

SHORELINE AND NORTHSORE FIRE DEPARTMENT
REGIONAL FIRE AUTHORITY PLAN

DRAFT

August 20, 2024

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	SECTION 1	BACKGROUND & NEEDS STATEMENTS
	<i>Adopted</i>	

For many decades the Shoreline Fire Department (SHFD) and Northshore Fire Department (NSFD) have talked off and on about some type of regionalization. These discussions have included options such as a service contract, merger, and regional fire authority (RFA). These efforts have received more attention especially over the past eight years, which included the potential of multiple fire departments across north King County joining together in a RFA. Ultimately, it was decided to start smaller and build into something bigger. One of the more obvious consolidations was between SHFD and NSFD.

In 2022 the NSFD entered into a contract, or an interlocal agreement (ILA), with SHFD to provide full services to the Cities of Lake Forest Park and Kenmore. The SHFD is an all-hazards fire department providing the following services through different Divisions:

- Administrative Services,
- Emergency Medical Services (BLS),
- Emergency Medical Services (ALS),
- Fire Suppression,
- Training as part of the North King County Training Consortium,
- Fire Marshal Services,
- Public Information and Education through Community Outreach,
- Technical Rescue (Low/High Angle, Confined Space, Trench, Surface Water),
- Hazardous Materials Operations,
- Mobile Integrated Health Care,
- Maintenance (Fleet, Facilities), and
- Emergency Management as part of the City of Shoreline Fire.

The ILA included the transfer of all NSFD employees to SHFD as the two Departments would be operating as one. The NSFD still exists with a Board of Fire Commissioners and District Secretary, who ensure that the ILA is being executed properly, and the Department still owns the existing fire stations and apparatus. They also have taxing authority, receiving revenues from the fire tax levy and fire benefit charge (FBC), which they use to pay the contract with SHFD and NSFD centric expenses. This ILA resulted in many benefits including improved levels of service as described below:

- Improved depth in dedicated administrative positions.
- Succession development.
- Increased Fire Marshal Office capabilities.
- Expanded PIO and PEO services.
- Improved Mobile Integrated Healthcare integration, including a peer support program.
- Increased BLS unit coverage.
- BLS transport patient continuity of care.

- Access for professional career growth in the ALS program.
- Improved ALS personnel integration into suppression activities.
- Improved Firefighter safety.
- Improved driver training and competency.
- Improved truck training, operations, and coverage.
- Information Technology.
- Improved fleet maintenance.
- Improved facilities maintenance.
- Better coordinated emergency management.
- Improved health and safety officer coverage and management.
- Diversified revenue sources.
- Increased experience in developing other revenue sources.
- Experience with other public funding opportunities.

While the ILA provides many benefits and efficiencies, it is not a full consolidation. It has been an expectation that after showing success of consolidating under an ILA, that there would be an opportunity for something more complete, such as a merger or RFA. Either a merger or RFA would allow for accessing the remaining efficiencies; financial, operational, and logistical. The two Departments are already accomplishing many of the things that a RFA will formalize; one administration, one labor group representation, one training division, and all employees working as one organization. After deliberation by both Department's Board of Commissioners it was decided to pursue a RFA.

There are many advantages of joining the two Departments together in a RFA, including overall financial savings as it removes the last pieces of redundancy. However, one of the more significant reasons pertains to governance. Establishing a RFA is similar to starting a new fire district in which you establish the governance model you prefer. This would potentially allow for NSFD Commissioners to sit on the new RFA governing board and have the opportunity for direct input. Currently, NSFD has authority over NSFD assets and the execution of the ILA, but not over the strategic operation of the SHFD. A RFA would also remove some barriers and allow other organizations to potentially join the new organization with governing board approval in the future.

Regionalization in whatever form has been an industry trend for decades. It has been wholeheartedly embraced in other States, and even in other counties around Washington. The King County area has been slower to move in this direction, but is gaining much momentum. The biggest reason is the service needs and expectations for fire departments continue to increase every year, while there is also increased pressure on taxes that residents pay. A RFA will allow for highest level of service and provide the best efficiencies, ensuring the people we serve will have the best service while stretching their tax dollars as far as possible.

The following is a summary of our needs and challenges:

1. The ability to respond to emergency situations by fire protection and emergency services jurisdictions has not kept up or progressed with the community's needs and special service demands. Anticipated increase in population will likely exacerbate this problem.
2. Providing fire protection and emergency medical service system requires a collaborative partnership and responsibility among local and regional governments, the private sector, and the communities we serve.

3. There are efficiencies to be gained by regional fire protection and emergency medical service delivery, while maintaining local control.
4. Timely development of critical, significant projects can best be achieved through enhanced funding options for regional fire protection, emergency services, specialized rescue, hazardous material mitigation, and other services.
5. Northshore and Shoreline have a long history of a cooperative approach to meeting the needs of their citizens. The Districts have operationally worked together on a daily basis for many decades, all IAFF Union employees are represented by one body, the Departments have engaged in a joint training consortium since 2020, they have been led by one Fire Chief and administration, functionally operating as a single provider since 2022.
6. On March 14, 2024, the Boards of Commissioners of each District authorized the formation of a Planning Committee to explore the feasibility of forming a regional fire authority and to draft a regional fire authority plan.
7. On approval of this Plan by both District's Boards of Commissioners, the Districts will then be asking its citizens to consider combining all functions and services currently provided by the two jurisdictions into a single entity, called a Regional Fire Authority.

RFA Plan Revision Disposition:

The NEEDS STATEMENT section of the RFA Plan is subject to amendment by a majority vote of the RFA Governance Board.

	SECTION 2	DEFINITIONS	
	<i>Adopted</i>		
	<i>Revision</i>	The DEFINITIONS section of The RFA Plan is subject to amendment by a majority vote of the RFA Governance Board.	
	<i>Revised</i>		

1. The definitions in this section apply throughout this RFA Plan, unless the context clearly requires otherwise.
 - 1.1. "**Board**", "**Governance Board**" or "**Governing Board**" means the Governance body of a regional fire protection service authority.
 - 1.2. "**Northshore**" means Northshore Fire Department
 - 1.3. "**Shoreline**" means Shoreline Fire Department
 - 1.4. "**Effective Date**" means May 1, 2025 pending approval of the RFA Plan by voters of the Participating Jurisdictions.
 - 1.5. "**Participating Jurisdictions**" means Northshore Fire Department and Shoreline Fire Department.
 - 1.6. "**RCW**" means Revised Code of Washington.
 - 1.7. "**Regional Fire Protection Service Authority**" or "**Regional Fire Authority**" or "**RFA**" means a regional fire protection service authority formed pursuant to chapter 52.26 RCW. An RFA is a municipal corporation, an independent taxing authority within the meaning of Article VII, Section 1 of the state Constitution, and a taxing district within the meaning of Article VII, Section 2 of the state Constitution.
 - 1.8. "**Regional Fire Authority Planning Committee**" or "**Planning Committee**" means the committee created under RCW 52.26.030 to create and propose to Northshore Fire Department and Shoreline Fire Department the Regional Fire Authority Plan.
 - 1.9. "**Regional Fire Authority Plan**," "**RFA Plan**" or "**Plan**" means this Regional Fire Protection Service Authority Plan, drafted and approved in accordance with chapter 52.26 RCW for the development, financing and operation of the _____ Regional Fire Authority.
 - 1.10. "**Shoreline Fire Department**" or "**SHFD**" means the Regional Fire Protection Service Authority defined in this plan whose boundaries are coextensive with Northshore and Shoreline.

RFA Plan Revision Disposition:

The DEFINITIONS section of the RFA Plan is subject to amendment or revision only by a majority vote of the RFA Governance Board.

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	SECTION 3	FORMATION AUTHORITY
	<i>Adopted</i>	
	<i>Revision</i>	The FORMATION AUTHORITY section of the RFA Plan is subject to amendment or revision only by submission of a revised RFA Plan to the electorate for approval.
	<i>Revised</i>	

A. REGIONAL FIRE PROTECTION SERVICE AUTHORITY.

1. Chapter 52.26 RCW provides statutory authority for the formation of a Regional Fire Authority by Northshore and Shoreline.

B. PLANNING COMMITTEE AUTHORITY.

1. RCW 52.26.030 and RCW 52.26.040 provides statutory authority to form and operate a Planning Committee.
2. The Participating Jurisdictions formed a Planning Committee consisting of three (3) members of the Northshore Board of Commissioners and three (3) Commissioners of Shoreline Board of Commissioners.
3. The Planning Committee developed and presented to the elected officials of each Participating Jurisdiction the RFA Plan.

C. RFA PLAN APPROVAL AUTHORITY.

1. The legislative body of each Participating Jurisdiction reviewed and approved the RFA plan by Joint Resolution and called for an election to approve the RFA Plan.
2. The RFA Plan is being submitted to the voters of each District as a single ballot measure that must be approved by a 60% majority vote.
3. The Planning Committee has authority to take all necessary actions on behalf of the Participating Jurisdictions, perform all necessary duties as required to place the RFA Plan before the voters and to comply with the public hearing requirements contained in RCW 52.26.230.
4. Should the RFA Plan be approved by a 60% majority of the voters of the Participating Jurisdictions, the Shoreline Fire Department, a Regional Fire Authority shall be formed on, May 1, 2025, in accordance with RCW 52.26.070.
5. Upon voter approval of the RFA Plan, the Districts shall continue to exist as Washington State Municipal Corporations. The exclusive purpose of the continued existence of the Districts shall be to levy and collect taxes and/or other fire protection district revenue to

be transferred to the RFA until such time as the RFA collects its own revenues and to provide representation to the newly formed RFA Governance Board.

6. If the RFA Plan is not approved by a 60% majority of the voters, then operations relating to the services set forth herein shall remain unchanged.

RFA Plan Revision Disposition:

The FORMATION AUTHORITY section of the RFA Plan is subject to amendment or revision only by submission of a revised RFA Plan to RFA Governing Board for approval.

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	SECTION 4	JURISDICTIONAL BOUNDARIES
	<i>Adopted</i>	
	<i>Revision</i>	The JURISDICTIONAL BOUNDARIES section of the RFA Plan is subject to amendment or revision only by a majority vote of the RFA Governance Board.
	<i>Revised</i>	

A. JURISDICTIONAL BOUNDARIES ON DATE OF FORMATION.

1. On the Effective Date, the jurisdictional boundaries of the RFA shall be the legal boundaries of the Participating Jurisdictions.

B. CHANGES IN JURISDICTIONAL BOUNDARIES AFTER FORMATION OF RFA.

1. Boundary Changes that do not require a RFA Plan amendment.
 - 1.1. **Annexation of a portion of a District by a City outside the jurisdictional boundaries of the RFA.** On the effective date of such annexation, the territory annexed shall automatically be removed from the boundaries of the RFA. In this situation the RFA shall not be obligated to transfer employees or assets of the RFA and the annexing city shall be restricted solely to assets and employees of the District, if any.
 - 1.2. **RFA Annexations.** Pursuant to RCW 52.26.090(g), the RFA shall have the authority to conduct annexations of unincorporated territory adjacent to the RFA pursuant to the statutory authority and procedures set forth in Chapter 52.04.001 through RCW 52.04.051.
 - 1.3. **RFA Partial Mergers.** Pursuant to RCW 52.26.090(g), the RFA shall have the authority to participate in the partial merger process under the authority and pursuant to the procedures set forth in RCW 52.06.090 and .100.
2. Boundary Changes that require a RFA Plan Amendment.
 - 2.1. **Annexations of Adjacent Fire Protection Jurisdictions.** The boundaries of the RFA may be expanded to include adjacent fire protection jurisdictions through the Plan Amendment and annexation procedures set forth at RCW 52.26.300.

RFA Plan Revision Disposition:

The **JURISDICTIONAL BOUNDARIES** section of the RFA Plan is subject to amendment or revision only by a majority vote of the RFA Governance Board.

	SECTION 5	GOVERNANCE and ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE
	<i>Adopted</i>	
	<i>Revision</i>	The GOVERNANCE and ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE section of the RFA Plan is subject to amendment or revision only by submission of a revised RFA Plan to the electorate for approval.
	<i>Revised</i>	

A. GOVERNING BOARD STRUCTURE AND OPERATION.

1. **Governing Board.** As provided by RCW 52.26.080, the RFA Governing Board shall be established consistent with the terms of this Section and shall have authority as of the Effective Date.
2. **Composition of Governing Board.** As provided by RCW 52.26.080, the governing board shall include 10 voting members consisting of the 5 current, seated members from Northshore and 5 current, seated members from Shoreline.
3. **Governing Rules.** The RFA Governing Board shall develop and adopt governance policies and rules for the RFA Governing Board to conduct business in accordance with RCW 52.26.080.
4. **Authority.** The RFA Governing Board shall have all the power and authority granted governing boards under Washington State law, and shall include the power and authority to make any decisions appropriate for the RFA and for matters related to Title 52 RCW.
5. **Compensation of Governing Board.** Commissioners of the Governing Board will receive compensation in the same manner and under the same conditions as provided by law for commissioners of a fire protection district organized under Title 52 RCW.

RFA Plan Revision Disposition:

The GOVERNANCE and ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE section of the Plan may be amended by a majority vote of the RFA Governance Board.

	SECTION 6	FUNDING and FINANCE
	<i>Adopted</i>	
	<i>Revision</i>	The FUNDING and FINANCE section of the RFA Plan is subject to amendment or revision by the Governing Board except when voter approval is required by statute.
	<i>Revised</i>	

A. INTERIM RFA FINANCES

1. The operation and administration of the RFA for the remainder of 2025 shall be funded by the funds budgeted for fire department services in the budgets of each Participating Jurisdiction of the RFA for the 2025 calendar year.

B. RFA REVENUES:

1. **Tax Levies.** The RFA shall be authorized to levy and collect taxes in accordance with RCW 52.26.050 (1) (b) at the initial tax levy rate of **\$.70** per thousand of assessed valuation.
2. **Benefit Charge.** The RFA shall be authorized to impose a benefit charge on all improved properties within the RFA service area, initially based upon the general formula and **methodology provided** in Appendix A in accordance RCW 52.26.050(1)(a).
3. **Service Contracts.** To the extent permitted by law, the RFA Governance Board shall have the authority to pursue and contract with agencies and entities exempt from property taxes in accordance with RCW 52.30.020 and related statutes.
4. **Impact and Mitigation Fees.** The RFA shall have the authority to impose impact and mitigation fees in the manner authorized by law.
5. **Additional Revenue Options.** The RFA Governing Board shall have the authority to pursue, subject to any applicable statutory voter approval requirements and RFA Plan Amendment, if required, all additional revenue sources authorized by law including but not limited to revenue sources specifically identified in Title 52 RCW and Title 84 RCW that are not otherwise addressed in chapter 52.26 RCW.

C. TRANSFER OF ASSETS.

1. **Northshore and Shoreline Assets.** On the Effective Date, the Districts shall immediately transfer any remaining and future assets to the RFA. Such assets shall include all real property and personal property, including but not limited to furniture, office equipment, motor vehicles, reports, documents, surveys, books, records, files, papers, or written material owned by or in the possession of the District.

2. On the date of the formation of the RFA, Northshore and Shoreline shall transfer to the RFA all funds held with King County together with all future property tax and contractual payments received at the time of receipt.

D. LIABILITIES.

1. **District Debt.** On the Effective Date, the RFA shall assume all outstanding liabilities of Northshore and Shoreline. Voter approved debt, such as Unlimited Tax Obligation (UTGO) bonds, shall remain with the originating jurisdiction's voters.
2. **Future District Expenses.** All future expenses incurred by the Districts beginning in 2025 shall be the responsibility of the RFA.

RFA Plan Revision Disposition:

The FUNDING AND FINANCE section of the RFA Plan is subject to amendment or revision by the Governing Board except when voter approval is required by statute.

	SECTION 7	ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE - PERSONNEL - ADMINISTRATION	
	<i>Adopted</i>		
	<i>Revision</i>	The ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE - PERSONNEL - ADMINISTRATION section of the RFA Plan is subject to amendment by a majority vote of the RFA Governance Board.	
	<i>Revised</i>		

A. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE.

- 1. Organizational Chart.** The RFA shall be organized as provided in Appendix B of the RFA Plan.

B. PERSONNEL.

- 1. Fire Chief.** On the Effective Date, the Fire Chief of Shoreline shall serve as the Fire Chief of the RFA. The Fire Chief shall at all times be appointed and serve at the pleasure of the Governance Board.
- 2. Personnel.** The existing personnel of Northshore and Shoreline shall transfer to the RFA to fulfill assigned duties as outlined in the organizational structure in Appendix A. All Northshore and Shoreline personnel shall be transferred on the Effective Date at their current rank, grade and seniority.
- 3. Agreements.** All current employee agreements, personal service contracts, and any other contracts or agreements pertaining to work, duties, services or employment with Northshore and Shoreline shall be transferred over with all personnel on the Effective Date.

C. ADMINISTRATION.

- 1. Administration.** The administrative staff of the RFA shall be the current members of Shoreline administrative staff. All current administrative and business functions, agreements, documents, operations, and policies and procedures from Northshore and Shoreline shall transfer over to the RFA unless otherwise noted in this plan.
- 2. Seamless Transition.** Unless otherwise noted in the RFA Plan, the transfer of authority and the administration and management of the RFA shall be seamless and shall initially model the current administrative and management components of the current Shoreline.

RFA Plan Revision Disposition:

The ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE – PERSONNEL - ADMINISTRATION section of The RFA Plan is subject to amendment by a majority vote of the RFA Governance Board.

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	SECTION 8	OPERATIONS AND SERVICES
	<i>Adopted</i>	
	<i>Revision</i>	The OPERATIONS AND SERVICES section of The RFA Plan is subject to amendment by a majority vote of the RFA Governance Board.
	<i>Revised</i>	

A. FIRE PROTECTION AND EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES.

1. On the effective date, the RFA shall become the service provider for all fire protection, fire suppression, emergency medical services and for the protection of life and property within the areas currently served by Northshore and Shoreline.
2. The RFA Governing Board shall determine staffing models, standards of coverage, deployment standards, field operations, command staffing, and operational policies and procedures for the RFA and shall, within budgetary limitations work to maintain or improve service levels.
3. All current automatic aid and mutual aid agreements, and any other contractual services agreements, documents, or memorandums currently in place with Northshore and Shoreline shall be transferred over on to RFA on the Effective Date to provide continuous, seamless readiness and emergency services coverage.

RFA Plan Revision Disposition:

The **OPERATIONS AND SERVICES** section of The RFA Plan is subject to amendment by a majority vote of the RFA Governance Board.

APPENDIX A
Fire Benefit Charge Data
INSERT FACTOR SHEET ONCE COMPLETED

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APPENDIX B Organizational Structure

SHORELINE FIRE DEPARTMENT ORGANIZATIONAL CHART 2025 7-18-24

