

2023-2026 STRATEGIC PLAN SWOT ANALYSIS

U.S. Council of the International
Association of Emergency Managers



SWOT Analysis Background

A strategic process includes an analysis of an organization's internal strengths and weaknesses and external opportunities and threats. The goal of the strategic planning process is to aid the organization's Board to utilize its strengths to seize new opportunities and minimize any potential threats while developing a plan to address weaknesses, so they do not hinder the growth and success of the organization.

While there was an extensive SWOT conducted in 2014, the Board recognizes that the field of emergency management and the USA Council have experienced change over the last four years. To recognize the change and provide an opportunity for input to each of the members, a SWOT survey was sent out to all members in early 2022. There were 275 responses collected through the survey, and multiple reports were created for different purposes and audiences. The most recent report (included below) was submitted to the Board for their consideration and conversation at their Annual Retreat in March 2022.

Additional highlights of the overall report are included here as a distilled and concise look at the overarching concerns that this plan is meant to address.

The following is a SWOT Summary Report that was presented to the Board in advance of the 2022 Retreat.

Overview

The Strategic Planning Ad-hoc Committee (SPAC) has undertaken an effort to review the previous Association SWOT analysis, conduct a current SWOT survey and analysis, provide opportunity for each working committee of the Association to provide input related to the current SWOT, and develop this overview of the effort to accompany the SWOT report and data for Board review. While a great many ideas were generated in an effort to make improvements, those opportunities are not highlighted here. Providing solutions before the

Board has identified the concerns and objectives is a bit like putting the cart before the horse.

The committee believes that by providing the Board with the data and input, the Board will identify a great many opportunities for strategic improvements. With that strategy in place, the “boots on the street” represented in the committee will be able to identify tactical operations in support of the Board direction. This process will begin an ongoing dialogue between the Board and committee leadership as they work in concert through the SPAC rather than in silos comprised of individual committees.

By working together, as chairs and designees of the committees, the members of SPAC can focus on Board strategy without placing undue stress or added workload to the individual committees. And the Board and committee liaisons can be assured of a concerted effort that works toward current goals with an eye to the future.

To that end, we offer you the following highlights of concerns related to specific topic areas from the SWOT and committee reports.

Specific Topics

Diversity and Inclusion

While DEI/DEIA are consistently a topic of conversation related to gaps in serving members or weakness of the association, the comments are also of such a diverse and disparate nature that it is likely that the conversation should be incorporated into every facet of the organization rather than as a separate or distinct conversation.

Diversity, like mental health, are as unique as each individual and as such should be integrated fully throughout the organization. In order to express full diversity in every effort, the organization needs to not only have visual “representation” on every stage, it needs to speak to the existing diversity and ongoing efforts. Additionally, conversation related to a “good ole boys club” needs to be properly discussed as a concern with the “political” atmosphere more than as a gender diversity concern.

Certifications

There appears to be a general feeling that while the CEM/AEM certification process is mis-understood or not transparent, the program is still of value. And, indeed, it has been listed as the only reason that some members stay engaged with the association.

Networking opportunities

It appears, through both the SWOT survey and committee input, that “networking opportunities” are generally misunderstood. Most comments relate back to the single event of the annual conference rather than true networking activities. While the conference may provide some networking, actual, business-based networking is of a more structured nature and has a degree of mentorship.

There are almost no comments related to regional networking efforts or caucus/interest areas where networking is available. And no comments were noted for employment networking opportunities.

New Member Orientation:

One of the most interesting parts of the SWOT assessment is that it was assumed that member orientation is not only a formal process, but one that is relegated to the annual conference and not available to anyone who doesn't attend that event.

It is a glaring gap that new and long-term members don't relate this terminology to the onboarding of new members and their attraction to region and committee/caucus work over time. Although this is a gap, the resounding refrain is that the orientation should be formalized into a process and that this process will not only more fully engage new members but also provide a real sense of belonging that provides emotional support to our members over time. It is also a glaring gap that many relate an onboarding process to the events surrounding the conference. If the only time a member is “oriented” is at the conference, we will likely continue to lose new members because of a lack of collegial opportunity. Many members never attend a conference and even more attend a conference on less than an annual basis.

Politicization of IAEM

It may be a concern of a “cancel culture” that conversations that are provocative or of a controversial nature are seen as a political polarization. And additional use of the term “politicization” refers to the consistent messaging within the member community of a “good ole boys club”. Changes of culture or mores can be among the most difficult and we offer the consideration of these topics as the Board considers the business of the organization.

Conference

While the annual conference is seen as a great training opportunity and an opportunity to come together as a community, many of the sessions, receptions, private/closed events, and the reserved tables at the front of the rooms can serve to further the “politicization” and non-diverse themes illustrated elsewhere in the documentation. While the actual event of the annual conference is a strength, it can be outside of the ability of many to attend (time, distance, investment, etc.). And simply adding a lesser priced virtual event does not satisfy the needs. Especially when many of the benefits of a professional conference are being in one place, face to face with the other attendees.

Cost

While cost will always be an issue for some members, it is a fact that expressing benefit for investment rather than “cost” to engage adjusts the culture that surrounds the investment. There is a perception that “young” people entering the field with student loans have less ability to pay for their membership and conference attendance. However, there were multiple open shifts for attendees to work in support of the conference, gain networking time, and defray conference costs at the 2021 event. Perhaps we are not having effective conversations related to managing cost vs. investment with the membership.

Burnout

While it is possible that burnout is a cyclical process and that it is unlikely that the entire country will be experiencing a chronic incident at the same time, and then have multiple acute incidents occur within the same timeframe in multiple regions, we should certainly know to never say never. Our historic review of threats demonstrates that the past two years are not unusual and that there have been series of incidents that could be more catastrophic than the most

recent timeframe. Especially as we consider the vulnerability of our communities and the potential for social construct to impact expectations and ability to respond and recover effectively. To that end, it is recognized that support for ongoing individual resilience in the field of emergency management is an area where IAEM could immediately propel itself into a thought leader and the pre-eminent resource and proponent.

Critique Comments

The following comments (in quotation marks) were excerpted from specific respondent input. Committee input follows:

“Stop minimizing sector EM's as third-class members”

This is very important. Unfortunately, most of the people who have historically been elected into leadership positions come from local/state EM roles.

“People get more from grassroots networks like LinkedIn than they do from IAEM”

This is not wrong. How do we address that we are not “LinkedIn” [separate/make distinction]? Perhaps with the IAEMConnect and the mirroring of the certain LI features we can create this environment?

While quotes are from within the SWOT survey, additional input was sought from SPAC members who, in turn, represent a working group of the USA-Council as per the USA Bylaws.

Current SWOT Issues

The following are comments from the SWOT survey in each of the S.W.O.T. areas:

STRENGTHS

“Best recognized certification program”

“Advocate EM concerns to Congress and fed(s)”

“Acceptance of focused committees, caucuses”

“Events for members to meet and share ideas”



WEAKNESSES

- “More collaborative opportunities for training and facilitated conversations”
- “Lack of modern year-round professional/work-related networking”
- “Expensive: membership, certs., conference”
- “Diversity, inclusivity - ease of getting involved”

OPPORTUNITIES

- “Modify dues structure - tiers of membership”
- “Network and affiliate with... (allied) assoc.s”
- “Diverse representation - lead the charge”
- “Mentor program for new members”

THREATS

- “Perception that we are "exclusive"”
- “Diversity...seek group that "look" like them”
- “Stagnant”
- “Narrow thinking”
- “Exorbitant fees”

With careful review of the SWOT data over a period of weeks as well as the work of the current, ongoing workgroups (committees and caucuses) the SPAC developed the

following information related to multi-year strategic objectives. Some initiatives are already begun and have opportunity for expansion. Others are meant to inform with basic information related to the needs of the member community that the Board may determine to address over the next three years that this plan covers.