

Category 10: External Systems Relationships

An agency's external relationships are defined as those relationships which serve to integrate the performance of one system with another. The increased use of multiunit systems and the increase of interagency agreements between various types of government entities necessitate regular attention to these relationships and the agreements between autonomous operating units. Agreements must be legally adopted, current, monitored and updated within the accrediting period. Programs that rely on support from external system relationships to meet agency expectations must be referenced in the agreement.

Criterion 10A: External Agency Relationships

The agency's operations and planning efforts include relationships with external agencies and operational systems that affect or may influence its mission, operations and/or cost effectiveness.

Summary:

The department collaborates with a multitude of agencies, both private and public throughout Douglas County. To supplement services provided to the community, the department understands the value of partnerships and cooperation.

The City of Lawrence's strategic plan and the department's strategic plan identify the importance of external relationships and encourage collaborative efforts to meet service expectations. The department's desire to continuously improve has driven outside relationships to not only the local and state levels, but also the regional and federal levels. The regional and federal-level collaboration efforts have primarily been attained through the accreditation process and department attendance at training / conferences.

Collaborative relationships have resulted in improved service delivery which supports the department's mission. Several agreements and programs have proven to be cost effective in terms of both service delivery and performance success. Inclusive in this are all the departments within the city's municipal structure as well as those agencies included within the Douglas County automatic tender aid (joint response agreement) and mutual aid agreements. The department maintains strategic relationships under an automatic tender aid agreement (Inter-Local Agreement) with municipal and county agencies within Douglas County. The department also participates in the Douglas County Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan and the State of Kansas Emergency Response Plan.

Performance Indicators:

CC 10A.1 The agency develops and maintains external relationships that support its mission, operations, and/or cost-effectiveness.

Description

The department develops and maintains external relationships with jurisdictional and regional agencies through in-kind services, mutual aid agreements, and memorandums of understanding. Locally, these relationships include but are not limited to:

1. City agencies (Lawrence Kansas Police Department, MSO, Parks and Recreation, Information Technology, City Attorney's Office)
2. Jurisdictional agencies (Douglas County Municipal, Fire District and Township Fire Departments, Douglas County Emergency Management, Douglas County Emergency Communications, Douglas County Sheriff's Office, Kansas State Fire Service Training Institute)
3. Regional (Kansas Regional Hazardous Material Teams, Kansas Regional USAR Teams, State Mutual Aid Compact)
4. Private organizations (American Red Cross, Rural Water District Associations, Bert Nash, Heartland Public Health, Lawrence Memorial Health Hospital, Evergy Inc., Black Hills Natural Gas Company)
5. Quasi-Governmental Organizations (University of Kansas, Haskell Indian Nations University, Baker University)

These relationships enable the department to meet its mission in a cost-effective manner through direct or indirect emergency incident support, training opportunities, specialized resources, and in-kind services. The department's strategic plan supports relationships with external partners to promote improved services.

Appraisal

These relationships have adequately supported department operations in support of its mission in a cost-effective manner that has allowed the department to re-allocate funding to other program areas.

The department's focus on building relationships with external partners have enhanced the department's ability to respond to incidents within the city and Douglas County. External partners have been readily available to assist the department with emergency and non-emergency needs or requests. The department has leveraged these relationships when planning for large scale events within the city. This has included planning for and deploying resources to support large scale celebrations in the downtown area of the city during the 2022 NCAA National Basketball Championship. The department coordinated with multiple law enforcement agencies, Douglas County Emergency Management, the MSO Department, and Parks and Recreation to prepare for this event.

Plan

The department believes the benefit of working with external agencies is invaluable to our successful operations and plans to continue balancing our daily workload with the participation in outside agencies. The department will continue to seek funding when available to reduce the budget impact in our participation in outside agencies.

The department will continue to prioritize building relationships with external agency partners. With the department's isolated response structure, mutual aid agreements with local first responding agencies are vital. The command staff will review and evaluate current mutual aid agreements and update them as necessary.

Through the development of the department's new MIH program, the department will collaborate with other agencies within Douglas County that are a part of the health system cycle. To address patient immediate needs and connect them with the proper long-term care, collaboration will be a necessity.

References

2022 NCAA National Basketball Championship IAP

MOU Douglas County Sheriff's Office

10A.2 The agency's strategic plan identifies relationships with external agencies/systems and outlines a process to identify any impact or benefit to the agency's mission, operations or cost-effectiveness.

Description

The department's strategic plan identifies external agency relationships as part of the Strengths Weakness Opportunities and Threat (SWOT) Analysis. The SWOT analysis lists external relationships as a strength and opportunity to support department operations.

Appraisal

The department's strategic planning process was effective at directing the identification of external resources that support department operations. The identified external resources include KU Fire Rescue Training Institute, Lawrence Kansas Police Department, Douglas County Sheriff's Office, Douglas County Consolidated Fire Dist. No. 1, Project Lively team, Douglas County Public Health, Bert Nash, Lawrence Memorial Health, Developing Caring Communities Committed to Action (DCCCA), Douglas County Mental Health Crisis Center, Haskell Indian National University, University of Kansas, USD 497, local media outlets, other city departments and local colleges/paramedic programs.

Plan

As part of the SWOT analysis, conducted through the strategic planning process, the department will continue to strengthen relationships with external partners. The department will continue to use the strategic plan process to discuss the importance of external agency relationships and their impact on its operations and effectiveness.

References

2021-2026 Lawrence-Douglas County Fire Medical Strategic Plan (pages 40 and 42)

10A.3 The agency researches, evaluates and considers all types of functional relationships that may aid in the achievement of its goals and objectives.

Description

The department’s participation in the City of Lawrence Strategic Plan teams has aided in the achievement of organizational goals. The city’s structure with support services has created an avenue for active functional relationships.

Within Douglas County, the department identifies the need for all types of functional agreements that support the department in meeting service expectations. These functional agreements include emergency response (auto/mutual aid agreements and memorandums of understanding), mitigation plan reviews (Douglas County EOP), and service agreements (ESO, Kansas State Fire Marshal).

Through the Douglas County Data Sharing Collaborative, the department contributes to county health initiatives and studies. This indirectly impacts department resource deployment.

Appraisal

The department’s functional relationships with other city departments have been adequate. Collaboration among city departments has been diluted through an excess of city-wide projects and competing priorities.

Relationships between the department and county agencies have not been formally recognized. The lack of formal agreements has hindered the department’s ability to form mutually beneficial partnerships. As a result, relationships are often one-sided and transactional in nature.

The department’s relationships outside of Douglas County have been increasing. Collaboration with other agencies through the Heart of America Accreditation Consortium has been beneficial through increasing the department’s sophistication of the accreditation

process and continuous improvement model. The EMS and Training Division's participation in Johnson County training opportunities have bolstered the department's training content and schedule. Relationships with first responder agencies outside of Douglas County are hindered by a historical view of geographical isolation.

Plan

The department will continue to monitor all current functional relationships and work towards improving those that are lacking. In 2023, the department will work with the City Attorney's Office to formalize agreements with the county agencies it currently works with. The department will continue to identify areas where service gaps occur and seek functional relationships to enable the department to accomplish its mission. The department will continue to research and consider other functional relationships that might enhance the operations of the department and further aid the department in achieving its goals and objectives.

References

Heart of America Accreditation Task Force Meeting Minutes - 3Q 2022
Commitments and Outcome Teams

10A.4 A conflict resolution process exists between all external organizations with whom the agency has a defined relationship.

Description

The department’s external agreements include a conflict resolution clause. Each agreement uses a method that is most likely to facilitate a successful resolution based on the nature of the agreement and the partner agency. The fire chief, or his/her designee, acts as the department’s representative and may use the city attorney’s office to provide guidance or representative counsel.

Appraisal

The conflict resolution clauses in the various agreements have been adequate thus far for all agencies that participate in said agreements. The city attorney’s office has been involved and supported throughout conflict resolution processes.

Plan

The department will continue to ensure that conflict resolution clauses remain in force within all agreements established between the department and all other external agencies. The department will continue to utilize the City Attorney’s Office for legal consultation and direction.

References

Douglas County Tender Response Auto Aid Agreement

Criterion 10B: External Agency Agreements

The agency maintains current agreements with those external agencies which support the identified programs. All external agency agreements required to be maintained in support of any program must be current, reviewed, and/or updated within the accreditation period and adopted by the appropriate governing bodies. All agreements should support the agency's effort to take advantage of any operational and cost-effective benefits. Data reports, at least annually, should reflect the impact of each agreement on the agency.

Summary:

The department recently identified that there are external agency agreements in effect that have not been managed or located in the department's records. External agency agreements with no sunset clause have not been recently reviewed for relevance.

The department is currently working to identify and inventory all external agency agreements. These agreements include emergency service automatic and requested mutual aid, support for the department's record management system and analysis software, and physical fitness assessments.

The increase of use related to the city's internal service department has enhanced agreement review and compliance requirements. A typical review of new agreements includes participation and support from the Information Technology Department, the City Attorney's Office, and may require the approval by the governing body prior to implementation. The department's command staff aids the fire chief in review and implementation of emergency service agreements.

Performance Indicators:

CC 10B.1 External agency agreements are reviewed every three years and revised as necessary to meet objectives.

Description

The department is currently working to identify and inventory all external agency agreements. The guidelines of the department reflect its participation in known agreements. SOP 102.40 Program Management Assignments identifies the fire chief and accreditation manager as the individuals responsible for managing the review of external agency agreements.

The department does not routinely review external agency agreements every three years. For agreements related to health and safety, information technology, and human resources, the department works with other city departments to ensure agreements are properly reviewed and supported.

The Cooperative Agreement Regarding the Provision of Emergency Medical Services in Douglas County 2021 and 2021-1122 Grant Township Fire Services Agreement identifies specific dates in which the agreements shall be reviewed/revised.

Appraisal

The department recently identified that there are external agency agreements in effect that have not been located in the department's records. External agency agreements with no sunset clause have not been recently reviewed for relevance.

The department's collaboration with other city departments on agreement review and approval has met the department's needs. The increase in internal service functions within the city have contributed to the frequency with which external agreements are reviewed.

Agreements that include specific dates that they will be reviewed/revised have been acknowledged by the department and have been beneficial, thus far.

Plan

The department will continue to participate in automatic and mutual aid agreements with external agencies and will review and propose updates in 2023. The department's command staff will spearhead this initiative. The department will continue to stay on track with the designated agreement update cycle for the Cooperative Agreement Regarding the Provision of Emergency Medical Services in Douglas County 2021 and 2021-11-22 Grant Township Fire Services Agreement.

References

SOP 102.20 Program Management-Assignments

Douglas County Tender Response Auto Aid Agreement

Cooperative Agreement Regarding the Provision of Emergency Medical Services in Douglas County 2021 (page 7)

2021-1122 Grant Township Fire Services Agreement (page 2)

10B.2 The agency has a process to manage, review and, if needed, revise agreements.

Description

As part of any participation in any agreements, the department reviews and revises said agreements as needed. The City Attorney’s Office conducts a review of all new and revised agreements to verify consideration of all legal parameters. The department’s communication with the AHJ regarding operationally focused agreements is minimal and informal.

Appraisal

All new and revised agreements that have gone through the city’s internal service departments for review has been successfully and thoroughly reviewed. The department’s collaboration with the city’s internal service departments has been increasing over the last two years. The review and management processes through this workflow have met department and city requirements.

Operationally focused agreements have not been successfully managed.

Plan

The department will continue to monitor the internal services agreement review process to ensure a full agreement review is conducted and agreements are updated as necessary. The department’s command staff will review external agreements and propose updates as necessary. The fire chief will work with the city clerk’s office to manage the storage, security and access of all agreements.

References

Douglas County Tender Response Auto Aid Agreement
PulsePoint Agreement Document Review Email

10B.3 The agency evaluates external agency performance annually to ensure that external agencies are capable and effective in supporting the agency's goals and objectives.

Description

The department does not formally evaluate external agency performance annually. Service agreements that are managed through other city departments are reviewed at a high level. Service agreements are typically reviewed if the department is experiencing issues with the service provided.

Appraisal

The lack of a formal evaluation system of external agency performance has led to uncertainty regarding the impact of external agencies on the department's ability to meet service delivery expectations.

Plan

The department will identify key external agencies whose performance impacts department service delivery and either request information related to performance metrics or amend agreements as necessary to require delivery of such information.

The department will continue to collaborate with other city departments to ensure performance objectives are met through agreements managed by other city departments.

References

Douglas County Tender Response Auto Aid Agreement