

TFCA 2026 Annual Conference



Applying Organizational Maturity Models to Your Organization and Career

Objectives



- Review Organizational Maturity Models (OMM) and how they can be adapted by public safety organizations and your career.
- Choosing to be an Ambiguity **Absorber** or an Ambiguity **Amplifier** as it relates to leading your community, organization, division, shift, crew, or career.
- How to apply an OMM assessment across many elements of your world.

Mindset for today...



The fire service has mastered *response*.

The next era belongs to those who
master *anticipation*.

Change or Die (Maturing)



If you fail to change, you will succeed at dying



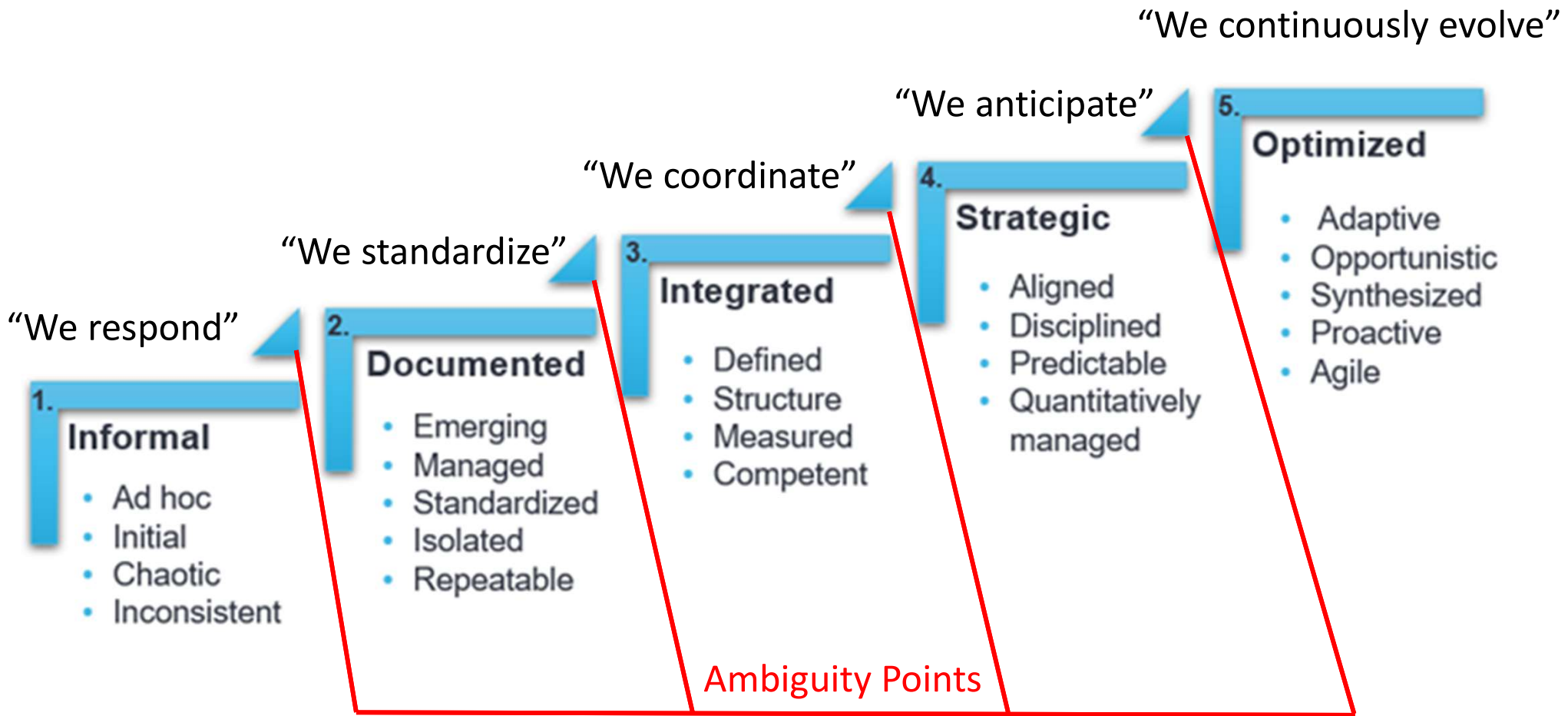
Don't be the Blockbuster® of
Fire and EMS organizations

20 Years in the making...



- Quietly studied, documented, and tested organizational development and its theories and approaches from 2006 to 2026.
- 563 in-person, telephone, or remote interviews with leaders from federal, state, tribal, local, and non-government organizations.
- 7,539 documented informal/formal discussion capturing between 15 and 31 data points.
- Data collection resulted in developing material focused on three areas:
 - ✓ How OMM can be adapted to many different levels of government
 - ✓ The true cost of government inefficiencies
 - ✓ What *not to do* as a public employee

OMM in the most basic form...



Level 1: Informal



Characteristics:

- Hero-based culture
- Minimal standardization
- Decisions based on experience, not data

Fire Service Example:

- Dispatch → respond → clear call
- Training = check-the-box
- Data = NERIS compliance only

“We respond”

Subsections:

- Ops: Inconsistent tactics between crews
- Training: No competency tracking
- Data: Reports filed but not used
- Leadership: Personality-driven, often 1-3 key people holding it together
- Community Risk Reduction (CRR): Public education = occasional events

Level 2: Documented



Characteristics:

- SOPs/SOGs in place
- Basic accountability
- Beginning of consistency

Examples:

- Standard response protocols
- Required training hours
- Annual performance reviews

Subsections:

- Ops: SOP-driven fireground operations
- Training: Defined curriculum
- Data: Basic reporting dashboards
- Leadership: Defined chain of command
- CRR: Scheduled inspection programs

“We standardize”

Level 3: Integrated



Characteristics:

- Systems start working together
- Cross-functional alignment

Examples:

- Training tied to incident trends
- EMS + fire integrated deployment strategy

Subsections:

- Ops: Deployment based on risk zones
- Training: Data-informed training plans
- Data: Systems integrated (CAD + RMS)
- Leadership: Collaborative command culture
- CRR: Targeted prevention programs

“We coordinate”

Level 4: Strategic



Characteristics:

- Data drives decisions
- Proactive resource allocation

Examples:

- Predictive staffing models
- High-risk property pre-planning using analytics

Subsections:

- Ops: Dynamic deployment models
- Training: Predictive skill gap analysis
- Data: Real-time dashboards
- Leadership: Strategic, future-oriented
- CRR: Risk modeling by neighborhood

“We anticipate”

Level 5: Optimized



Characteristics:

- Continuous improvement culture
- Innovation embedded

Examples:

- AI-assisted dispatch/resource deployment
- Continuous feedback loops after incidents

Subsections:

- Ops: Rapid adaptation to emerging risks
- Training: Personalized development pathways
- Data: Fully integrated + predictive + prescriptive
- Leadership: Distributed leadership model
- CRR: Community co-designed risk reduction

“We continuously evolve”

Ambiguity at its core ...



Your rank determines how much ambiguity you're exposed to.

Your leadership determines how much ambiguity you pass on.

Ambiguity – You choose



Ambiguity Absorber = reduces uncertainty, creates clarity, stabilizes the system

Found in both experienced leaders and in leaders who are methodical, measured, and calculated.

The leader is poised in their approach, provides reassurance to the team, is accessible for concerns or questions, and practices regular *feedforward* conversations.

Ambiguity Amplifier = increases confusion, spreads uncertainty, destabilizes the system

Found in both inexperienced leaders and in leaders who are very fast-paced, visionary, and innovative.

While well-intentioned, the leader may not be clear, change may be too soon/fast for most of the team, the leader may be operating at a different level or the vision may simply be lost in translation from the executive level to the rest of the team.

Maturity Alignment Example #1



With your city, county, or board:

- The elected or appointed officials may be new, lack experience, or be operating at a different level of OMM. You are ready to grow and change, but they are not – OR – the opposite is true.
- Your community's needs are changing and require new or enhanced services from your organization, but your organization is not prepared or equipped.

Possible Solutions: Education of elected and appointed officials of current and future services and challenges. Joint planning sessions, community partnerships, and collaborations for mutual gains. Be honest with the bosses about where you assess the organization and what it needs to change and be better aligned.

Maturity Alignment Example #2



With divisions, shifts, or crews:

- One division, shift, or crew appears to be behind, or ahead, of others as it relates to its performance and ability to grow. Creates a lack of standard and repeatable outcomes.
- Your department may be very mature, but it starts a new division or service that is struggling to align itself with the rest of the organization's maturity level.

Possible Solutions: Bring in experienced leaders or have them mentor those assigned leaders. Conduct a “gap” analysis of the areas needing specific attention and build a plan. Assess the level of ambiguity

Maturity Alignment Example #3



Assessing your own career using a maturity model:

- You've had a great run to get where you are today, but feel you are in a rut, the wrong position to affect true change, or need to change a direction that hasn't been working.
- You are coming into a new department, division, shift, or crew, and you are looking for ways to assess your alignment with them compared to yours.

Possible Solutions: Assess your own maturity against the organization's. Assess their maturity level and adapt yours. Assess where your gaps and blind spots are and build a plan to reduce gaps and improve in other areas.

Thank You!



Organizations and their leaders don't fail
because they don't see change.

They fail because they cannot align
fast enough to respond to it.

Call Bobby



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