



*CANADIAN INTERAGENCY FOREST FIRE CENTRE INC.
CENTRE INTERSERVICES DES FEUX DE FORÊT DU CANADA INC.*

2024-2029 STRATEGIC PLAN

December 21, 2023

Contents

Executive Summary	1
Introduction.....	2
5 Year Strategic Plan Process	2
CIFFC Vision, Mission and Values	2
Vision	3
Mission	3
Values	3
CIFFC Strategic Landscape	3
CIFFC’s Strategic Priorities 2024-2029	4
People.....	4
Strategic Context	4
Strategic Goals.....	4
Resource Sharing.....	4
Strategic Context	4
Strategic Goals.....	4
Future Planning	5
Strategic Context	5
Strategic Goals.....	5
Wildland Fire Management Research and Innovation.....	5
Strategic Context	5
Strategic Goals.....	5
Prevention and Mitigation (FireSmart Canada)	5
Strategic Context	5
Strategic Goals.....	6

Executive Summary

The Canadian Interagency Forest Fire Centre (CIFFC) is a not-for-profit corporation owned and operated by the federal, provincial, and territorial wildland fire management agencies to coordinate resource sharing, mutual aid, and information sharing. CIFFC's mandate was further expanded in 2020 to include coordination of wildfire prevention and mitigation activities and programs on behalf of its member agencies.

CIFFC understands that, given its unique collaborative model of member agency subject matter experts, it has a responsibility to assist the Canadian Council of Forest Minister's in the development and implementation of strategies and strategic priorities related to wildland fire.

CIFFC's strategic plan has been renewed using insight gleaned through a process of surveys, interviews, and live workshops with the CIFFC community, staff, and corporate boards. In CIFFC's current strategic context of significant changes in the environmental, operational, and social landscape, three main strategies will drive the organization's focus over the next five years.

1. Develop firefighting capacity to respond to increasing demand.
2. Develop predictive capability to support more effective proactive responsive to demand.
3. Accelerate community-based Prevention and Mitigation to reduce demand.

Aligned with these strategies, five strategic priorities were identified, each informed by CIFFC's vision and mission of supporting its members through safe, effective and timely wildland fire resource sharing, cooperation, and mutual aid. Two of the identified priorities have existing action plans that will be executed in tandem with this strategic plan – Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (People); and Prevention and Mitigation (FireSmart Canada).

The strategic priorities supporting the strategy are:

1. *Develop Capacity: People*
2. *Develop Capacity: Resource Sharing*
3. *Predictive Capability: Future Planning*
4. *Develop Capacity & Predictive Capability: Wildland Fire Management Research & Innovation*
5. *Prevention and Mitigation: FireSmart Canada*

There are strong linkages between these priorities. In the tactical execution phase, attention to these links will lead to more effective outcomes over the course of the plan. For example, actions around People will support Resource Sharing. Action on Research and Innovation will support outcomes in Prevention and Mitigation, Future Planning, Resource Sharing and People.

For the priorities introduced in this plan, several strategic and tactical directions were generated through the workshops. Strategies and potential tactics for each priority are described in detail in the Strategic Initiative Draft Strategies and Tactics documents.

Introduction

The risk of wildland fire in Canada continues to escalate due to “climate change, community and resource expansion into wildland areas, and declining forest health.”¹ Year after year, the CIFFC member agencies’ response capacity is tested by intense wildland fire events that threaten communities, infrastructure, and natural habitats with increasing frequency. Climate science predicts that extreme, destructive fire weather is only going to increase as time goes on.

The Canadian Council of Forest Ministers (CCFM) has recognized the need to transform wildland fire management to not only focus on suppression and response, but prevention and mitigation of increasing wildland fire threats and risks as well. This transformation is founded with a whole-of-society approach which will incorporate all pillars of emergency management. In 2019, the CCFM endorsed a set of recommendations presented in *Priority Actions for Increasing Wildland Fire Resiliency in Canada* (Resiliency Report), which outlined a comprehensive series of strategies and activities to enable transformation of wildland fire management in Canada. The Resiliency Report included specific recommendations to develop options to enhance CIFFC and to increase focus on risk reduction by prioritizing prevention and mitigation efforts.

While these efforts related to prevention and mitigation are critical to the success of modern wildland fire management, they are not enough on their own. Suppression and response remain at the core of CIFFC’s business, and will require continued vigilance and improvement to keep up with increasing fire activity resulting from accelerated climate change. Wildland fire management agencies across the country are feeling the strain as fire activity outpaces organizational growth and capacity for response. CIFFC is committed to supporting our member agencies in any way possible, and this plan seeks to outline new, proactive solutions to the problems we will face in the coming years.

5 Year Strategic Plan Process

CIFFC engaged Vitus Inc. to support its leadership team in developing a new 5 Year Strategic Plan for the organization.

Step 1 – Surveys

Step 2 – Member Agency Interviews

Step 3 – Leader Team Planning Session

Step 4 – Member Agency Planning Session

Step 5 – Leader Team Review Session

Step 6 – Revision and Documentation

Step 7 – Board of Directors / Management Committee Review and Approval

Step 8 – Develop working plans from draft strategies and tactics

Survey, interview, and planning session results, as well as draft strategy and tactics documents have been provided to CIFFC for reference throughout the duration of this Plan.

¹ [Canadian Council of Forest Ministers Wildland Fire Management Working Group Action Plan 2021-2026](#)

CIFFC Vision, Mission and Values

Vision

To be the global leader of safe wildland fire resource sharing, cooperation, and mutual aid.

Mission

CIFFC facilitates cooperation between federal, provincial and territorial wildland fire management agencies. We support our member agencies through two primary areas: effective and timely coordination of firefighting resources within Canada and internationally, and supporting prevention and mitigation activities through FireSmart Canada. CIFFC is committed to working with member agencies and international partners to build a safe and inclusive wildland fire community.

Values

CIFFC's organizational value statements are an important strategic component, particularly in an interagency corporation. These values provide guidance for performance and conduct; they form the foundation of the CIFFC cooperative network.

CIFFC Values:

- a safety first attitude and culture in ourselves and our workforce;
- excellence and efficiency in all activities;
- the maximization of combined benefits to all member agencies;
- transparent, consultative, and fiscally responsible decision making;
- environmentally and socially responsible business practices;
- integrity and respect in all dealings among members agencies, staff, clients, and partners;
- resolution of issues through discussion and cooperation to achieve common goals; and
- ownership of work and responsibility for decisions.

CIFFC Strategic Landscape

When planning our focus for the coming five years, we need to consider how change may unfold over that time and its impact on our mission. Arising from the survey and interview steps in the strategy consultation process, several changes were identified that are either already underway or likely to be felt during this planning cycle, including:

- Increasing challenges arising from climate change that will put further strain on people, equipment, and organizational resources.
- Significant personnel change as key long-term employees retire.
- Structural change as member agencies make different choices to handle a broader range of hazards across all seasons.
- An increasingly competitive hiring environment that will require continued effort in the area of EDI as well as enhanced effort around physical wellness to attract and retain employees.
- Cost, supply chain, and delivery challenges for essential equipment.
- Increasing firefighting resource demands that will require proactive planning if CIFFC and its member agencies are to keep pace.

In addition, CIFFC's commitment to prevention and mitigation through the FireSmart Canada program was acknowledged as even more essential in the face of the evolving wildland fire expected during this planning cycle.

CIFFC's Strategic Priorities 2024-2029

In response to this strategic landscape, CIFFC member agencies and staff identified the following strategic priorities, and shaped goals and potential tactics for each. While immediate Strategic Actions have been identified, those for later years will be driven by early results and updated as the Plan progresses.

People

Strategic Context

At the same time that demands for staff volume are increasing, and expected to increase further across the span of this strategic plan, hiring is becoming more challenging for CIFFC and its member agencies. Experienced staff are retiring and taking knowledge with them, and expectations of a safe and inclusive workplace are increasing.

To this end, CIFFC member agencies previously identified Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) as a strategic priority and developed a framework for action with the objective to create a better, more equitable work environment, advance an inclusive culture, and improve organizational effectiveness. It was clear through the strategic planning process that continued action here is essential to creating a workplace that attracts and retains an effective workforce for CIFFC and its member agencies.

CIFFC will continue to provide a collaborative space to facilitate national conversations and foster opportunities for collective efforts around these issues, while member agencies will maintain autonomy to implement strategies as appropriate within their individual jurisdictions.

Strategic Goals

- Foster a better, more equitable work environment, advance an inclusive culture, and improve organizational effectiveness by implementing the recommendations in the EDI Framework².
- Comprehensive and effective health, safety, and wellbeing programming within CIFFC and its member agencies.
- Improved staff retention, increase opportunities for recruitment, and address succession planning within CIFFC and support to member agencies.

Resource Sharing

Strategic Context

The increasing demands on CIFFC and its member agencies (and anticipated further demands over the life of this 5-year plan) requires additional focus on resource capacity building and sharing. Further, the landscape for cost-effective and timely equipment supply has become more complex.

Strategic Goals

- Increase capacity/availability of personnel resources for mobilization.
- Optimize the use of existing firefighting personnel resources.
- Ensure continued availability of firefighting equipment.
- Identify the current issues surrounding aerial firefighting capacity amongst member agencies, analyzing future needs, facilitating opportunities for collaboration, and determining CIFFC's role in eventual planning to increase capacity nationally.

² <https://www.ciffc.ca/sites/default/files/2022-05/CIFFC%20EDI%20Framework%20Final.pdf>

Future Planning

Strategic Context

In the area of suppression, both the expected pace of change during this strategic plan and the timelines required for effective response by the member agencies to those changes (equipment purchase, hiring and training, structural and technical systems, and processes) mean that CIFFC, in its role of providing a space for collaboration, must encourage a significant shift from reactivity to proactive assessment and action. There is a collective need to collaboratively plan and act today for outcomes we expect several years down the line.

Strategic Goals

- CIFFC and member partners can effectively manage wildfire into the future by collaborating on long-term response related planning to help identify gaps and opportunities within current wildfire response to ensure member agencies can understand and balance risk, make informed decisions to achieve strategic goals, and potential collaborative strategies are addressed appropriately within CIFFC in the face of climate change.
- Provide information to help inform CIFFC's role in resource sharing of Canadian capacity for Prevention, Mitigation, Preparedness, Response and Recovery for natural and human-caused hazards and disasters beyond wildland fires.

Wildland Fire Management Research and Innovation

Strategic Context

CIFFC and its members have essential strategic research needs (predictive science, employee wellness, future resource requirements) that require support if these needs are to be met. There is also a general need for more effective sharing of strategically aligned research that is ongoing, has been completed, or may be required in future. These needs will be supported by the Research and Innovation Integration Committee (RIIC), formerly the Fire Science Committee. A name change was initiated to emphasize that the Committee's focus extends beyond fire behaviour or fundamental fire sciences, which has been a historical misconception. The Committee will help to improve fire management through the development and use of research, knowledge, and innovation.

Strategic Goals

- CIFFC and member agencies have a collaborative venue to shape and promote the development of research and innovation to support wildland fire management by providing a connection point for collaboration between CIFFC member agencies and the research community.
- Facilitate knowledge exchange and mobilization, operationalizing research for the benefit of CIFFC's member agencies.

Prevention and Mitigation (FireSmart Canada)

Strategic Context

Destructive and record-setting wildland fire events have increased in frequency and severity in the past 20 years. Climate change projections tell us that extreme fire weather is more likely in coming years, and Canadians should prepare for more record-breaking summers living with wildland fire. Canada's wildland fire suppression and emergency response efforts on their own will not be enough to reduce the risk that difficult wildfires will become disastrous for homeowners, communities, and businesses.

Canadians can adapt to climate change and be resilient in the face of more frequent and extreme wildfire events. Half of wildland fires in Canada are human-caused and can be prevented. Wildland fuels and the built environment can be modified to reduce fire spread. It is clear that a whole-of-society effort is required.

CIFFC understands that, given its unique collaborative model of member agency subject matter experts, it has a responsibility to assist the Canadian Council of Forest Minister's in the development and implementation of the Canadian Wildland Fire Prevention and Mitigation Strategy.

Central to its prevention and mitigation mandate, CIFFC owns the program and branding for FireSmart Canada. In this capacity, CIFFC has a unique role to provide national leadership in promoting awareness and uptake of FireSmart Canada in support of CIFFC's member agencies, to expand strategic national partnerships that support awareness and uptake, and to the continuous improvement of FireSmart Canada's foundational technical and outreach materials.

With a vision of *Canadians working together to become better prepared and more resilient to wildland fire risks*, the CIFFC Wildland Fire Prevention and Mitigation Action Plan organizes new effort around four themes:

- Provide leadership in promoting and expanding the FireSmart Canada brand and program with strategic national partners;
- Build and Expand Collaboration;
- Communicate to Build FireSmart Awareness as a Foundation for Engagement;
- Build the Tools that Support the FireSmart Vision; and
- Support Healthy and Resilient Forests.

Within this document, "FireSmart Canada" refers to the full spectrum of Prevention and Mitigation activities advanced through the CIFFC organization.

Strategic Goals

- Where requested, engage in the development and implementation of the Canadian Council of Forest Ministers' *Canadian Wildland Fire Prevention and Mitigation Strategy*.
- Expand and promote the FireSmart brand and program with strategic partners.
- Facilitate prevention and mitigation conversations within and between member agencies.

For further details on CIFFC's efforts in this area, see the *CIFFC Wildland Fire Prevention and Mitigation Action Plan*³.

³ https://www.ciffc.ca/sites/default/files/2022-02/PM_Action_Plan_Public_2022_02_01.pdf