost avoidance opportunity is agency consolidation.

MSR Analysis

Cost Avoidance Opportunities – Consolidation:

- Reorganizations do not, on the whole, lead to substantial cost savings.
 - Costs associated with labor (on-the-line personnel salary) would not be decreased if the number of firefighters remain the same.
 - There would also be little cost reduction in the maintenance of facilities if the number of stations remains the same.

- Savings can be achieved if the number of personnel is cut, if management levels are reduced or flattened, through economies of scale for purchasing and equipment maintenance and through a reduction in administrative and facilities costs.

- Consolidation can be best achieved among agencies that have cooperated, shared and coordinated resources significantly in the past.

MSR Analysis

Cost Avoidance Opportunities – Consolidation:

- A consolidated agency would have to demonstrate that service levels would increase or remain the same; that it would reduce redundancies in resources by a noticeable amount and that the service area would be a well-defined geographic area.
- Consolidation would also entail a combination of the oversight boards and an expanded administration overseeing the combined firefighting corps.



MSR Analysis

Opportunities for Rate Restructuring:

- *Purpose: To identify opportunities to positively impact rates without decreasing service levels.*

MSR Analysis

Opportunities for Rate Restructuring:

- Because each revenue source has inherent constraints that limit an agency's ability either to impose it, institute it, enhance it, utilize it or (in some cases) implement it, the MSR recommends that agencies explore diversifying their revenue streams as much as possible:
 - **Out-of-District Medical Reimbursement** – All agencies without a fee schedule to recover costs for the administration of emergency medical services provided to out-of-district or out-of-County visitors.
 - **Usage Fees** – If the agencies have not already done so, agencies should consider implementing usage fees for direct services rendered.
 - **Facility Rental Fees** – Agencies should also consider renting its hall to be used for community events.
 - **Inter-Governmental Contracts** – Several districts indicated that they respond to emergency calls on Federal or State lands.



MSR Analysis

Opportunities for Shared Facilities:

- *Purpose: To evaluate the opportunities for a jurisdiction to share facilities and resources to develop more efficient service delivery system.*

MSR Analysis

Opportunities for Shared Facilities:

- Inter-agency sharing of facilities as well as public-private partnerships are widespread within the County. All agencies studied have sharing arrangements with public and private entities, either formal agreements or informal arrangements or both.
- The most beneficial sharing of resources to residents in the County is the practice of deploying the nearest resource to an emergency.
- While sharing can stretch resources farther, it cannot unilaterally overcome fundamental shortages and deficiencies in funding or infrastructure.



MSR Analysis

Opportunities for Shared Facilities:

- Among the impediments to increased cooperation and sharing of facilities are:
 - geographic distance
 - political preferences
 - limited space.

- Some of these deficiencies can only be overcome by revenue enhancements, through reorganization of the districts and/or service area boundary readjustments.



MSR Analysis

Government Structure Options:

- *Purpose: To consider the advantages and disadvantages of various government structures to provide service.*



MSR Analysis

Government Structure Options:

- ❑ The structure of local government in El Dorado County consists of many overlapping single purpose special districts.
- ❑ Fire and emergency services are directly provided by a diversity of local government agencies in El Dorado County including fire protection districts, a county water district, community services districts and a city.
- ❑ Other related service agencies include County Service Areas 3 and 7, El Dorado County, CDF, USFS, joint powers authorities and others.
- ❑ Further, other special districts exist within the boundaries of each fire protection provider.

MSR Analysis

Government Structure Options:

- In regions with separate, distinct communities that are geographically remote from each other, services are most logically provided by several local single purpose agencies.
- In the most rapidly growing areas of the County, which may have once geographically contained several distinct communities, now have developed areas between those original small communities that have taken identities of their own or blurred historical distinctions.
 - Agencies that once reflected the core community have become mismatched to areas that have filled out since the agencies were created.
 - New residents who have moved into areas with recent rapid growth are demographically more homogenous to each other, have generally similar service needs and may have expectations for higher levels of service than can easily be provided by individual special districts designed and funded for lower levels of service.



MSR Analysis

Government Structure Options:

- Multi-purpose service providers and larger agencies generally have the advantage of economies of scale, cohesive planning and fundraising capability. Administration and overhead costs for several separate agencies may be higher than those for a single larger agency.
- Regardless, as noted in the report, there might be some difficulties with consolidating districts, both from a technical standpoint (such as infrastructure) and from a political one.



MSR Analysis

Government Structure Options:

- Agencies whose geographic location, history of shared facilities and/or community ties would make them candidates for consolidation include:
 - Fallen Leaf Lake CSD and Lake Valley FPD
 - Lake Valley FPD and South Lake Tahoe Fire Department
 - Diamond Springs/El Dorado FPD and El Dorado County FPD
 - Garden Valley, Mosquito and Georgetown FPD

MSR Analysis

Government Structure Options:

- If consolidation is not a feasible option, then the readjustment of service boundaries would be needed in the near future in order to ensure that:
 - Growing communities of interest are not split between service agencies. In other words, residents may have a community identity with one service provider while services are actually delivered by another.
 - Issues of fiscal inequity brought to the surface by mutual aid are removed.
 - Remove issues of increasing service demand upon districts that currently do not have the capacity or resources to address this increase.
 - Remove any issues of “free riders”.

MSR Analysis

Government Structure Options:

- In that respect, based on the concept of community identity, location of fire stations and mutual aid calls given and received, the following agencies are candidates for a readjustment of service boundaries, including lands already in an agency and lands that are currently outside of any fire suppression agency:
 - El Dorado Hills CWD and Rescue FPD
 - Cameron Park CSD and Rescue FPD
 - El Dorado County FPD and Garden Valley FPD
 - Diamond Springs/El Dorado FPD and El Dorado County FPD
 - Latrobe FPD and El Dorado County FPD

MSR Analysis

Government Structure Options:

- When considering consolidations or service area adjustments, the Commission will need to draw distinctions between:
 - Short term allocation problems that should be addressed by the affected agencies themselves (with additional growth and investment) and long term problems that require boundary changes;
 - The need for changes of organization that equitably re-allocate revenues and the simple need for increased revenues; and
 - The extent to which special district boundaries and jurisdiction can or should be used to define and reinforce the identities of the unincorporated communities and instances in which district boundaries must extend to wider areas.



MSR Analysis

Evaluation of Management Efficiencies:

- *Purpose: To evaluate the quality of public services in comparison to cost.*

MSR Analysis

Evaluation of Management Efficiencies:

- The purpose of management is to effectively carry out the principal function and purpose of an agency. Good management will ensure that the agency's mission is accomplished and that the agency's efforts are sustainable into the future.
- A large part of the evaluation of management quality and efficiency is subjective.
- Based on the research for this report, all agencies have management and accountability structures in place that adequately provide fire protection and emergency medical services to their respective service areas.
- The agencies are also implementing innovative solutions to combat equipment deficiencies, sharing facilities to reduce costs and cooperating extensively with one another.



MSR Analysis

Local Accountability and Governance:

- *Purpose: To evaluate the accessibility and levels of public participation associated with agencies decision making and management processes.*

MSR Analysis

Local Accountability and Governance:

- Agencies appear to consistently comply with open meeting regulations by posting agendas and staff reports in advance.
- An option for the agencies that receive funding from outside sources to consider is to adopt similar practices for the reporting of those funds. Variances in their reporting practices may lead to allegations that those agencies not reporting those revenues in their budget summaries are “hiding” funds and to unnecessary investigations.
- Although difficult, some agencies may want to consider adopting budget accountability metrics and performance measures to present to the public as to how well their district is doing.



MSR Analysis

Local Accountability and Governance:

- The JPA should assist local agencies to standardize fiscal accountability, budget reporting and transparency at the local level with a goal of facilitating public and agency understanding of the process, flow of revenue and improve accountability throughout the county



Countywide Fire Suppression and Emergency Services

Municipal Services Review

LAFCO staff would like to extend many thanks to the following agencies and individuals:

- The fire chiefs and their staffs
- Staff from the California Department of Forestry and the Fire Safe Council
- County Administrator's Office
- County Assessor's Office
- County Auditor's Office
- County JPA Administrators
- County Surveyor's Office