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**Department of Justice Guidance  
for State, Tribal, Local, and Territorial  
Law Enforcement Agencies on  
Best Practices for Officer Recruitment,  
Hiring, Promotion, and Retention**



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On May 25, 2022, in Section 3(d) of the Executive Order on Advancing Effective, Accountable, Policing and Criminal Justice Practices to Enhance Public Trust and Public Safety (EO 14074), President Biden directed the Department of Justice to develop guidance for State, Tribal, local, and territorial law enforcement agencies on best practices for recruiting, hiring, promoting, and retaining highly-qualified and service-oriented law enforcement officers.

The Department of Justice subsequently convened a meeting of more than 30 law enforcement and community leaders from across the country to discuss best practices and potential solutions to law enforcement staffing challenges. Separately, the Department of Justice also participated in an interagency working group, convened and chaired by the Office of Personnel Management, to examine “core policies in hiring, promotion, and retention, as well as best practices” for Federal Law Enforcement Agencies. Following these efforts, the Department of Justice issued a report on Recruitment and Retention for the Modern Law Enforcement Agency, and the Office of Personnel Management published an Action Plan for Strengthening Officer Recruitment, Hiring Promotion, and Retention, which outlined best practices for Federal Law Enforcement Agencies.

Pursuant to Section 3(d) of EO 14074, the Department of Justice offers these reports, collectively, as guidance for State, Tribal, local, and territorial law enforcement agencies to consider in recruiting, hiring, promoting, and retaining highly-qualified and service-oriented law enforcement officers. The recommendations provided in these reports are voluntary; are provided to inform the independent efforts of State, Tribal, local, and territorial law enforcement agencies; and should be adapted to best address the needs of each individual State, Tribal, local, and territorial law enforcement agency.



# Recruitment and Retention for the Modern Law Enforcement Agency

Bureau of Justice Assistance and Office of Community Oriented Policing Services



**COPS**  
Community Oriented Policing Services  
U.S. Department of Justice



**BJA**  
Bureau of Justice Assistance  
U.S. Department of Justice

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# Letter from the Directors of the Bureau of Justice Assistance and the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services

Colleagues:

It is no secret that recruitment and retention are serious obstacles facing law enforcement today. The profession, by its very nature, challenges law enforcement professionals both physically and mentally. Society's ever-changing nature, needs, and expectations add another complex layer to policing. In recent years, several significant events have led to rapid changes and shifts in community expectations of what people want from their police and other public servants. These changes and accompanying challenges have played a part in departments' struggles to attract potential applicants to fill positions left vacant by retirement and to reduce or prevent the increasing number of resignations.

The United States Attorney General, recognizing the need to have a national discussion on and identification of recommendations to address police recruitment and retention through the modernization of the police profession, requested a convening of law enforcement and community leaders to examine strategies and promising practices around this issue. This document represents the recommendations that resulted from the meeting, held on April 18, 2023. The Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) and the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office) were honored to host this event.

Prior to the meeting, participants identified discussion topics to allow for robust conversations on how our nation might move forward in addressing police workforce challenges and meeting the needs of our communities. The outlined recommendations focus on potential strategies and solutions that might be implemented at the agency level as well as possible actions that local and state governments and the Federal Government might take to support these changes. It is important to acknowledge that there is no one-size-fits-all solution and that agencies and governments are best positioned to consider their resources and limitations.

We wish to thank the convening participants for their expertise, time, and contributions. This publication reflects their work and voices on how we may move forward, together, to support our law enforcement and communities. There is work to be done, and we are committed and honored to partner with and support our law enforcement colleagues.

With gratitude,



Karlton F. Moore  
Director  
Bureau of Justice Assistance



Hugh T. Clements, Jr.  
Director  
Office of Community Oriented Policing Services





# Introduction

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, a tightening labor market, heightened community frustration with the policing profession, and concerns about officer safety and well-being, law enforcement agencies across the country face an historic crisis in recruiting and retaining qualified candidates.<sup>1</sup> As agencies continue to seek innovative ways to attract qualified potential candidates and retain current staff, the crisis demands an immediate and effective response to ensure that law enforcement agencies can maintain staffing levels sufficient to support their communities' public safety needs. Addressing these issues may necessitate the reexamination of agencies' foundational organizational structure and processes to more clearly and easily meet the needs and expectations of both law enforcement and the community.

In response to this situation and recognizing that the way law enforcement professionals are recruited and retained has a major impact on violent crime reduction, overall public safety, and community trust—Attorney General Merrick Garland identified law enforcement recruitment and retention as a U.S. Department of Justice priority and directed the Office of Justice Programs' Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) and the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office) to hold a convening. On April 18, 2023, a group of more than 30 law enforcement and community leaders<sup>2</sup> from across the country met in Washington, D.C., to discuss existing best practices and emerging and transformative solutions designed to address current staffing challenges. In addition to command staff and other law enforcement leaders from key stakeholder associations, other new vocal and innovative leaders were in attendance to assist in designing a national solution. As Associate Attorney General Vanita Gupta noted in her opening remarks, the issues of recruitment and retention are among the most important faced by federal, state, local, tribal, and territorial law enforcement agencies across the nation, regardless of size or location. The agenda was driven by information obtained from the participants during brief interviews conducted prior to the event and designed to promote meaningful, actionable discussion.

This publication represents the outcomes of the convening, focusing on both short-term strategies and long-term solutions identified by participants, who shared examples of streamlining and modernizing the hiring process, incorporating technology, updating requirements, and increasing accessibility; discussed marketing strategies designed to attract service-oriented candidates; examined existing and potentially new benefits and incentives, including a focus on employee wellness and mental well-being, to entice current employees to stay; and addressed the need for transparency and accountability throughout the hiring and employment process to promote public confidence. While there is no one-size-fits all solution for the law enforcement recruitment and retention challenge, agencies are encouraged to consider adopting strategies contained herein as they pertain to their individual situations.

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1. PERF (Police Executive Research Forum), "New PERF Survey Shows Police Agencies Are Losing Officers Faster than They Can Hire New Ones," last modified April 1, 2023, <https://www.policeforum.org/staffing2023>.
  2. See appendix A for a list of attendees.



The goal of this document is to provide practical guidance and specific recommendations for consideration by all law enforcement agencies; however, each recommendation taken alone is not enough to successfully address the problem. Instead, each should be viewed as part of a comprehensive review and evaluation of agency strategies. Recommendations have been identified at the end of each section as potentially being either short-term solutions (noted with an S), taking less time to implement, or long-term strategies (noted with an L), taking a greater amount of time to implement. Recommendations identified with an S/L are those that may require a short-term action followed by a longer implementation strategy.



# Eligibility and Hiring Practices

Recruiting and retaining qualified law enforcement officers in the 21st century requires executives and hiring professionals to modernize policing from the ground up. While funding to examine the effects of hiring on policing may provide additional insight on how to best address the current crisis, leaders must take action immediately to begin addressing the problem. Specifically, agencies must reevaluate their eligibility requirements, hiring processes, academy structures, and training to accurately reflect policing today.

## Solutions

### Analyze communities' needs

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*Agencies should consider the changing nature of policing and work with the community to establish how law enforcement can best serve their needs.*

Prior to enacting any meaningful change regarding recruitment and retention within their agencies, police leaders should analyze how and whether their current and future employees, as well as related policies and procedures, meet the needs of the communities they serve. To better understand how best to recruit effective candidates, the agency must first directly and meaningfully engage a wide variety of community members to understand the community's expectations, conduct an analysis of the skill sets required to meet those expectations, and identify gaps that may exist. Instead of relying solely on available data and statistics, the analysis should directly involve members from a variety of segments of the community, including individuals from different age, socioeconomic, and ethnic groups. This community engagement can be achieved through individual interactions and interviews, town halls, and the use of technology such as online forums and comment forms. Refining the job description of the modern police officer allows the profession to move forward in an informed manner when reviewing its hiring practices.

### Modernize eligibility requirements

Police officers in today's society are often expected to perform a wider variety of tasks than they may have expected in the past, as law enforcement may be called upon to handle tasks like rendering emergency aid or collaborating with other professionals in responding to individuals experiencing behavioral health crises (but see "Crisis Assistance Helping Out On The Streets (CAHOOTS) Program" on page 34 for discussion of alternative, nonpolice responses to many such behavioral health calls for service).<sup>3</sup> Therefore, officers must possess a variety of skills, many of which are not currently included in the application, hiring, and training processes.

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*Law enforcement agencies should examine their eligibility requirements and the skill sets they are seeking to ensure that they are aligned with the work that police officers do every day.*

There was a consensus among meeting participants that eligibility requirements for hiring need to be updated to reflect a more modern culture. It is important to note that this change does not translate to lowering standards but instead allowing for evolution of standards to align with the realities of policing in the 21st century. In addition to identifying candidates who meet the

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3. Sue Rahr and Stephen K. Rice, *From Warriors to Guardians: Recommitting American Police Culture to Democratic Ideals*, New Perspectives in Policing (Washington, DC: National Institute of Justice, 2015), <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/248654.pdf>.



minimum standards, agencies should seek to attract those who possess character traits and values that align with their community. In addition, agencies may consider categorizing some requirements as immediate (e.g., lack of criminal history) while allowing recruits additional time, such as during the academy, to meet other requirements (e.g., physical fitness).

Participants at the convening identified the usefulness and supported the development of a national standard for police hiring developed by accrediting bodies. They also recommended that agencies consider their current eligibility requirements, highlighting those that cannot be compromised, those that can be updated, and those others that should be added. Some stressed incorporating “room for redemption,” recognizing that brain function is not fully developed until early adulthood and that recruits may have made minor unwise decisions in their younger years that affect their hiring eligibility now. These situations should perhaps be examined on a case-by-case basis. Examples of potential items that participants identified for consideration include relaxing restrictions on visible tattoos (provided the tattoos do not demonstrate prejudice or bigotry) and other traditional appearance or “grooming” requirements; considering adjustments around drug use to account for time passed and/or changes in law; assessing the need for spelling tests or other written examinations; considering adjustments to educational requirements; reconsidering flat bars based on minor, isolated criminal offenses, especially where offenses occurred a long time ago; evaluating the importance of financial history and credit scores; and adapting physical fitness standards, such as distance running.

Participants unanimously agreed, however, that any potential candidate with history of the following should be ineligible:

- Any form of extremism or demonstrated prejudice or bigotry, including in dress, jewelry, or tattoos
- History of violence, including domestic violence convictions
- Serious criminal history, including felony convictions
- Serious misuse of alcohol or illegal drugs

## Streamline hiring process

The length of time it takes a candidate to navigate the full hiring process varies across agencies from several weeks to several months. For many candidates, the longer the hiring process, the more likely they are to seek employment at other agencies with a shorter process or to look outside of law enforcement altogether. Examining the different steps needed for hiring and how those steps function may bring to light potential changes that could help shorten hiring processes.

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*Agencies should examine ways to accelerate the hiring process.*

One way to speed up hiring is to test smaller numbers of applicants frequently rather than requiring all applicants to test in a large group once or twice a year. This rolling testing allows for a steadier flow of applicants, reducing their waiting periods while also making the process more manageable for administrative staff. In addition, increasing the number of background investigators on staff would improve application processing capacity quickly; but the limited number of available qualified human resources staff may also be a barrier to efficient and effective hiring processes. One suggested way to ameliorate this situation is to hire retired officers on a part-time basis to conduct screening and background checks on applicants. Governments should consider providing support and funding for training and retaining these officials.



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*Agencies may wish to hire new recruits as temporary civilian employees while they wait for the final steps of the application process to be completed and the next academy class to begin.*

In many cases, agencies support only a limited number of academy classes each year. While these limits help control costs, they may also force candidates who have completed the hiring process up to that point to wait an extended period of time before they can begin the academy. This delay can result in qualified applicants seeking other opportunities that will begin paying immediately. One option is to hire these individuals as nonsworn staff, which would provide them salary and real-world experience, prevent wasting hiring resources, and indicate the agencies' commitment to the new employees until the next academy class begins. Agencies may want to explore whether government assistance may be available to provide stipends allowing agencies to make conditional offers and pay candidates in these situations.

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*Law enforcement agencies should examine their use of technology in the recruitment and hiring process.*

Departments should consider automating as much of the hiring process as possible for greatest efficiency. For instance, agencies can implement a paperless system, including online applications that are customized to the individual (e.g., only if they indicate prior military experience will they see questions about length of service, branch) and can be saved and accessed again later; immediate notifications to designated personnel when an application is received; and online tests that provide immediate results. Agencies can incorporate automation to reduce the time it takes for applications to be processed, reduce the overall hiring timeline, and attract more candidates.<sup>4</sup> (However, agencies should take care to ensure that automated decision-making in hiring does not introduce discrimination via algorithmic bias.)

In an effort to connect with younger generations who have become accustomed to immediate feedback and 24/7 connections, departments should consider the use of live chats to stay engaged throughout the hiring process. Live chats can enable bidirectional communication between the recruit and members of the agency's human resource staff, providing the opportunity for the recruit to ask questions throughout the process and for agency staff to provide regular updates.

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*Agencies should consider standardization of social media background investigations.*

In the increasingly saturated social media atmosphere, it can be difficult to fully and consistently vet applicants across all social media platforms. Agencies should ensure consistency in applicant vetting by developing a standard review process that includes which applications will be reviewed and the criteria of online behavior that should be evaluated (including ensuring that the applicant's privacy settings allow access to background investigators) when considering candidates for employment. As in any profession with eligibility standards, these expectations should be advertised as part of the application process.

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*Agencies should consider how they communicate with unsuccessful applicants.*

It is important that agencies consider how they communicate with applicants who are not successful in the recruitment process. Agencies must be committed to the "feedback loop," capturing those applicants' experiences to help improve the hiring experience for them in subsequent attempts or for others when they apply to future vacancies.

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4. For instance, the Washington (D.C.) Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) made its hiring process faster and more efficient through process changes and the addition of technology. Its new methodology has reduced the hiring timeline from 12–18 months to 3–4 months. Kevin P. Morison, *Hiring for the 21st Century Law Enforcement Officer: Challenges, Opportunities, and Strategies for Success* (Washington, DC: Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, 2017), <https://portal.cops.usdoj.gov/resourcecenter?item=cops-w0831>.





## Validate assessments

Throughout the hiring process, agencies use a wide range of tools, from written tests to oral interviews, to assess a candidate's suitability for the law enforcement profession. However, as the nature of policing has shifted, so too must the ways agencies measure applicants. Agencies should consider whether their current assessment process requires updating—including the addition of different types of validated, evidence-based testing as well as the removal of other historically used testing. In addition, governments may consider funding to support the identification and development of related validated assessments.

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*In addition to ensuring that eligibility requirements are aligned with the needs of the community, departments should consider the importance of identifying candidates with nontraditional skills.*

Emotional intelligence is the ability to understand, communicate effectively, and empathize with others. It is the ability to harness one's own feelings and apply them to critical thinking skills and problem solving. It is also the ability to regulate one's own emotions and help others to do the same.<sup>5</sup> Strong emotional intelligence is linked to fewer cases of excessive force and improved relationships within the community.<sup>6</sup> It is essential that officers be equipped with interpersonal skills that are difficult to train—not only emotional intelligence but also empathy, relationship building, communication, and understanding of the community. Agencies can also seek to identify candidates with skills such as conflict resolution, mediation, and de-escalation, though these skills can and should also be trained.

Measuring for emotional intelligence and other interpersonal skills through validated assessments is one way that departments can identify candidates who possess the qualities necessary to be effective officers in today's policing environment. Screening tests designed to evaluate interpersonal skills may consist of videos of officers interacting with community members in different situations followed by scenario-based questions.<sup>7</sup>

Participants also recommended considering whether to remove the polygraph examination as a hiring requirement. They noted that polygraph tests can cause applicants considerable anxiety and drain agency resources, as well as the continuing discussion surrounding their accuracy<sup>8</sup> and the accuracy of similar (e.g., voice stress analysis) assessments. Agencies using polygraph testing as part of their hiring process may want to reexamine the strengths and possible weaknesses of such examinations. By removing and replacing them with a consideration of other indicators of reliability and honesty for applicants (such as behavioral interviews and background checks), agencies can further expedite hiring and direct those resources elsewhere.

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5. "Emotional Intelligence," Psychology Today, accessed June 22, 2023, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/emotional-intelligence>.

6. Rochelle M. Howard, "Emotional Intelligence and Police," LinkedIn, last modified August 29, 2021, <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/emotional-intelligence-police-rochelle-m-howard-esq-mba>; David Black, "The Role of Emotional Intelligence in Public Safety," Cordico, accessed August 22, 2023, <https://www.cordico.com/2022/05/04/role-of-emotional-intelligence-in-public-safety/>; Aiste Dirzyte, Faustas Antanaitis, and Aleksandras Patapas, "Law Enforcement Officers' Ability to Recognize Emotions: The Role of Personality Traits and Basic Needs' Satisfaction," *Behavioral Sciences* 12, no. 10 (2022), 351–371, <https://doi.org/10.3390/bs12100351>.

7. Katherine Barrett and Richard Greene, "To Find More 'Good Cops,' a Few Big Cities Change Their Hiring Process," *Governing*, last modified June 20, 2019, <https://www.governing.com/archive/gov-police-hiring-test-recruit-interpersonal-emotional-intelligence.html>.

8. Christian L. Hart, "Do Lie Detectors Tests Really Work?" Psychology Today, last modified January 14, 2020, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-nature-deception/202001/do-lie-detector-tests-really-work>.



## **Tackling the Hiring Process**

Chief Cory Tchida of the Georgetown (Texas) Police Department (GPD) knew that tackling the problem of recruitment and retention would be a significant part of his job. He and his staff identified that applicant engagement and employment process timing were areas where they could streamline the hiring process and increase the number of qualified applicants.

### **Applicant engagement**

The GPD changed its process so that as soon as an interested individual applies online, someone from the department contacts them personally. The potential candidate is invited to tour the department and speak to staff to learn more about the organization first-hand. From this point on, the department maintains personal contact with each recruit throughout the process. Chief Tchida said, “The amount of feedback we have already received about this personal touch has been incredible. It has actually influenced some to choose us over other agencies that aren’t doing this. Feeling valued is a powerful motivator.”

### **Employment process timing**

To address the issue of recruitment head on, Chief Tchida went directly to new officers at other local agencies to learn why they had chosen those departments over the GPD. The most common answer was simply that the GPD was not hiring at that time. The GPD reexamined its hiring process, which included a strictly defined application period and testing date. This rigidity allowed only people who happened to be looking for a job at that exact time to apply. In response, the GPD created a continuous hiring process, meaning that as long as there are open positions, the department will process applications and test applicants in an expeditious manner. Every other month, the department creates a list of everyone who has successfully passed all elements of the testing process and hires from that list. In this way, the GPD can effectively create six hiring lists a year where historically they were lucky to have three. This continuous process is fairly new but appears to be producing improved results over the GPD’s former method. “I have 10 openings and we feel good about filling most of them from the first list!” Tchida said.



## Recommendations

- **S.** Short-term solutions, taking less time to implement.
- **L.** Long-term strategies, taking a greater amount of time to implement.
- **S/L.** Recommendations that may require short-term action followed by longer implementation strategy.

## Analyze communities' needs

- (S) Determine what the community needs from law enforcement and direct future recruitment and retention efforts to meeting these needs.

## Modernize eligibility requirements

- (S) Allocate funding to study how hiring standards impact policing.
- (L) Support efforts to create a national standard for policing eligibility requirements.
- (L) Examine eligibility requirements and desired skill sets to ensure they are compatible with current policing environment, including identifying those that can be added, updated, or eliminated.

## Streamline hiring process

- (S) Examine ways to accelerate the hiring process.
- (L) Provide support and funding for training and retaining qualified human resource officials.
- (L) Hire new recruits as temporary civilian employees, including providing stipends to allow agencies to make conditional offers and pay candidates while they wait for the next academy class to begin.
- (S/L) Standardize investigations of applicants' social media.
- (S/L) Be deliberate in communication with unsuccessful applicants.

## Validate assessments

- (L) Employ emotional intelligence and other interpersonal skills assessments.
- (L) Evaluate the continued use of polygraph testing.



# Training

Hiring the right individuals involves identifying desired character traits and confirming that candidates have conducted themselves in a manner that reflects positively on the agency. However, training is where new recruits become the officers who will represent the agency as they interact with the community.

## Solutions

### Reimagine academy training

The structure of most police academies throughout the nation has remained relatively static, while the nature of policing has changed significantly. To maximize the effectiveness of academy training and ensure recruits leaving the academy possess the knowledge and skills necessary to successfully perform the evolving duties associated with a career in law enforcement, agencies must examine existing academy structure and incorporate necessary changes.

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*Police academies must modernize training to accurately reflect officers' day-to-day duties.*

Many agencies are shifting training to highlight and develop the core values and skills associated with a community-oriented mindset. The police academy should not only train officers in the physical and tactical aspects of the job but also equip them for day-to-day interactions in their communities.<sup>9</sup> As part of this process, agencies should incorporate the results of the previously conducted analysis of community needs and expectations. In addition, agencies should reexamine their methods of training and developing skills with a focus on encouragement and positive reinforcement rather than intimidation. In conjunction with these changes, the definition of success should also be adjusted to include the identification and development of metrics to track this shift in perspective.

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*Police academies should consider the inclusion of community partners.*

Many agencies have established partnerships with community advocacy groups, social service providers, and other stakeholders in their communities. The police academy could benefit from further involvement of these community partners in the academy training curriculum. Topics such as behavioral health alternative and co-response, violence interrupters, or available youth services could all enrich recruits' understanding of the types of additional resources their communities have to offer—both to them as officers in their day-to-day duties and to the community members they serve.

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*Agencies should ensure trainees attend outreach and recruitment opportunities.*

For new officers to stay connected to the community, agencies should ensure that each trainee attend outreach and recruitment opportunities during their first year to remain in touch with their peer group and to share their recent experiences with other potential trainees, who will identify with and respond to the energy that new recruits offer. Potential recruits want recruiters with whom they can identify—not necessarily ones with long tenure in an organization.

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9. Daniel M. Blumberg et al., "New Directions in Police Academy Training: A Call to Action," *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 16, no. 24 (2019), 4941, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6950698/>.



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*Increase focused efforts on conflict resolution training.*

Agencies should increase their focus on efforts to engage officers in conflict resolution strategies and training, which should focus on interpersonal skills and conducting difficult conversations. This training should be ongoing and could be offered by internal or external sources.

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*Police agencies should be thoughtful in their selection of academy trainers to ensure their suitability to connect with a newer generation of recruits.*

The police academy is a recruit's first introduction into the culture and expectations of their new position and organization. Therefore, it is of utmost importance that the experience be one that not only is educational and informative but also sets the correct tone. Agencies should ensure that their academy staff represent the qualities they seek in new employees and that staff members have the ability to connect with the newer generation of recruits to motivate, inspire, and enhance the profession of policing. Selection of training instructors should be reflective of the core values and competencies the organization aims to develop in its new officers.

## Focus on field training

While the academy teaches new recruits the basics of policing and the rules, laws, and guidelines that dictate an officer's actions, the field training portion of the learning process is where the recruit is truly introduced to the culture of the agency and how to interact with the community on a day-to-day basis.

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*Agencies should carefully select field training officers (FTO) to ensure they represent the agency's values.*

FTOs are among the strongest influences on a recruit. They are the ones who work with the new officer on a one-to-one basis, in the field, teaching them how to act in a variety of situations. The FTO sets the tone for the remainder of the officer's career. They should be considered new officers' first mentors, with the power to assist them in building a strong foundation focused on prioritizing maintaining physical and mental wellness. They are instrumental as role models and should provide their trainees with career-building skills to help them face the challenges they will likely face in the profession. Therefore, FTOs should be carefully selected to ensure they embody the agency's philosophy, mission, and values. FTOs should also be evaluated regularly to confirm that they are providing the correct messaging to the officers they train.

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*Agencies should consider assigning each trainee a mentor once an offer of employment is accepted.*

This mentorship relationship allows for immediate engagement with a professional role model rather than delaying engagement until on-the-job field training begins.





## Washington State Criminal Justice Training Commission

The Washington State Criminal Justice Training Commission (WSCJTC) oversees the training of 10,000 officers and deputies across the state. Approximately 600 police recruits go through the training program each year.\* Before 2012, the basic training followed a “boot camp” model in which instructors berated recruits and the majority of the five-month program was spent emphasizing physical skills for gaining control of a situation over communication skills for de-escalation. However, to shift mentality, several key changes have been implemented to the academy training program. Rather than pushing officers to excel by making them feel inadequate, training officers now coach new recruits and encourage them to improve. They work to instill a sense of camaraderie and teamwork. Messaging—through posters, speeches, and other displays—emphasizes the nobility of the profession and the higher purpose and honor of police work. The training program now includes behavioral and social science courses with the purpose of improving officer safety and building public trust. Specifically, the WSCJTC has implemented the Justice Based Policing program, which teaches procedural justice using the Listen and Explain with Equity and Dignity (LEED) model.† Other programs include Crisis Intervention Training (CIT) and Tactical Social Interaction.

It is important to note that moving away from a traditional “boot camp”-style academy does not mean softening training or relaxing disciplinary standards.‡ The WSCJTC partnered with the Seattle University Department of Criminal Justice Crime and Research Center to conduct a four-year longitudinal study to measure the effectiveness of this updated style of law enforcement training. The study measured seven elements of the training program and found significant sustained effects in reduced burnout, emotional intelligence, organizational support, CIT support, and CIT organizational value scales, thereby validating the effectiveness of the revised training methodology.§

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\* “Washington State Criminal Justice Training Commission,” accessed June 22, 2023, <https://cjtc.wa.gov/>.

† The Justice Based Policing class was developed by the King County Sheriff’s Office with funding from the COPS Office. For more information, see Washington State Criminal Justice Training Commission, “Justice Based Policing: Communication Skills for Officer Survival,” accessed July 21, 2023, <https://www.cjtc.wa.gov/training-education/vendor-courses/justice-based-policing-communication-skills-for-officer-survival>.

‡ Sue Rahr and Stephen K. Rice, *From Warriors to Guardians: Recommitting American Police Culture to Democratic Ideals*, New Perspectives in Policing (Washington, DC: National Institute of Justice, 2015), <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/248654.pdf>.

§ Jacqueline B. Helfgott and Matthew J. Hickman, *The Effect of Guardian Training for Law Enforcement Officers: Longitudinal Findings 2015–2020 Phase 4 Final Report to the Washington State Criminal Justice Training Commission* (Seattle, WA: Seattle University, 2021), [https://www.seattleu.edu/media/college-of-arts-and-sciences/departments/criminaljustice/crimeandjusticeresearchcenter/documents/Helfgott-and-Hickman-2021\\_Longitudinal-Study-of-the-Effect-of-Guardian-Training-for-LE.pdf](https://www.seattleu.edu/media/college-of-arts-and-sciences/departments/criminaljustice/crimeandjusticeresearchcenter/documents/Helfgott-and-Hickman-2021_Longitudinal-Study-of-the-Effect-of-Guardian-Training-for-LE.pdf).



## Recommendations

- **S.** Short-term solutions, taking less time to implement.
- **L.** Long-term strategies, taking a greater amount of time to implement.
- **S/L.** Recommendations that may require short-term action followed by longer implementation strategy.

## Reimagine academy training

- (L)** Update academy curriculum and training approaches to better prepare recruits for day-to-day duties.
- (S/L)** Consider the inclusion of community partners.
- (S/L)** Select academy trainers thoughtfully to ensure they can meaningfully connect with modern recruits.
- (L)** Ensure trainees attend outreach and recruitment opportunities.
- (S/L)** Increase focused efforts on conflict resolution training.

## Focus on field training

- (S/L)** Carefully select and regularly evaluate field training officers.
- (L)** Assign each trainee a mentor.



# Benefits and Incentives

As policing is modernized, law enforcement executives must examine the use of benefits and incentives in recruitment and retention for sworn positions. In addition to attracting new recruits, benefits and incentives play a key role in retaining existing employees; may dissuade them from seeking employment elsewhere; and can demonstrate the agency's commitment to employees' health, happiness, and overall well-being.

Participants agreed that agencies must reimagine signing bonuses, pension plans, and additional incentives for retention. As well, participants representing federal law enforcement spoke about the challenges federal organization face in recruiting from SLTT agencies because of pay scale requirements that almost inevitably mean new federal hires take pay cuts relative to their previous positions. Investing in the current workforce, understanding what is important to potential recruits, and funneling funding to the most valuable programs should be the focus.

## Solutions

### Review retirement plans

Individuals at the beginning of their careers are often advised that it is never too early to think about saving for retirement. However, the preferred path to retirement savings is shifting with the newer generation of employees. Providing financial education and retirement options and education starting at the academy and throughout a career will give officers a foundation to make educated decisions about ways to better meet their financial and retirement goals.

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*Agencies should consider current retirement options to determine whether they meet the needs of the current workforce.*

There is a great deal of conversation about whether today's workforce is motivated by traditional pension plans, which involve the employer making regular contributions to a pool of money that is dispersed to employees only after they leave the agency. The employer's contribution amounts are usually determined by length of the employee's service and final salary, often including any overtime pay. In most cases, the employer does not begin contributing to the employee's pension account until the employee has been on the job for three to five years; if the employee leaves the profession and later rejoins, their previous time accrued is not counted and they must start again from the beginning. In addition, participants noted that states and localities are increasingly disincentivizing and placing caps on existing pensions. Caps on overtime and pension payouts make it unattractive for mid-level employees to stay and advance to senior positions. Some participants suggested that governments could assist by allocating funding toward pension plans and removing any existing caps.

Participants reported that fewer people than in previous generations are entering policing with the plan of staying for 25 years or more. Because of this generational shift, pension plans are often no longer a strong motivator. Meeting participants discussed providing the option of portable investments, such as 401(k) plans. While an employer often contributes a matching percentage to these types of investments, the money ultimately belongs to the employee and can follow them if they leave the profession, regardless of length of service.



## Strategically reevaluate bonuses

Agencies use bonuses for a variety of purposes, operating under the assumption that additional money is a primary motivator for employees.

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*Agencies should examine whether funding earmarked for current sign-on bonuses could be better used to help retain current employees.*

Traditionally, money, including sign-on bonuses (i.e., one-time payouts upon beginning employment) was an effective way to attract candidates to the law enforcement profession. However, much of the younger generation increasingly values job satisfaction and work-life balance, and participants noted that sign-on bonuses are becoming an obsolete method for recruiting a qualified, diverse police force. Rather than directing resources to bonuses during the hiring process, meeting attendees recommended retention bonuses for existing staff with specialty skills that require training, clearances, or credentials. This practice is especially helpful to small and rural departments that cannot compete with the signing bonuses that larger departments may offer.

## Consider additional incentives

Offering benefits aside from retirement contributions or bonuses can be seen as valuable and much desired perks by potential candidates and existing staff. These can include direct financial benefits as well as quality-of-life benefits and professional resources.

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*With workers placing an increased value on work-life balance, agencies should explore nontraditional benefits and incentives.*

Meeting participants also discussed additional incentives that are important to recruitment and retention. More paid time off, increased parental leave, flexible schedules (including alternate shifts and work hours), and tuition reimbursements are appealing to today's workforce. Updated equipment and technology, including take-home vehicles—especially in smaller agencies—play a significant role in candidates' evaluation of agency. Health care is also a primary concern, including coverage for mental well-being, family planning, and nontraditional treatments. Agencies should also consider benefits for those who have reached retirement, especially including behavioral health and well-being and health care options for retirees younger than 65 who have not yet qualified for Medicare. Government assistance in supplementing these incentives would allow for the lowering of costs for individual agencies.

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*Consider structuring a different pay scale for federal law enforcement officers to attract individuals who want to continue their career in law enforcement but cannot afford the reduction in pay.*

Many veteran SLTT law enforcement officers have student debt to repay or families to support and cannot survive on the beginning salary the Federal Government offers irrespective of experience or job history.



## Recommendations

- **S.** Short-term solutions, taking less time to implement.
- **L.** Long-term strategies, taking a greater amount of time to implement.
- **S/L.** Recommendations that may require short-term action followed by longer implementation strategy.

## Review retirement

- (S/L)** Evaluate current retirement options, with a potential shift away from traditional pension plans toward portable investments.
- (L)** Eliminate caps on pensions and overtime pay.

## Strategically reevaluate bonuses

- (S)** Transition toward retention bonuses instead of sign-on bonuses or redirect funding from sign-on bonuses to support other incentives (e.g., tuition reimbursement).

## Consider additional incentives

- (S/L)** Consider additional incentives that are attractive to the modern workforce, including increased paid time off, expanded health care options (including options specifically for retirees), and updated technology and equipment.
- (L)** Federal agencies should consider adopting a pay scale for experienced transfers from SLTT law enforcement agencies.







# Work-Life Balance and Officer Wellness

Prioritizing work-life balance and officer wellness is a critical component of law enforcement recruitment and retention. Policing takes both a physical and a mental toll on officers, stressing the overwhelming need for appropriate and adequate agency support to promote overall health and well-being. To attract new candidates, help prevent officers from leaving the profession early because of illness or injury, and safeguard existing staff members' health, agencies should implement comprehensive wellness programs. These programs and initiatives should be championed by command staff and adopted throughout the agency using a top-down approach. Government funding and associated legislation can support these programs and provide mechanisms that protect confidentiality for officers seeking support.

## Solutions

### Expand child care

A major concern for most working individuals with children is securing affordable child care that is available when the parent or guardian needs it. This one factor may dictate whether that individual is able to pursue or continue to have a career in law enforcement.

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*Agencies should explore public-private partnerships and other innovative ways to ensure child care is available to accommodate the unconventional schedules found in policing.*

One significant barrier to recruiting and retaining police officers is a lack of suitable child care options. Because traditional police work schedules often do not follow regular child care center hours, parents may be left to choose between caring for their children and a law enforcement career. To hire and retain a qualified, diverse workforce, police agencies should invest in making child care accessible and affordable for all officers. Participants also discussed the necessity of shifting child care from a welfare issue to a workforce issue to remove barriers for funding. Departments should engage with community stakeholders to identify potential partnerships and funding opportunities to extend the hours of child care options, including early mornings, evenings, weekends, and holidays.<sup>10</sup>

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10. The National Law Enforcement Foundation's mission is to provide "secure and affordable child care for law enforcement." National Law Enforcement Foundation, "Enhance the Working Environment for Law Enforcement," accessed July 21, 2023, <https://www.nlef.org/>.



## San Diego (California) Police Department Child Care Solution

In most areas, child care can be inaccessible and expensive, especially for police officers. Anne Bosanac, a member of the Advisory Board of Directors for the San Diego Police Officers Association, knew that finding an innovative solution to the child care problem was necessary. Through public/private partnerships, Bosanac and her team created a community-based approach to provide funding for child care centers exclusively for law enforcement. This customized offering, which uses funding from both the government and private philanthropists, includes an extended 17-hour, 7-day-a-week operation that supports emergency child care. Affordability is increased by providing a 50 percent discount off the market rate. In response to the child care worker shortage, pay was increased by 15 percent for care workers. The San Diego Police Department was the first agency to successfully stand up this model of child care.

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Source: Nicole Pruss and LaToshia Austin, "The San Diego Police Department's Childcare Solution," *Community Policing Dispatch* 15, no. 6 (2022), [https://cops.usdoj.gov/html/dispatch/06-2022/SanDiego\\_Childcare\\_Solutions.html](https://cops.usdoj.gov/html/dispatch/06-2022/SanDiego_Childcare_Solutions.html).

## Examine shift schedules

Departments understand all too well the challenges of designing shift schedules that provide staffing coverage while also providing the most benefit to their officers. Research has examined how police shift schedules impact officer safety and well-being.<sup>11</sup>

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*Shift schedules should be examined to promote maximum health, wellness, and work-life balance.*

The COVID-19 pandemic changed the way many companies and businesses operate by motivating them to provide flexible and remote work options. Police departments cannot offer these types of schedules, but their availability in other sectors, coupled with the importance of work-life balance, should prompt police agencies to assess current shift schedules to promote maximum health and wellness. Many potential police hires are not interested in working the long hours that traditional police shift schedules require. In addition, research shows that certain shifts and schedules contribute to negative health outcomes, such as poor sleep quality, daytime sleepiness, and symptoms of depression and anxiety.<sup>12</sup> By reevaluating and increasing scheduling options, agencies may attract a greater number of applicants.

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11. Karen L. Amendola et al., *The Shift Length Experiment: What We Know about 8-, 10-, and 12-hour Shifts in Policing* (Washington, DC: National Policing Institute, 2011), <https://www.policinginstitute.org/publication/shift-length-experiment/>.

12. Lois James, Stephen James, and Loren Atherley, "The Effects of Shift-work Schedules on the Sleep, Health, Safety, and Quality of Life of Police Employees during the COVID-19 Pandemic," *Frontiers in Psychology* 14 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1128629>.



## Shift Schedule Case Studies

The Arlington County (Virginia) Police Department has a 28-day cycle in which officers work 10.5 hours a day. Officers work five days on/four days off, five days on/four days off, and finally five days on/five days off. This pattern results in officers not having the same days off every week but rather having a rotation.

The Roanoke County (Virginia) Police Department designed a shift schedule to meet their officers' needs. Day-shift officers work shifts of 8.5 hours, 5 days a week; those on the evening and midnight shifts work 10 hours for 4 days. Younger officers tend to be assigned to the evening and midnight shifts, but the department attempts to offer everyone the opportunity to change shifts approximately twice a year. Officers work the same shift for six months at a time, which provides consistency and helps officers acclimate to their schedules. In addition, the department allows teams of officers to arrange their own schedules within their assigned shifts for each 20-day period.\*

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\* *The Workforce Crisis, and What Police Agencies Are Doing About It* (Washington, DC: Police Executive Research Forum, 2019), <https://www.policeforum.org/assets/WorkforceCrisis.pdf>.

## Address comprehensive wellness

The physical and mental health and safety of police officers is directly tied to recruitment and retention. Without adequate support, daily stresses and repeated exposure to traumatic events can have lasting negative impacts on officers. The alarming rate of officer suicides—45 percent higher than the general population in 2021—highlights the need for wellness programs that extend beyond tactical and physical fitness to mental, psychological, and emotional health.<sup>13</sup>

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*Wellness programs should be developed and expanded to go beyond addressing physical health; they should incorporate mental and emotional well-being.*

Historically, law enforcement health and wellness programs focused almost exclusively on physical health. However, more and more agencies are losing officers to burnout, suicide, and other mental health issues.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, agencies should develop comprehensive wellness programs that incorporate aspects of mental and emotional health and well-being, including access to

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13. According to First H.E.L.P., an organization that tracks law enforcement and first responder suicides, 143 officers died by suicide in 2021. First H.E.L.P., "The Numbers," accessed July 21, 2023, <https://bluehelp.org/the-numbers/>. When measured against the total number of law enforcement officers (with power of arrest) in 2021 (n=712,112), this equates to 20.5 suicide deaths per 100,000 of the law enforcement population. U.S. Census Bureau, "National Police Week: May 14–20, 2023," last modified August 16, 2023, <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/stories/police-week.html>. By comparison, in 2021, 14.1 per 100,000 of the general population died by suicide. CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention), "Suicide Data and Statistics," last modified August 10, 2023, <https://www.cdc.gov/suicide/suicide-data-statistics.html>.
  14. For example, see USDOJ reports in response to Executive Order 14074 "Advancing Effective, Accountable Policing and Criminal Justice Practices to Enhance Public Trust and Public Safety," The White House, May 25, 2022, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2022/05/25/executive-order-on-advancing-effective-accountable-policing-and-criminal-justice-practices-to-enhance-public-trust-and-public-safety/>; *Department of Justice Report on Best Practices to Address Law Enforcement Officer Wellness* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, 2023), <https://www.justice.gov/olp/executive-order-14074-reports>; *Department of Justice Recommendations Regarding the Prevention of Death by Suicide of Law Enforcement* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, 2023), <https://www.justice.gov/olp/executive-order-14074-reports>.



qualified culturally competent mental health providers, peer support programs, training on topics such as resilience and healthy coping mechanisms, and resources for officers nearing or post-retirement. Agencies should also consider additional aspects of well-being such as financial, spiritual, and family wellness. Further, it is important that agencies consider these services for those who have retired from the profession.

Unfortunately, there is still a stigma among the law enforcement community toward seeking mental health support. Meeting attendees agreed that top-down change is required to allow officers to feel safe and supported in seeking help. Command staff must do more than create programs and encourage officers to use resources. They need to model that it is “okay to not be okay” and speak openly about mental health challenges and how they are finding support themselves. Possible government funding was also suggested to conduct research on the effectiveness of various resources on mental health and wellness, as well as to support comprehensive wellness and peer support programs.

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*Prioritize confidentiality for officers seeking mental health care.*

Confidentiality is vital during law enforcement interactions with those providing mental health support, whether through peer support programs or visits with culturally competent mental health providers. Officers may fear reprisal, the loss of their firearm and badge, or barriers to promotion if they ask for help. Police departments need wellness programs that guarantee officers’ anonymity and confidentiality and should educate each officer on those programs. Some departments have addressed this issue by partnering with outside service providers and billing agencies to make mental health care accessible but separate from the department’s internal affairs.<sup>15</sup> Another key participant recommendation was legislation that guarantees confidentiality, thereby ensuring that information officers provide when they are the most vulnerable is protected.

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*Consider wellness as it relates to specific employee populations.*

Women in the workforce, especially policing, have different wellness needs than men. For instance, agencies should consider how they address pregnancy, lactation, and physical needs specific to female officers. Many women are forced to have their uniforms custom tailored, an out-of-pocket expense. Bullet-resistant vests are often not designed to accommodate a woman’s body, leading to added discomfort (in addition to the potential safety issue). Involving female employees in the development of wellness programs will help to ensure that their needs are addressed and their voices are heard.

The prospect of retirement can be both exciting and frightening. Many law enforcement retirees express difficulty in shifting to a life without the camaraderie of their peers and the day-to-day structure provided by the job. Agencies should develop programs designed both to prepare officers for retirement and to support them after they leave. These programs may include establishing an “alumni” association for retirees and their families, providing career transition services and resources, or encouraging retirees to consider volunteering their time within the department.

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15. The Arlington (Texas) Police Department’s “Blue Chip” program is one successful example where all employees are given a blue poker chip that grants them access to unlimited free services from a variety of mental health providers. Anonymous billing ensures that employee records are never shared with the department. Christopher Sun et al., *Blueprint for Law Enforcement Recruitment and Retention in the 21st Century: Principles of a Comprehensive Recruitment, Hiring, Promotion, and Retention Strategy* (Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Assistance, 2022), [https://www.smart-policing.com/sites/default/files/2022-10/2022\\_SPI\\_RR\\_Blueprint\\_FINAL\\_1.pdf](https://www.smart-policing.com/sites/default/files/2022-10/2022_SPI_RR_Blueprint_FINAL_1.pdf).





## Recommendations

- **S.** Short-term solutions, taking less time to implement.
- **L.** Long-term strategies, taking a greater amount of time to implement.
- **S/L.** Recommendations that may require short-term action followed by longer implementation strategy.

## Expand child care

- (L) Expand child care options to accommodate nontraditional work schedules.
- (L) Explore public-private partnerships and other funding options to support expanded child care hours.

## Examine shift schedules

- (L) Evaluate existing shift schedules to determine whether they promote officer safety and wellness and work-life balance.

## Address comprehensive wellness

- (L) Develop wellness programs that address mental and emotional well-being in addition to physical health.
- (S) Ensure confidentiality for all mental health and peer support conversations.
- (L) Consider specific populations, such as female officers and retirees, when examining comprehensive wellness programs.





# Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Prioritizing diversity and inclusion throughout the hiring process and throughout an officer's career is critical to ensuring that officers represent the communities they serve and possess the cultural knowledge to effectively engage with the public. Participants discussed that agencies need to have difficult, solution-focused conversations with individuals and groups in the community, including with those who may mistrust or feel animosity toward police. At the same time, racial and gender equity and elimination of potential bias need to be at the forefront of leaders' minds for lasting, impactful change. Attention to equity and inclusion efforts will benefit agencies not only by making their applicant pools more diverse but also simply by making them larger; with more candidates to choose among, agencies will be able to build stronger classes of recruits.

## Solutions

### Address diversity, equity, and inclusion

Law enforcement officers should reflect the community they serve. To achieve this goal, agencies should carefully consider their policies and practices related to diversity, equity, and inclusion—including increased recruitment efforts that will appeal to multilingual applicants.

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*Agencies should conduct an analysis of current diversity status.*

Agencies should examine the makeup of their workforce and consider whether it reflects the diversity of the community. This should include both current employees and recruits. As appropriate, agencies should consider changes to the recruitment, hiring, and promotional processes in order to remove barriers and promote inclusion.

### **Recruiting, Engagement, Selection, Transfer, Assignment, and Retention Team**

The Chattanooga (Tennessee) Police Department uses its Recruiting, Engagement, Selection, Transfer, Assignment, and Retention Team (RESTART) to bring together community members, academics, officers, command staff, union officials, and human resource professionals to “ensure equity and aggressively support diversity”<sup>\*</sup> in a range of practices, including those related to retention, assignment, and transfer practices. Through this effort, the department is currently in the process of reforming its promotion standards.

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<sup>\*</sup> *Advancing Diversity in Law Enforcement* (Washington, DC: U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2016), <https://www.eeoc.gov/advancing-diversity-law-enforcement>.



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*Agencies should review policies and programs to identify areas that may be hindering efforts at equity and inclusion.*

True progress toward equity and inclusion requires identifying and addressing the key drivers of systemic racism and inequality. Agencies should carefully examine their policies, procedures, statistics (e.g., use of force data, demographics related to stops and searches), and culture through the lens of equality and fairness. In addition to making changes to remove problematic guidance, agencies should also add policies that are designed to actively promote equity and inclusion. By doing so, agencies can use their platform on equality to attract new recruits and work toward ensuring current employees feel valued and appreciated.

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*Agencies should recognize the unique talents and skills diverse officers possess when developing promotional processes.*

It is also important to note that lack of diversity is an issue at all levels of law enforcement, and as such, these concrete commitments must not be made only at the recruit level.<sup>16</sup> It is critical to encourage individuals of all demographics who may be interested in promotional opportunities to seek out those opportunities. Ensuring that the promotional process is fair and equitable for all is paramount. Law enforcement leadership should be as diverse as the workforce they lead and the communities they serve.

Individuals with backgrounds not traditionally represented in agencies often provide the agencies with unique and useful skills that may be overlooked during traditional promotional processes. Therefore, agencies should reassess the way promotions are granted—often through a written test and oral interview—to include placing value on these traits.

## Remove barriers to recruitment

Removing barriers to the representation of underrepresented groups in law enforcement starts with attracting diverse candidates.

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*Recruitment strategies aimed at increasing diversity must go beyond putting officers of different backgrounds in marketing materials.*

While providing representation of officers from diverse backgrounds in marketing materials, such as posters and social media messaging, is important, it is not the only way for agencies to incorporate diversity into the recruitment process. Additional strategies include ensuring that recruiters represent the community and proactively highlighting the agency's commitment to inclusivity during interactions with the public. Participants suggested the identification of younger recruiters with whom potential candidates can better relate. In addition, an agency's culture should encourage every officer to consider themselves a recruiter as they represent the agency and the profession to the public. Their actions when interacting with the public can greatly influence the public perception of law enforcement as a career choice. School resource officers often have significant experience interacting with youth in the community and thus may be considered for recruitment roles.

Agencies should work with community leaders to target recruitment efforts toward diverse candidates and identify ways to reach potential recruits who might otherwise not consider law enforcement as a career. This cooperation may include partnering with local youth groups, colleges, and universities.<sup>17</sup>

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16. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, in 2020, in local police departments, 3.6 percent of chiefs, 8.7 percent of immediate supervisors, and 10.9 percent of sergeants or first-line equivalents were women. In the same time period, 87.2 percent of chiefs, 79.3 percent of immediate supervisors, and 75.3 percent of sergeants or first-line equivalents were White. Sean E. Goodison, *Local Police Departments Personnel, 2020* (Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2022), <https://bjs.ojp.gov/library/publications/local-police-departments-personnel-2020>.

17. Pipeline programs are addressed specifically in a later section.



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*Agencies should consider replicating private sector recruitment and networking events.*

Many private sector industries offer recruitment and networking events as opportunities to grow their talent pool and share information about their work with interested candidates as well as those who may know little about the profession. Law enforcement agencies should consider how they may learn from these private sector recruitment efforts to target potential candidates, draw interest to the profession, or demonstrate some of the benefits the job has to offer.

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*Agencies should join the 30x30 Initiative to illustrate a commitment to diversity.*

Studies show that women make up only 12 percent of sworn officers and 3 percent of police leadership in the United States.<sup>18</sup> The 30x30 Initiative is a coalition of police leaders, researchers, and professional organizations who have joined together to address barriers to the representation of women in policing agencies across the United States. 30x30 has instituted a waiting list and will begin accepting new agencies in the spring of 2024.

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*Police executives and community leaders should evaluate what the workforce is seeking in a career and incorporate findings, wherever possible, to attract and retain candidates.*

Research shows that job seekers today are looking for careers where they not only feel valued and appreciated but also have a strong sense of purpose in what they are doing.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, agencies should highlight the nobility of law enforcement<sup>20</sup> and the many opportunities that police have to make a positive difference in the community in their messaging and examine ways to engage with current employees to communicate their value and importance to both the agency itself and the community.

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*Community members from different generations should be included in the recruitment process to assist in identifying and attracting candidates who are reflective and representative of the communities they serve.*

Members of the community should be involved in the evaluation of existing recruitment and hiring practices. Through their connections with the public and unique viewpoints, community members can help identify ways to improve processes and point out areas that may be ineffective or even harmful to law enforcement's efforts to attract new and retain existing employees. While the main focus is usually to involve community members from different types of groups (e.g., faith-based), as well as a variety of ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds, too often age is not considered as a factor. However, the differences among generations are becoming increasingly apparent with respect to how they view the world and their varied motivations and definitions for a successful career.<sup>21</sup> Therefore, any group of advisory members from the public should include individuals who represent each of these generations, as the approaches to recruiting and retaining officers from each age group may vary greatly.

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18. "Background," 30x30 Initiative, accessed August 22, 2023, <https://30x30initiative.org/about-30x30/>.

19. Bruce Horowitz, "Employers Take Note: Young Workers Are Seeking Jobs with a Higher Purpose," *Time*, last modified May 13, 2022, <https://time.com/6176169/what-young-workers-want-in-jobs/>.

20. For examples of service-based recruitment videos, see VALOR Officer Safety and Wellness Initiative, *The Nobility of Policing: Why I Serve* (St. Petersburg, FL: St. Petersburg College, n.d.), <https://cpsi.spcollege.edu/nobilityofpolicing/WhyIServe.htm>.

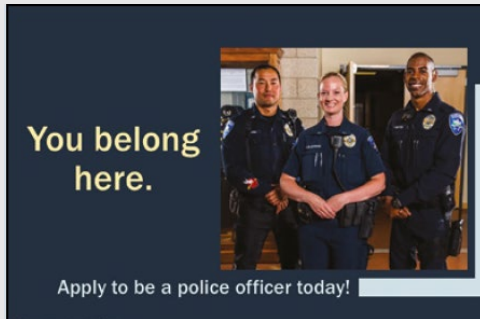
21. Current generations in the workforce include Baby Boomers (born between 1946 and 1964), Generation X (born between 1965 and 1980), Millennials (born between 1981 and 1996), and Generation Z (born between 1997 and 2012).





## You Belong Here

The Tacoma (Washington) Police Department uses a postcard with the messaging “You Belong Here” to boost its recruitment efforts. The postcard features three officers of different races on the front and a personalized message to the postcard recipient on the back. Researchers found that using this approach—designed to suggest that individuals from diverse backgrounds could find a home in the law enforcement community—was an effective strategy that “boost[ed] applications fourfold compared to the status quo.”



Source: Joanna Weill et al., *Behavioral Insights for Building the Police Force of Tomorrow* (New York: Behavioral Insights Team, 2019), <https://www.bi.team/publications/behavioral-insights-for-building-the-police-force-of-tomorrow/>.



## Recommendations

- **S.** Short-term solutions, taking less time to implement.
- **L.** Long-term strategies, taking a greater amount of time to implement.
- **S/L.** Recommendations that may require short-term action followed by longer implementation strategy.

## Address diversity, equity, and inclusion

- (S) Conduct a diversity analysis.
- (S) Identify and address any policies and programs that may erect barriers to establishing a culture of equity and inclusion.
- (S) Ensure the skill sets possessed by officers from diverse backgrounds are considered as part of the promotional process.
- (L) Aim to have the makeup of the agency reflect the diversity found in the community, including executives and command staff.

## Recruit for diversity

- (S) Expand recruitment strategies beyond marketing materials featuring diverse candidates to include carefully selecting recruiters and highlighting the agency's commitment to inclusion.
- (S) Consider replicating private sector recruitment and networking events.
- (S/L) Join the 30x30 Initiative.
- (S) Evaluate what the current workforce values in a career.
- (S) Include members from the community and other relevant stakeholder groups in discussions of how best to identify, attract, and retain qualified candidates.





# Culture

While policies and procedures dictate the day-to-day operations of a law enforcement agency, it is the underlying culture that truly shapes the attitudes and behaviors of the workforce. A culture that encourages positive relationships both between employees and with community members, recognizes the vital importance of mutual respect, and focuses on the value and growth of each individual will aid in overall recruitment and retention efforts by attracting potential candidates, improving morale, and providing a compelling reason for current officers to remain.

## Solutions

### Change the culture

Just like any other organization, each law enforcement agency has its own organizational culture. Identifying cultural strengths and weaknesses may assist agencies in ensuring a strong and healthy culture.

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*Agencies should conduct a cultural assessment.*

To identify areas where change is necessary, agencies should first conduct a cultural assessment. This assessment may include analyzing existing policies and procedures including those related to internal affairs, promotional processes, and use of force; conducting focus groups with various staff throughout the organization as well as community members; reviewing feedback (e.g., complaints) from the community; and disseminating a survey to all members of the agency. The results from these efforts can aid the agency in identifying opportunities to enhance fair and equal treatment of all employees and promote a culture where everyone feels valued. Specifically, agencies should consider the shift from a solely warrior mentality to a guardian mentality, as many day-to-day activities have changed from tactical in nature to a focus on community caretaking functions.

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*Agency culture should be carefully examined to ensure there is a zero-tolerance attitude toward discrimination and harassment.*

While changes to policies and procedures can greatly improve an agency's approach to diversity and inclusion, a pervasive internal culture that does not support these initiatives can undermine progress, make the agency less attractive to potential candidates, and alienate members of the existing workforce. However, identifying and addressing undesirable agency culture is a difficult process—one that should be initiated by enacting a zero-tolerance policy for all behavior that goes against the agency's values and mission, including discrimination and harassment. In addition, it is essential that executive, command, and first-line supervisory staff publicly adopt an attitude that embraces diversity, equity, and inclusion and serve as role models to the entire staff.



## Prepare for difficult conversations

The power of conversation cannot be underestimated. While many, if not most, individuals would rather avoid having difficult conversations, avoidance may worsen unresolved issues and misunderstandings.

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*Police leaders should be prepared to engage with members of the community to discuss potentially challenging topics surrounding race and gender inequity.*

The issue of diversity in the recruitment and retention of law enforcement officers cannot be addressed without a firm commitment from leaders to engage in open and honest conversations around the challenging topics of racial and gender disparities as well as bias. It is important not only to acknowledge the fact that these disparities exist but also to dig deeper during conversations with members of the community and other relevant stakeholders to identify root causes and possible solutions. This discourse may make some people uncomfortable or defensive, so developing a framework for these conversations is a key step in promoting productive outcomes.

While such conversations may feel awkward or even hostile at first, agency leaders should keep in mind that their goal is to develop positive perceptions and dispel negative attitudes through regular contact. Leaders may be eager to proactively address the perceived issues, but they should recognize the value of listening and providing the community an opportunity to voice their concerns. A consistent, concerted effort is necessary to create and sustain the lasting impact of these conversations. With proper preparation, an open mindset, and identification and assistance of allies in the community, agencies can use the power of conversation and constructive interactions to advance equity and inclusion.

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*Agency leadership should be prepared to engage honestly with their employees to discuss difficult subjects such as workplace inequities.*

Strong internal communication about difficult subjects is important for the well-being and retention of officers, and line officers who experience solid communication from their leadership are better prepared to communicate well with community members.

## Recommendations

- **S.** Short-term solutions, taking less time to implement.
- **L.** Long-term strategies, taking a greater amount of time to implement.
- **S/L.** Recommendations that may require short-term action followed by longer implementation strategy.

## Change the culture

- (S) Conduct an in-depth cultural assessment.
- (S) Adopt a zero-tolerance policy toward discrimination and harassment.

## Prepare for difficult conversations

- (S) Develop a framework for discussing potentially controversial or emotionally fueled topics with the public in a professional and productive manner.
- (S) Develop a framework for conducting difficult discussions in the agency.





# Law Enforcement Image

Participants noted that the image of law enforcement has changed drastically since the early 2000s. The current, often negative, public perception of policing has a direct impact on agencies' ability to recruit new and retain current officers. Some potential candidates are no longer drawn to policing as an attractive career option, and some existing officers are resigning or retiring because of the increased stress and burnout caused in part by the erosion of public trust in the profession. To address this hiring gap, police leaders must work strategically and consistently to rehabilitate that image, improve trust with their communities, examine their internal culture, and highlight the rewarding aspects of law enforcement.

## Solutions

### Focus on the purposes of policing

In many instances, the policing profession is not being advertised or promoted in a way that reaches the most diverse pool of qualified candidates. Agencies must analyze their current messaging regarding the policing profession to identify gaps in the public's understanding of the work and areas in which departments can clarify or shift the narrative of policing.

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*Recruitment campaigns should underscore the opportunity that policing offers to join a noble profession that has a real impact on community and serves a higher purpose.*

Traditionally, law enforcement agencies often relied on the allure of specialty assignments (e.g., special weapons and tactics [SWAT], K9, air support) and action-based marketing to appeal to potential candidates, reinforcing the "warrior" mentality. However, these depictions of policing, coupled with the sensationalized portrayals in film and television, do not accurately characterize the realities of a law enforcement career and may attract incompatible candidates or lead to disillusionment of new recruits. Meeting attendees suggested pivoting the focus of recruitment videos and social media to instead share officers' reasons for joining the force and changing focus to highlight the "guardian" mentality.<sup>22</sup> Recruiting through these compelling stories may have a greater impact on today's generation of workers who are interested in making a difference than attempts to highlight the perceived excitement of being a police officer.

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*Agencies should consider the role of families and friends when developing messaging.*

A shift in the narrative is critical not only so that potential candidates consider the profession but also so that their support systems and communities also come to see policing as a viable, legitimate role for their loved ones to fill. Agencies should also develop resources to support families of current officers. These resources may include access to family academies, where loved ones are introduced to the various aspects of the officer's job, support groups, and opportunities to work with culturally competent mental health providers.

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22. For examples of service-based recruitment videos, see VALOR Officer Safety and Wellness Initiative, *The Nobility of Policing: Why I Serve* (see note 20).



## Power in Purpose

Chief Cory Tchida of the Georgetown (Texas) Police Department provided the following insight during the meeting. “The one question I ask every candidate when I am hiring them is why they want to be a police officer. They all say ‘I want to help people.’ I then tell them that there are lots of jobs where they can help people, so why are they choosing this job? That is where the real power of their why (purpose) comes out. So many people have amazing purpose stories that you just have to draw out. There are a lot of powerful purpose stories out there with people who might not think about doing this job. We must cater our marketing to that sense of purpose and not the things that we target (job excitement) now.”

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*Public-facing campaigns should be carefully composed to offer a realistic portrayal of policing and foster a sense of community.*

Shifting the narrative of policing will require work on several different fronts, but an intentional, public-facing campaign (beyond recruitment materials) to change the way the community views law enforcement is a key strategy. Messaging should prominently feature officers’ relationships with their communities and the positive impact policing can make. Governments can also assist in this effort by spearheading and funding campaigns designed to engender positive police-community relationships. This effort could also involve allocating resources to create training and toolkits for community engagement and to evaluate the effectiveness of these materials.

In the process of developing materials and messaging, departments should also strive to receive and feature endorsements from trusted community leaders such as those associated with faith-based, educational, and LGBTQ+ community organizations. These organizations and the leaders who operate them typically enjoy a large degree of trust from the communities they serve. Organizations such as the local Chamber of Commerce and Rotary Clubs may also serve as potential avenues of support.<sup>23</sup>

Agencies should also work to publicize positive stories emerging from their work with the community. In addition, when community members see officers as mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, daughters, and sons, they can begin to separate the negative portrayal of law enforcement from the reality of the officers who honorably serve their communities and risk their lives on a daily basis.<sup>24</sup>

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23. For example, the Bloomington (Indiana) Police Department partnered with the Greater Bloomington Chamber of Commerce to foster awareness of staffing shortages among the business community. The chamber explicitly stated its support for city leaders in any effort that will aid with recruiting more public safety personnel to work for the city of Bloomington. Eric Spoonmore, “It’s Your Business: Chamber Ready to Support Bloomington in Recruiting New Police Officers,” *The Herald-Times*, March 10, 2023, <https://www.heraldtimesonline.com/story/news/local/2023/03/10/chamber-supports-bloomington-recruiting-more-public-safety-personnel/69986617007/>.

24. For example, see the BJA-sponsored public safety announcement “Mom’s Job,” National Crime Prevention Council, accessed July 21, 2023, <https://www.ncpc.org/preventviolentcrime/resources/>.



## New Blue Fellowship Program

New Blue is a nonprofit organization that awards microgrants to officers “who demonstrate a desire to reimagine law enforcement and are dedicated to the pursuit of social equity and racial justice.” The program is offered virtually over the course of a year. Participants identify policing practices that negatively impact community trust in law enforcement. These fellows then work with “communities and subject matter experts to develop, apply and analyze the most promising systemic solutions.”\* The microgrants awarded to fellows are used as implementation funds to bring these solutions to life.

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\* “Apply for a Micro Grant + Fellowship,” New Blue, accessed June 22, 2023, <https://newblue.org>.

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*Current officers should be encouraged to identify solutions for improving community trust and the perception of law enforcement.*

To support honest dialogues about policies, procedures, and programs that should be changed, officers must feel supported to share their opinions without fear of retaliation or retribution. Existing employees should be involved in all aspects of the workforce modernization effort, from recruitment and hiring to wellness and retention. Their unique insight into the culture of the agency and the community it serves is invaluable to an agency’s efforts to address the recruitment and retention crisis.

Fellowships and similar programs offer unique opportunities to officers from all backgrounds and may give voice to those who otherwise may not be represented among law enforcement leadership. Governments may consider providing funding for fellowship programs and microgrants to address diversity issues in communities.

## Identify partners

Law enforcement—that is, the literal enforcement of laws—is the purview of police agencies; however, public safety extends beyond law enforcement to encompass the welfare and protection of the public and community. While law enforcement agencies play a key role in public safety, other partners in the community should be identified to assist in keeping communities safe.

Regularly facilitating or participating in public forums can help to impart the idea that public safety is an important issue affecting all members of a community and that everyone has a shared interest (and obligation) in keeping their community safe.



## **Crisis Assistance Helping Out On The Streets (CAHOOTS) Program**

Collaborative partnerships are not new to policing and are becoming more common, especially when it comes to nonviolent behavioral health issues and working with crisis response teams. A strong example of crisis response collaboration between law enforcement and trained professionals can be found in the Crisis Assistance Helping Out On The Streets (CAHOOTS) public safety system in Eugene, Oregon. When the CAHOOTS nonemergency line receives a call involving a behavioral health crisis, responders send a medic and a trained mental health crisis worker; if the call involves violence or medical emergencies, they contact law enforcement. In 2019, out of 24,000 CAHOOTS calls, mobile teams requested police backup only 150 times.

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Source: "What is CAHOOTS?" White Bird Clinic, last modified October 29, 2020, <https://whitebirdclinic.org/what-is-cahoots/>.

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*Public safety should be reframed as a shared responsibility.*

Public safety is a responsibility shared by private and public individuals, families, neighborhoods, community organizations, educational institutions, and businesses, as well as police. Operating from a place of shared responsibility fosters mutual collaboration, respect, and trust between police departments and the public. Therefore, building or rebuilding this relationship of trust and respect from the perspective of both law enforcement officers and the communities they serve is critical. Viewing public safety through this lens can help departments work more effectively with the communities they serve, which will in turn positively affect the way those communities perceive police.<sup>25</sup>

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25. BJA's Safer Together Program, offered through the VALOR Officer Safety and Wellness Program, emphasizes and strengthens the link between officer safety and wellness, community trust, and crime reduction. "Explore Safer Together Training," VALOR Officer Safety and Wellness Program, accessed July 21, 2023, <https://www.valorforblue.org/Training/ExploreSaferTogether>.



## U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Office of Social Impact and Campaigns

DHS has an Office of Social Impact and Campaigns (SI)\* that fosters community engagement across the department's mission space with special emphasis on engaging underrepresented and underserved communities. SI coordinates outreach with community, faith-based, and nongovernmental and nonprofit organizations to build trust and establish a routine process for collaboration with diverse community leaders.

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\* "Office of Partnership and Engagement," U.S. Department of Homeland Security, last modified May 16, 2023, <https://www.dhs.gov/partnership-engagement>.

## Recommendations

- **S.** Short-term solutions, taking less time to implement.
- **L.** Long-term strategies, taking a greater amount of time to implement.
- **S/L.** Recommendations that may require short-term action followed by longer implementation strategy.

## Shift the narrative

- (S) Reimagine recruitment campaigns to reflect the reality of modern policing.
- (S) Develop messaging and marketing that addresses the concerns of families and friends.
- (S) Develop public campaigns that highlight the service-oriented nature of policing and foster a sense of community.
- (S) Encourage existing officers to identify ways to improve community trust.

## Identify partners

- (S/L) Involve other community and government service organizations in the shared responsibility of public safety.







# Pipeline Programs

Pipeline programs can be important, influential tools not only for recruiting new officers but also for changing the way that law enforcement is perceived. Adopting these models can help police departments to identify potential recruits at an early age while also setting youth up for success, even outside the policing profession. Governments should explore funding models to support these efforts as well as the creation of a database of potential candidates who have participated in these programs that agencies can access and use to recruit potential new officers.

## Solutions

### Invest in Cadet and Explorer programs

Organized opportunities that afford interested youth the chance to learn about the policing profession can benefit those members, the agencies, and the community by building powerful relationships and educating youth about law enforcement careers.

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*Cadet and Explorer programs can expose youth to the law enforcement profession and help build foundational skills.*

Departments should explore ways to engage youth as early as possible in their educational careers. Cadet and Explorer programs can have a profound impact on growing a robust and committed pool of future candidates for careers in law enforcement. These programs are relatively inexpensive and can be tailored to students from various age groups, from elementary through high school. Young participants can gain firsthand knowledge of what a career in law enforcement entails and build skills—such as teamwork, physical and mental fitness, and self-discipline—that will set them up for success regardless of their final chosen career path. Participation can also be incredibly rewarding and can form lasting positive relationships for all involved.



## Junior Cadet Program

The Anaheim (California) Police Department has a Junior Cadet Program\* that focuses on elementary school students ages 8 to 13 and is affiliated with the department's Police Activity League (PAL) Cops-4-Kids Program. The program, which is facilitated by off-duty officers and hosted on elementary school campuses throughout the Anaheim area, runs for 24 weeks, meeting after school one to two hours each week. The objective of this program is to foster positive relationships between law enforcement and youth. It has the added benefit of allowing youth to explore their possible interest in a law enforcement career early on in a low-pressure setting.

## Public Safety Cadets

Youth ages 14 to 20 can join national programs such as the Public Safety Cadets (PSC).<sup>†</sup> PSC is an organization "founded and managed by active and retired law enforcement officers and business leaders dedicated to preparing young adults for careers and leadership in the public safety profession."<sup>‡</sup> PSC offers participants a variety of benefits and learning opportunities, including access to national events, scholarships, mentorship opportunities, Youth Safety Training programs, and academic credits for community service.

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\* *Building a Public Safety Career Pipeline: Update 2014*, Program Guide (West Sacramento: California Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training, 2014), [https://post.ca.gov/data/sites/1/post\\_docs/careerpipeline/programguideupdate-pipeline.pdf](https://post.ca.gov/data/sites/1/post_docs/careerpipeline/programguideupdate-pipeline.pdf).

† "Public Safety Cadets: Preparing to Serve and Protect," Public Safety Cadets, accessed June 22, 2023, <https://publicsafetycadets.org/default.aspx?menuitemid=1&menugroup=Public+Home>.

‡ "About Public Safety Cadets," Public Safety Cadets, accessed June 22, 2023, <https://publicsafetycadets.org/default.aspx?menuitemid=1&menubid=1&menugroup=Public+Home>.



## Offer internships and apprenticeships

Providing young adults nearing high school graduation and college students with continued opportunities to gain more exposure to policing can provide agencies with well-informed future law enforcement candidates.

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*Agencies can offer internships and apprenticeships to keep young adults engaged and provide real-world experience and exposure to the law enforcement field.*

It is important to continue engaging with and providing young adults with opportunities as they approach high school graduation and beyond to maintain their interest in law enforcement careers. Internships and apprenticeships are ideal opportunities for young adults to continue exploring their potential future careers in public safety.<sup>26</sup> The increased level of responsibility required in an internship or apprenticeship setting can help participants determine whether law enforcement may be their chosen career.<sup>27</sup>

### **Registered Apprenticeships**

According to interviews with participants, the Fraternal Order of Police (FOP) is in the early stages of undertaking an effort to create Registered Apprenticeships for police officers, correctional officers, and crime scene technicians. Registered Apprenticeships are industry-vetted and -approved and validated by the U.S. Department of Labor or a state apprenticeship agency. This initiative came about because of the need to retain the interest of young adults in law enforcement careers in the period between high school graduation and reaching 21 years of age, which is the traditional hiring age for law enforcement organizations. This unique, three-year, paid opportunity will allow young adults to gain critical skills needed in their law enforcement careers through a combination of on-the-job training, college education, and traditional POST-certified training.

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26. Internships are generally short-term (1–3 months), unpaid, and less structured, while apprenticeships are typically longer-term (1–3 years), paid, and have a defined training plan. “What is the Difference between an Apprenticeship and an Internship?” ApprenticeshipUSA, accessed July 21, 2023, <https://www.apprenticeship.gov/help/what-difference-between-apprenticeship-and-internship>.
  27. Shelly Bradbury, “Chattanooga-area Emergency Service Agencies Look to Boost Minority Hiring,” *Chattanooga Times Free Press*, June 10, 2015, <https://www.timesfreepress.com/news/2015/jun/10/local-emergency-service-agencies-look-boost-m/>.



## Establish educational partnerships

In addition to the types of pipeline programs already discussed, which are usually developed and implemented by individual agencies or localities, departments can also work more closely with the schools and higher education institutions where youth and young adults spend a large portion of their time.

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*Agencies can partner with high schools to develop programs, courses, or curricula to introduce and prepare students for a career in law enforcement.*

Departments may want to work with their school districts to introduce teenagers to the possibility of law enforcement as a career and develop potential candidates. This can range from after-school programs, individual courses focusing on law enforcement and other public safety topics, development of career academies in local high schools, or even the creation of stand-alone high schools that exclusively serve youth interested in public safety careers.

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*Agencies should also seek ad hoc opportunities to engage students.*

One-time or nontraditional opportunities to work together with schools may arise and provide agencies with the chance to interact with students in settings not directly related to law enforcement and reach a broader audience. For instance, audio/visual classes can be used to assist departments in developing recruitment videos,<sup>28</sup> and students interested in media and marketing can provide input on agency messaging and public campaign materials.

### **San Bernardino (California) Public Safety Academy**

San Bernardino, California, has a public safety academy (PSA), an independent charter school that has been in operation since 2009. Cadets are prepared for careers in police, fire, and military service and focus on the “six pillars of character”—trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and citizenship.\* Approximately 400 students (60 percent boys and 40 percent girls) attend the academy; the high school graduation rate is 100 percent. An estimated 70 percent of students go on to higher education, and 25 percent enlist in the military.†

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\* “Public Safety Academy,” Public Safety Academy of San Bernardino, accessed July 21, 2023, <https://www.psasb.us/>.

† *Building a Public Safety Career Pipeline: Update 2014*, Program Guide (West Sacramento: California Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training, 2014), [https://post.ca.gov/data/sites/1/post\\_docs/careerpipeline/programguideupdate-pipeline.pdf](https://post.ca.gov/data/sites/1/post_docs/careerpipeline/programguideupdate-pipeline.pdf).

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28. Jeff Caponera and Emily Kuhn, “Enhancing Recruitment and Retention in Anna, Texas,” *Community Policing Dispatch* 13, no. 9 (2020), <https://cops.usdoj.gov/html/dispatch/09-2020/texas.html>.



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*Departments should consider reaching out to higher education institutions to find ways to collaborate.*

Agencies can work with local higher education institutions to review existing criminal justice curricula to increase compatibility with law enforcement careers by making sure coursework has real-world applicability; work to develop courses specific to law enforcement careers, such as those that concentrate on legal concepts and the interpretation of case law; or develop full degree programs focused on preparing students to become officers, similar to premedical degrees. One proposed option is creating a four-year program in which participants attend undergraduate classes for the first three years and go into field training during the fourth year once they reach 21 years of age. Upon graduation, participants have an undergraduate degree and proceed to a career in law enforcement. Governments may consider funding to support these types of programs.

Colleges and universities can also be useful as vehicles for promoting public safety careers to students in nontraditional disciplines (e.g., those outside of criminal justice– or law-based degree programs). While traditional criminal justice degree programs may assist in preparing students to become law enforcement officers, as the nature of policing changes, traditional programs should not be the only pathway to employment. Instead, students obtaining degrees in communications, social work, STEM programs, and liberal arts–focused areas should be included in recruitment and marketing efforts.

### **HBCU Partnership**

The Greenville (South Carolina) Police Department (GPD) has reconsidered and adjusted the way it works with historically black colleges and universities (HBCU) for more effective partnerships. The agency realized that it was not making meaningful connections with potential candidates by using the traditional route of simply attending college job fairs. As a result, the GPD began engaging HBCUs with more strategic approaches that put recruiters and staff in more frequent contact with students. The department also brings student and faculty groups to Greenville, hosts them for a couple of days, and engages them with different populations in the city. For example, the department hosted Benedict College and the local Urban League “facilitat[ed] a panel discussion about living, working and enjoying [the] city.”\*

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\* “Police Leaders Discuss Challenges in Recruiting at PERF Town Hall Meeting in Nashville,” *Subject to Debate* 32, no. 1 (2018), [https://www.policeforum.org/assets/docs/Subject\\_to\\_Debate/Debate2018/debate\\_2018\\_jun.pdf](https://www.policeforum.org/assets/docs/Subject_to_Debate/Debate2018/debate_2018_jun.pdf).





## Recommendations

- **S.** Short-term solutions, taking less time to implement.
- **L.** Long-term strategies, taking a greater amount of time to implement.
- **S/L.** Recommendations that may require short-term action followed by longer implementation strategy.

## Invest in Cadet and Explorer programs

- (L) Introduce youth, beginning as early as elementary school, to law enforcement and public safety as a career and build key foundation skills through Cadet and Explorer programs.

## Offer internships and apprenticeships

- (S) Build upon potential recruits' existing skills and interest in the law enforcement profession with more focused programs such as internships (short-term) and apprenticeships (long-term).

## Establish educational partnerships

- (L) Consider working with local high schools to identify and develop opportunities for immersive and ad hoc experiences designed both to attract new candidates and to continue developing youth who have expressed interest in the law enforcement profession.
- (L) Work with institutions of higher learning to provide coursework designed to teach students material relevant to a career in law enforcement.
- (L) Consider the creation of a degree program solely focused on preparing students for law enforcement careers, similar to premedical degrees.



# Conclusion

Law enforcement is at a crossroads as more officers are leaving the field through resignation or retirement and fewer qualified applicants are considering policing as a career. Individual agencies must carefully examine how their mission, values, culture, and employees meet the changing needs of the communities they serve. As part of this, the profession must reconsider its current hiring and retention practices to modernize the workforce. Through implementation of the short-term solutions and long-term strategies provided in this publication, law enforcement agencies can work to increase the attractiveness of policing as a preferred employment option, attract candidates, better prepare new recruits for the realities of modern policing, make sure existing employees know they are valued, promote the health and safety of the workforce, and increase community trust. The U.S. Department of Justice, through BJA and the COPS Office, is dedicated to assisting law enforcement agencies in navigating the recruitment and retention crisis and providing support for incorporating these solutions.





# Appendices

## Appendix A. Participants

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## Appendix B. Recommendations

### Short-term solutions

- Determine what the community needs from law enforcement and direct future recruitment and retention efforts to meeting these needs.
- Allocate funding to study how hiring standards impact policing.
- Examine ways to accelerate the hiring process.
- Transition toward retention bonuses instead of sign-on bonuses or redirect funding from sign-on bonuses to support other incentives (e.g., tuition reimbursement).
- Ensure confidentiality for all mental health and peer support conversations.
- Conduct a diversity analysis.
- Identify and address any policies and programs that may erect barriers to establishing a culture of equity and inclusion.
- Ensure the skill sets possessed by officers from diverse backgrounds are considered as part of the promotional process.
- Expand recruitment strategies beyond marketing materials featuring diverse candidates to include carefully selecting recruiters and highlighting the agency's commitment to inclusion.
- Consider replicating private sector recruitment and networking events.
- Evaluate what the current workforce values in a career.
- Include members from the community and other relevant stakeholder groups in discussions of how best to identify, attract, and retain qualified candidates.
- Conduct an in-depth cultural assessment.
- Adopt a zero-tolerance policy toward discrimination and harassment.
- Develop a framework for discussing potentially controversial or emotionally fueled topics with the public in a professional and productive manner.
- Develop a framework for conducting difficult discussions in the agency.
- Reimagine recruitment campaigns to reflect the reality of modern policing.
- Develop messaging and marketing that addresses the concerns of families and friends.
- Develop public campaigns that highlight the service-oriented nature of policing and foster a sense of community.
- Encourage existing officers to identify ways to improve community trust.
- Build upon potential recruits' existing skills and interest in the law enforcement profession with more focused programs such as internships (short-term) and apprenticeships (long-term).



## Long-term strategies

- Support efforts to create a national standard for policing eligibility requirements.
- Examine eligibility requirements and desired skill sets to ensure they are compatible with current policing environment, including identifying those that can be added, updated, or eliminated.
- Provide support and funding for training and retaining qualified human resource officials.
- Hire new recruits as temporary civilian employees, including providing stipends to allow agencies to make conditional offers and pay candidates while they wait for the next academy class to begin.
- Employ emotional intelligence and other interpersonal skills assessments.
- Evaluate the continued use of polygraph testing.
- Update academy curriculum and training approaches to better prepare recruits for day-to-day duties.
- Ensure trainees attend outreach and recruitment opportunities.
- Assign each trainee a mentor.
- Eliminate caps on pensions and overtime pay.
- Federal agencies should consider adopting a pay scale for experienced transfers from SLTT law enforcement agencies.
- Expand child care options to accommodate nontraditional work schedules.
- Explore public-private partnerships and other funding options to support expanded child care hours.
- Evaluate existing shift schedules to determine whether they promote officer safety and wellness and work-life balance.
- Develop wellness programs that address mental and emotional well-being in addition to physical health.
- Consider specific populations, such as female officers and retirees, when examining comprehensive wellness programs.
- Aim to have the makeup of the agency reflect the diversity found in the community, including executives and command staff.
- Introduce youth, beginning as early as elementary school, to law enforcement and public safety as a career and build key foundation skills through Cadet and Explorer programs.
- Consider working with local high schools to identify and develop opportunities for immersive and ad hoc experiences designed both to attract new candidates and to continue developing youth who have expressed interest in the law enforcement profession.
- Work with institutions of higher learning to provide coursework designed to teach students material relevant to a career in law enforcement.
- Consider the creation of a degree program solely focused on preparing students for law enforcement careers, similar to premedical degrees.



## Combined short- and long-term strategies

- Standardize investigations of applicants' social media.
- Be deliberate in communication with unsuccessful applicants.
- Consider the inclusion of community partners.
- Select academy trainers thoughtfully to ensure they can meaningfully connect with modern recruits.
- Increase focused efforts on conflict resolution training.
- Carefully select and regularly evaluate field training officers.
- Evaluate current retirement options, with a potential shift away from traditional pension plans toward portable investments.
- Consider additional incentives that are attractive to the modern workforce, including increased paid time off, expanded health care options (including options specifically for retirees), and updated technology and equipment.
- Join the 30x30 Initiative.
- Involve other community and government service organizations in the shared responsibility of public safety.



## Appendix C. Government Actions

The following actions were recommended by meeting participants for federal, tribal, state, local, or territorial governments (or combinations of these) to consider to help address the law enforcement recruitment and retention crisis.

When and if possible, governments should consider providing funding or support

- (S/L) for training and retaining qualified human resource professionals;
- (L) to allow agencies to make conditional offers and pay candidates while their background check and processing are occurring;
- (L) to examine various aspects of the hiring process and how they affect the hiring of law enforcement officers;
- (L) to identify and develop validated assessments for nontraditional skills;
- (L) toward supplementing pension plans to ensure they are able to support employees in their retirement;
- (L) to supplement additional incentives and benefits (e.g., tuition reimbursement, updated equipment and technology);
- (L) to support expanded child care programs that accommodate various shift schedules;
- (S/L) to bolster comprehensive wellness and peer support programs;
- (L) to study the effectiveness of various resources on mental health and wellness;
- (S) to aid agencies in conducting cultural assessments;
- (S) for campaigns designed to engender positive police-community relationships;
- (S/L) for identifying new opportunities for and continuing existing pipeline programs;
- (S/L) to encourage partnerships with institutions of higher learning to develop curricula that prepare potential candidates for a career in law enforcement.

When and if possible, governments should also consider

- (L) removing existing caps on pension plans and overtime pay;
- (L) enacting legislation that protects the confidentiality of officers seeking mental health support;
- (S) creating a database of potential candidates who have participated in pipeline programs.



# About BJA

The **Bureau of Justice Assistance** is a component of the Office of Justice Programs, which also includes the Bureau of Justice Statistics; the National Institute of Justice; the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention; the Office for Victims of Crime; and the Office of Sex Offender Sentencing, Monitoring, Apprehending, Registering, and Tracking. BJA's mission is to provide leadership, criminal justice policy development, and services in grant administration to support local, state, and tribal justice strategies to achieve safer communities. BJA supports programs and initiatives in the areas of law enforcement, justice information sharing, countering terrorism, managing offenders, combating drug crime and abuse, adjudication, advancing tribal justice, crime prevention, protecting vulnerable populations, and capacity building. Visit <https://bja.ojp.gov/> for more information.



# About the COPS Office

The **Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office)** is the component of the U.S. Department of Justice responsible for advancing the practice of community policing by the nation's state, local, territorial, and tribal law enforcement agencies through information and grant resources.

Community policing begins with a commitment to building trust and mutual respect between police and communities. It supports public safety by encouraging all stakeholders to work together to address our nation's crime challenges. When police and communities collaborate, they more effectively address underlying issues, change negative behavioral patterns, and allocate resources.

Rather than simply responding to crime, community policing focuses on preventing it through strategic problem-solving approaches based on collaboration. The COPS Office awards grants to hire community policing officers and support the development and testing of innovative policing strategies. COPS Office funding also provides training and technical assistance to community members and local government leaders, as well as all levels of law enforcement.

Since 1994, the COPS Office has been appropriated more than \$20 billion to add community policing officers to the nation's streets, enhance crime fighting technology, support crime prevention initiatives, and provide training and technical assistance to help advance community policing. Other achievements include the following:

- To date, the COPS Office has funded the hiring of approximately 136,000 additional officers by more than 13,000 of the nation's 18,000 law enforcement agencies in both small and large jurisdictions.
- More than 800,000 law enforcement personnel, community members, and government leaders have been trained through COPS Office-funded training organizations and the COPS Training Portal.
- Almost 800 agencies have received customized advice and peer-led technical assistance through the COPS Office Collaborative Reform Initiative Technical Assistance Center.
- To date, the COPS Office has distributed more than eight million topic-specific publications, training curricula, white papers, and resource CDs and flash drives.

The COPS Office also sponsors conferences, roundtables, and other forums focused on issues critical to law enforcement. COPS Office information resources, covering a wide range of community policing topics such as school and campus safety, violent crime, and officer safety and wellness, can be downloaded via the COPS Office's home page, <https://cops.usdoj.gov>.



On April 18, 2023, at the request of the U.S. Attorney General, more than 35 participants met in Washington, D.C., in a convening hosted by the COPS Office and the Bureau of Justice Assistance to review the current state of law enforcement recruitment and retention and explore ways they can be modernized to meet the needs of today's agencies, communities, and workforce. The group pinpointed practices that may be contributing to hiring and retention difficulties in several areas: eligibility, benefits and incentives, work/life balance and officer wellness, diversity, image and public relations, and pipeline programs. In each of these areas, leaders from various agencies and community groups proposed solutions that can be implemented at the agency level and also action steps that can be taken by local and state governments as well as the Federal Government to support and institutionalize these changes. This publication summarizes the convening and presents the group's recommendations.



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Visit the COPS Office online at [cops.usdoj.gov](http://cops.usdoj.gov).

# Action Plan for Strengthening Officer Recruitment, Hiring, Promotion, and Retention

Interagency Working Group Policies, Best Practices  
for Federal Law Enforcement Agencies



Prepared in accordance with requirements of  
**Executive Order No. 14074 (2022): Advancing Effective,  
Accountable Policing and Criminal Justice Practices to Enhance  
Public Trust and Public Safety**, § 3, Strengthening Officer Recruitment,  
Hiring, Promotion, and Retention Practices.

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## Executive Summary

On May 25, 2022, President Biden marked the two-year anniversary of George Floyd's murder by signing Executive Order (EO) 14074, titled "Advancing Effective, Accountable Policing and Criminal Justice Practices to Enhance Public Trust and Public Safety." The EO outlines specific directives for agencies to improve policy and training, promote accountability, increase transparency, and ensure equal treatment and respect for the dignity of all individuals within the jurisdiction of Federal law enforcement. Furthermore, the EO encourages actions to drive reforms among state, local, Tribal, and territorial law enforcement and criminal justice systems.

As required by Section Three of the EO, the Director of the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) convened and chaired an interagency working group (IWG). The group comprised representatives from 15 Federal Law Enforcement Agencies (FLEAs) and was tasked to examine core policies in hiring, promotion, and retention, as well as best practices for FLEAs. The overarching goal of this effort was to promote an inclusive, diverse, and expert law enforcement workforce.

Within the Federal government, these 15 FLEAs collectively employ approximately 145,000 Federal Law Enforcement Officers (Federal LEOs). The IWG was also informed by engagement with a diverse group of stakeholders, including advocates for criminal justice reform, civil rights groups, law enforcement leaders, labor organizations and unions, and policing organizations.

The IWG members shared their core policies and best practices, while also identifying agency-specific recruiting, hiring, promotion, and retention challenges. OPM then assessed existing and recommended policies, identified best practices, and outlined steps to strengthen Federal law enforcement recruiting, hiring, promotion, and retention practices, with particular attention to promoting an inclusive, diverse, and expert law enforcement workforce, culminating in this action plan.

This action plan is intended to provide a resource for FLEAs to identify and use best practices for the following areas:

- **Recruiting and hiring**, including by considering the merits and feasibility of recruiting law enforcement officers who are representative of the communities they are sworn to serve (including recruits who live in or are from these communities). Additionally, incorporate recommendations from the FLEAs' strategic plans required under Executive Order 14035 of June 25, 2021 (Diversity,

Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility in the Federal Workforce). FLEAs should take the following steps:

- Employ recruiting strategies that focus on targeted messaging and branding;
  - Engage with sources of talent that are most closely connected with the Law Enforcement Community with special attention to “Where Job Seekers Live” and their “Circles of Influence”;
  - Engage in partnerships and collaboration with fellow agencies that hire similar types of positions to attract Federal talent with the same skill sets and take advantage of economies of scale;
  - Leverage the use of Special Hiring Authorities; and
  - Leverage resources across agencies to use pooled hiring and share certificates that use improved candidate assessments.
- **Promotion and retention**, including but not limited to ways to expand mentorship and leadership development opportunities for Federal LEOs. FLEAs should take the following steps:
    - Take a holistic approach to utilizing pay and leave flexibilities and consider the following:
      - ◇ Leveraging student loan repayments;
      - ◇ Working with OPM to establish special salary rates for Federal LEOs;
      - ◇ Providing creditable service for annual leave accrual for non-Federal work experience and experience in the uniformed service;
      - ◇ Delegating recruiting and retention incentive pay authorities to managers to allow managers to act decisively to retain top talent;
      - ◇ Prioritizing the retention of senior leaders;
      - ◇ Establishing group retention incentives; and
      - ◇ Providing lump sum retention incentive payments after an employee has fulfilled a service agreement.
    - Ensure inclusion of the Chief Diversity Officer, Chief Data Officer, Chief Human Capital Officer, and Chief Financial Officer when developing and implementing pay flexibilities; and
    - Use and refer to information on [government-wide pay and leave flexibilities](#), which can be found on OPM’s website.

- **Performance evaluations and promotion decisions for Federal LEOs**, ensuring they include an assessment of the officer's adherence to agency policies and that performance evaluations and promotion decisions for supervisors include an assessment of the supervisor's effectiveness in addressing misconduct by officers they supervise. FLEAs should take the following steps:
  - Establish or enhance existing Federal LEO professional support and development programs.
  - Ensure that law enforcement officers are informed of, and have access to, wellness and employee support services, and strengthen institutional cultures that support well-being and psychological health.
  - Build leadership capability at all levels to support effective succession planning.
  - Use the categories of leadership development interventions when designing training and development opportunities for organizational leaders.
  - Provide supplemental development programs and services such as coaching and sabbatical opportunities.
  - Integrate the use of 360-degree evaluations when appropriate.
  - Develop and utilize individual development plans (IDPs) and executive development plans (EDPs) to assist in career and personal development.
  - Develop pre-supervisory training programs to meet the needs of the organization and the aspirations of individual employees.
  - Provide all employees annual, evidence-informed anti-bias training for law enforcement officers on implicit bias and avoiding improper profiling based on the actual or perceived race, ethnicity, national origin, limited English proficiency, religion, sex (including sexual orientation and gender identity), or disability of individuals.
  - Identify and use best practices for conducting background investigations and implementing properly validated selection procedures.
  - Identify and use best practices for vetting and ongoing employment screening that, consistent with the First Amendment and all applicable laws, help avoid the hiring and retention of law enforcement officers who promote unlawful violence or bias against persons based on race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sex (including sexual orientation and gender identity), or disability.



## **Executive Order 14074 Requirements**

EO 14074 required the Director of OPM to “convene and chair an interagency working group to strengthen Federal law enforcement recruiting, hiring, promotion, and retention practices, with particular attention to promoting an inclusive, diverse, and expert law enforcement workforce.” The interagency working group (IWG), composed of the heads of FLEAs, was further tasked with consulting with “other stakeholders, such as law enforcement organizations.”

The IWG was charged with issuing an action plan within one year of the date EO 14074 was issued. In crafting this plan, the EO directed the IWG “to the extent possible, [to] coordinate on the development of a set of core policies and best practices to be used across all FLEAs in recruiting, hiring, promotion, and retention, while also identifying any agency-specific, unique recruiting, hiring, promotion, and retention challenges.” Furthermore, the EO specifically directed the IWG to:

- (i) assess existing policies and identify and share best practices for recruiting and hiring, including by considering the merits and feasibility of recruiting law enforcement officers who are representative of the communities they are sworn to serve (including recruits who live in or are from these communities) and by considering the recommendations made in the FLEAs’ strategic plans required under [Executive Order 14035](#) of June 25, 2021 (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility in the Federal Workforce).
- (ii) assess existing policies and identify and share best practices for promotion and retention, including by identifying ways to expand mentorship and leadership development opportunities for law enforcement officers.
- (iii) develop best practices for ensuring that performance evaluations and promotion decisions for Federal LEOs include an assessment of the officer’s adherence to agency policies, and that performance evaluations and promotion decisions for supervisors include an assessment of the supervisor’s effectiveness in addressing misconduct by officers they supervise.
- (iv) develop best practices for conducting background investigations and implementing properly validated selection procedures, including vetting mechanisms and ongoing employment screening that, consistent with the First Amendment and all applicable laws, help avoid the hiring and retention of law enforcement officers who promote unlawful violence, white supremacy, or other bias against persons based on race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sex (including sexual orientation and gender identity), or disability.

## **Recruiting and Hiring**

### **Objective 1: To recruit and hire a diverse pool of highly qualified law enforcement professionals, fostering a safer and more effective Federal policing workforce, and emphasizing the importance of recruiting Federal LEOs who reflect the communities they are sworn to serve**

Recruiting and hiring qualified Federal Law Enforcement professionals is vital to improving safety within our agencies and our communities. As the Nation's largest employer, the Federal government must lead by example, championing the principles of equity, dignity, and accountability in the law enforcement field and our criminal justice system. Federal agencies should be equipped to develop and deploy recruiting and hiring strategies that attract talented law enforcement officers who can engage their communities, strengthen public trust, and improve the safety of those they are sworn to serve.

To help agencies achieve these goals, the EO directed the IWG to assess existing policies and identify and share best practices for recruiting and hiring, including by considering the merits and feasibility of recruiting law enforcement officers who are representative of the communities they are sworn to serve (recruits who live in or are from these communities) and by considering the recommendations made in the FLEAs' strategic plans required under Executive Order 14035 of June 25, 2021 (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility in the Federal Workforce).

The IWG identified several strategic recruiting and hiring practices and goals for Federal employment that have a demonstrated record of success in attracting and retaining qualified law enforcement officers in their organizations. These practices are aligned with broader recruiting, hiring, and retention strategies shared by the Department of Justice Office of Community Oriented Policing Services.

#### **OPM recommends agencies take the following actions to achieve Objective 1.**

##### **1. Employ recruiting strategies that focus on targeted messaging and branding**

For effective outreach to potential law enforcement candidates, agencies should work to carefully craft their messaging and branding to appeal to all ages and backgrounds. For example, given that different generations in the workforce consider work and reward in varied ways, agencies should consider the "employee value proposition," or EVP, for each generation of potential employees. Agencies should incorporate their

unique message, mission, and EVP into job announcements, print and digital promotional materials, and talking points used at networking events, job fairs, information sessions, career days, and other interactions with law enforcement job seekers.

To create an effective EVP, Federal agencies can follow these steps:

- Assess what they currently offer that is attractive to employees by creating an inventory of all aspects of employment. Specifically assess what agency employees perceive as valuable. This inventory could include items such as compensation, benefits, training and promotion opportunities, workplace flexibilities, or the organization's mission.
- Interview current and past employees to find out what is important to them and what they value at work. This list will help agencies understand what aspects of the job are attractive to some generations but are not important to others. Agencies can also use data collected from exit surveys and the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) engagement index.
- Identify future hiring needs.
- Write an employee value proposition.
- Promote the EVP through appropriate channels.

Another effective recruiting strategy used by several agencies involves Realistic Job Previews (RJPs). Written RJPs or brief in-house videos featuring individuals currently in the role can be included in job announcements or promotional materials.

Agencies should also consider best practices for the targeted recruitment of various underrepresented populations. Examples of actions to recruit underrepresented populations in law enforcement, such as women, include:

- Reviewing assessment instruments and processes for potential bias.
- Reviewing the demographic data of applicants at each stage of the hiring and candidate assessment processes to determine where the agency is losing a disproportionate number of women and other underrepresented applicants and taking appropriate follow-up action.
- Articulating the duties and day-to-day activities of a Federal LEO and what it takes for an officer to be effective in these scenarios (e.g., using RJPs) and taking steps to

ensure that agency recruitment materials accurately represent the totality of these activities and skills.

- Seeking to ensure that underrepresented populations are represented in recruiting materials as part of an overall recruitment strategy that draws from the broad demographics of the community.
- Seeking to ensure that interview panels include people from different parts of the organization, as well as people with diverse perspectives and experiences.
- When appropriate, implementing a screening process that anonymizes applications by removing identifiable characteristics from a resume that are not related to the job or experiences needed for success. When implementing a screening process, consider removing personally identifiable information that might trigger unconscious biases. This information may include, but is not limited to, gender, age, name, and educational institutions attended.
- Reviewing applicant flow data to assess the effectiveness of outreach and recruiting strategies. If agencies are not reaching a diverse pool of talent, they should consider partnering with agency recruitment experts to ensure all communities are learning about job opportunities.
- Developing outreach and recruitment efforts within communities to attract local applicants, including use of local recruiting strategies rather than nationwide strategies. This includes taking advantage of hiring authorities where appropriate to target advertising about LEO jobs to the local community in which the LEO serves. Agencies should also partner with local law enforcement organizations on career fairs and other recruiting and hiring activities that will build an ongoing connection between the FLEA and Federal LEOs and their local community.
  - A specific example of how one agency is strategically marketing and branding its career paths through the effective use of technology is the Department of Interior (DOI) “My DOI Career” web platform. This dynamic platform allows users to explore careers and be informed of the skills and experience needed to achieve their desired jobs at DOI. It can be used by current and prospective employees to help them navigate DOI career paths. The platform’s multiple segments include “Find Your Path,” “Plan Your Path,” “Where Are We?,” “Featured Occupations,” and “Resources.” If a prospective applicant wants to learn more about a particular career, they can select the “Featured Occupations” section and find detailed information. For example, within that section, job seekers can obtain a wealth of information about Park Rangers’ job

requirements and responsibilities, a realistic job preview to know what to expect on the job, a description of the ideal candidate, and much more.

- Using a diverse selection of current Federal LEOs as “ambassadors” to get the word out about the many, varied opportunities for law enforcement in the Federal government. While job announcements and promotional materials can adequately describe duties and responsibilities, an actual employee discussing a “day in the life” of a Federal LEO with a prospective applicant can be both informative and persuasive. This is especially true when officers live in the communities they serve and can speak firsthand about the unique nuances of carrying out law enforcement duties and responsibilities in the context of what goes on in their respective environments.
  - For example, one agency employed a Senior Special Agent to serve as its National Recruiting Coordinator to create a personal connection with interested applicants to gauge sincerity of interest and share announcements and recruiting materials upon request. Such ambassadors can also be present at job fairs, career days, and networking events to speak directly with attendees who have a particular interest in law enforcement and answer their questions.
  - Another agency designated Special Agent “recruiters” at the GS-13 level within its field divisions throughout the United States. These recruiters worked with agencies, colleges, and others to recruit applicants for their Criminal Investigator positions.

## **2. Engage with sources of talent that are most closely connected with the law enforcement community, with special attention to where job seekers live and organizations that positively impact their community**

For maximum effectiveness, agencies should build relationships and regularly interact with a wide variety of talent sources that can connect them to job seekers with interest in and skill sets conducive to careers in law enforcement. These may include (i) campus talent sources such as career services professionals at colleges and universities that have programs in law enforcement-related fields such as criminal justice, auditing, and others, (ii) heads of criminal justice and related departments, (iii) affinity groups affiliated with particular groups of students, (iv) executive directors and staff at community-based organizations, and (v) contacts at local police departments, security-related firms, and military and veteran organizations.

To the extent that FLEAs can regularly network with community-specific law enforcement entities (e.g., local police departments), they can reach potential applicants who will understand the law enforcement needs of the communities they intend to serve. For example, one agency featured panel interviews with diverse panel members representing various law enforcement perspectives. Another agency partnered with Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs), and other Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs), student organizations, law enforcement organizations, veterans' organizations, professional associations, and military recruiting organizations to promote current job openings, host virtual information sessions, and conduct related activities. Interacting with a variety of sources will also connect agencies with job seekers who offer different perspectives.

### **3. Partner and collaborate with fellow agencies that hire for similar types of positions to make Federal employment attractive to individuals with the same skill sets and take advantage of economies of scale**

Departments and agencies should be intentional about partnering internally across all components and bureaus as well as externally with other FLEAs to share successful practices related to hiring and assessing high caliber talent, sharing certificates for common occupations, and outreach efforts. This type of coordination on recruiting and hiring can be lacking within and among agencies, and it should become a focus area for agencies because combining efforts on recruiting and hiring LEOs across an agency leads to a more efficient process and improved results.

For example, several bureaus within one agency partner to facilitate law enforcement recruiting and branding strategies for an integrated approach. One agency with law enforcement responsibilities collaborates with the Department of Defense (DoD) to reduce onboarding times by hiring transitioning military personnel to civilian law enforcement occupations while they are still on active duty and completing all the pre-hire requisites. Once this process is complete, the new hires are assigned a law enforcement job in the area in which they choose to work. Similar partnerships among other agencies can help in the sharing of resources and in promoting the Federal government to prospective candidates as an employer of choice with multiple law-enforcement related missions.



4. Partner with other FLEAs and the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center (FLETC) to use available training that aids in the development and use of emerging critical skills training for Federal LEOs. The Federal Law Enforcement Training Center Leadership Institute offers the following programs within the requested area of professional development/training for supervisors/managers:

**Law Enforcement Supervisors Leadership Training Program (LESLTP):** The Law Enforcement Supervisors Leadership Training Program provides a unique opportunity for law enforcement professionals to develop and refine their leadership skills. The program focuses heavily on human capital development disciplines and their interaction with the law enforcement mission and culture. Topical areas include leadership skills through understanding and adapting to human behaviors, communication skills, team building, conflict management, human resource management, legal responsibilities, stress management, workplace diversity, performance skills, public speaking, and situational decision-making skills. Taking into consideration life and work experience, participants will explore these topics and develop skills by means of an adult learning model that employs lecture, practical exercises, case studies, and self-directed learning. LESLTP is an eight-day training program.

**Leadership Through Understanding Human Behavior (LTUHB):** Leadership Through Understanding Human Behavior allows participants to develop a better understanding of themselves, interpersonal dynamics, and how their strengths, weaknesses, and roles within workgroups and teams affect a mission's outcome. Participants learn how to adapt to and capitalize on each other's strengths for more effective mission outcomes. The program starts by developing participants' self-awareness and ability to recognize behavioral styles in order to build relationships. As participants start to develop an understanding of the strengths and benefits associated with behavioral styles and value systems, collectively they start to develop strategies to accomplish goals. This information can be used to establish more effective teams by capitalizing on the strengths each individual brings to the group. More specifically, training can yield valuable information on the particular aspects of the team's development process. LTUHB is a three-day training program also offered as an export program.

**Leadership for Women in Law Enforcement (LWLE):** Leadership for Women in Law Enforcement is a training program designed to explore challenges for women in the law enforcement profession. Participation is gender-neutral, and FLETC encourages all interested persons to participate. This program fosters and supports inclusiveness while facilitating open, candid discussions and activities to develop leadership skills, improve resiliency, and increase understanding of challenges that a female law enforcement officer may encounter. Competency areas include understanding and adapting to human behaviors, communication skills, team building, decision-making, understanding gender differences, and emotional intelligence. While communicating life- and work-related experiences, participants will collaboratively develop their skills through lecture, labs, role-play, case studies, and self-directed learning. Topics and questions will be selected by participants for a group of diverse law enforcement executives who will lead a roundtable discussion. One-on-one instructor-led counseling will be available upon request to support growth and improvement in emotional intelligence. LWLE is a five-day training program and is also offered as an export program.

**Leadership in a Crisis Training Program (LICTP):** The Leadership in a Crisis Training Program is a research-based curriculum to help law enforcement officers and emergency managers from Federal, state, local and Tribal agencies hone the leadership skills that will be needed during a critical event. Because critical events can vary widely in size, scope, and impact, this program focuses on core concepts of communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and decision-making that are applicable in virtually any situation. Using innovative technology, LICTP creates an immersive environment that challenges the participants' ability to apply leadership, interpersonal, and decision-making skills in a crisis situation. LICTP addresses Homeland Security and OPM competencies in the areas of Influencing/Negotiating, Interpersonal Skills, Problem Solving, Crisis Management, DHS Joint Enterprise Perspective, Critical & Creative Thinking, and Collaborating and is a complement to FEMA ICS and NIMS training and procedures. LICTP is a three-day training program.

## **5. Leverage the use of available hiring authorities**

Agencies should consider the full array of hiring authorities available to them to address talent needs (See Appendix C under “Additional Recommended Actions Agencies Can Take for Recruiting and Hiring in Support of the Recruiting of Federal LEOs”). Special hiring authorities can be useful for targeted recruiting to meet specific needs. Agencies with more broad-based critical hiring needs can pursue additional flexibilities from OPM, such as [direct hire authority](#).

## **Promotion and Retention**

### **Objective 2: To enhance retention rates and promote career advancement for Federal LEOs by offering competitive compensation packages, incentives, and standardized professional development programs**

Neglecting the promotion and retention of LEOs is costly and undermines law enforcement agencies' effectiveness. To align with the objectives outlined in the EO, which emphasize expanding opportunities, agencies must invest substantial resources to recruit, hire, and train LEOs. The EO entrusted the IWG with assessing existing policies and uncovering and disseminating best practices for promotion and retention, including by identifying ways to expand mentorship and leadership development opportunities for law enforcement officers.

Federal agencies reported exploring and implementing a variety of strategies to retain LEOs, primarily centered around compensation flexibility. These strategies encompassed recruitment, relocation, and retention incentives, student loan repayments, special rates, and creditable service for annual leave accrual for non-Federal work experience and experience in the uniformed service. Agencies also reported generally adhering to established promotion rules and procedures for Federal LEOs occupying career ladder positions. Furthermore, agencies identified the ways they implement mentorship initiatives, temporary detail assignments, and other developmental opportunities for Federal LEOs that provide additional leadership and technical skills, which in turn enhance their prospects for promotion.

### **Compensation Flexibilities for Federal LEO Recruiting and Retention**

Though the salary of Federal LEOs is largely set by statute, agencies have considerable discretionary authority to provide additional compensation and leave benefits to support Federal law enforcement recruiting, relocation, and retention efforts. Information on [government-wide pay and leave flexibilities](#) can be found on OPM's website.

Agencies reported some obstacles that serve as barriers to expanding development opportunities for Federal LEOs. Some agencies reported that they lack adequate or dedicated funding to use available flexibilities. Others indicated the need to determine whether funding allows for ongoing payment of recruiting or retention incentives, as well as if past incentive programs have been terminated or paused for lack of funding.

## **Use pay and leave flexibilities to recruit top Federal LEO talent to improve retention and promotion**

### **1. Adopt a holistic approach when leveraging pay and leave flexibilities, considering the following strategies**

- **Use student loan repayment programs.** Some agencies reported leveraging the student loan repayment program to retain top talent. This program permits agencies to repay Federally insured student loans as a recruiting or retention incentive for candidates or current employees of the agency in exchange for a service commitment.
- **Request OPM approval for special salary rates.** Some agencies have obtained approval from OPM to offer higher rates of pay to Federal LEOs under OPM's special salary rate authority. This tool can help when there are recruiting and retention challenges in specific geographic areas or with specific occupations.
- **Provide creditable service for annual leave accrual for non-Federal work experience and experience in the uniformed service.** Agencies can credit Federal LEO candidates for other relevant service for purposes of determining the rate at which they will earn annual leave. This tool can help recruit and retain Federal LEOs who have greater leave benefits in previous non-Federal jobs and want to be sure they will have sufficient leave time when joining the Federal government. Additional information on such practices and recommended actions are provided below.
- **Delegate incentive pay authority.** To allow for managers to act decisively to retain top talent, some agencies have delegated incentive payment authority to managers within specified limits.
- **Prioritize retention of senior leaders.** To support succession planning and transition to new leadership, some agencies reserve a certain amount of budget for retention incentives on a case-by-case basis for members of the Senior Executive Service and other key managers who are likely to leave the Federal service.
- **Establish group retention incentives.** Some agencies use group retention incentives to address retention difficulties for targeted categories of employees with critical law enforcement, cybersecurity, or other skills that meet performance and rank eligibility requirements when there is a high risk that a significant number of employees in the group are likely to leave Federal service.

- **Provide lump sum retention incentive payments.** Some agencies pay retention incentives in a lump sum after an employee has fulfilled a service agreement instead of biweekly as an enticement for the employee to stay with the agency for the full service period. Some agencies may find it helpful to work with OMB when developing and submitting budget requests to include any necessary funding for incentive payments.

## **2. Include the Chief Diversity Officer, Chief Data Officer, Chief Human Capital Officer, and Chief Financial Officer when developing and implementing pay flexibilities**

Ensuring that management and hiring teams coordinate with each other and across the agency is vital to addressing Federal law enforcement recruiting and retention challenges to help establish and maintain funding levels for programs that are working. OPM recommends that agencies establish systems to evaluate the use of pay flexibilities and incentives aimed at strengthening agency retention.

Agencies should partner with OPM to explore government-wide opportunities to provide additional guidance to agencies on the strategic use of pay and leave flexibilities for Federal LEOs and to resolve staffing challenges using pay flexibilities.

## **Mentorship and Leadership Development**

### **Objective 3: To establish Federal law enforcement mentorship and leadership development programs to ensure the promotion and retention of top talent in Federal Law Enforcement Agencies (FLEAs)**

Mentorship embodies a professional relationship in which an experienced employee (mentor) guides a less experienced one (mentee) in honing specific skills and knowledge. In response to the EO's directive to expand mentorship and leadership development, agencies have reported utilizing various mentorship and development opportunities to improve retention and support promotions.

Most agencies that responded to OPM's survey identified internal mentorship and development programs that emphasize leadership and management competencies. Some agencies provide structured mentorship programs, requiring candidates and mentors to provide regular feedback to program managers, ensuring candidates maintain an individual development plan; others described their programs as having fewer formal requirements. These mentorship relationships and programs cultivate an environment of encouragement. This fosters employee retention by establishing an organizational culture that is attractive to top talent seeking development and advancement opportunities. Mentoring also serves as a tangible demonstration to employees that they are valued members of their organizations.

In addition to mentorship, the EO also tasked the IWG to assess leadership development programs. Under Title 5 *U.S.C. 4121* and Title 5 *CFR 412*, agency heads are responsible for establishing succession management programs, which includes training employees for management roles. Effective succession planning ensures an adequate number of qualified individuals are prepared to fill supervisory roles that are critical functions within the organization.

Agencies must provide training when employees make critical career transitions, such as moving from a non-supervisory position to a supervisory position or from manager to executive positions. This training should align with both the agency's and employee's needs. Moreover, agencies are required to develop individuals identified as potential candidates, based on the agencies' succession plans (Title 5 *CFR 412.201*).



More specifically, Title 5 CFR 412 (external link) (*on Supervisory, Managerial, and Executive Development*) requires new supervisors to receive:

- Initial supervisory training within one year of the new supervisor's appointment.
- Periodic retraining in all areas at least once every three years.
- Training on mentoring employees.
- Training on improving employee performance and productivity.
- Training on conducting performance appraisals.

Leadership development should take place at all levels, and many law enforcement agencies responding to the survey have identified practices that meet or exceed OPM's leadership and executive development requirements. Furthermore, agencies must design and evaluate supervisory training programs that align with organizational needs, mitigate knowledge risk, and demonstrate increased proficiency in line with employees' career progression. By taking this important planning step, agencies can formulate a leadership development strategy that yields more robust and meaningful contributions to agency outcomes. Regular evaluations of program effectiveness lead to increased capacity, sustained resource allocation, and evidence-based program decisions.

Several reporting agencies not only meet the basic requirements for leadership development opportunities but also demonstrate promising practices. These noteworthy practices include:

- **The 70-20-10 model.** True learning takes place when individuals can apply their skills to real situations. Through this approach 70% of learning takes place on the job (e.g., rotation assignments); 20% of learning results from meaningful relationships (i.e., mentoring) and coaching; and 10% of learning occurs through formal training (e.g., in-person or virtual courses).
- **The 3-33% development model.** Also known as the Pervasive Learning model, this recognizes that learning can take place anytime and anywhere through three methods of exposure. In this approach 33% of learning takes place through formal learning (e.g., e-learning, rotations, physical or virtual classrooms, performance reviews, etc.), 33% in social learning (e.g., blogs, user-generated content, tagging, comments, ratings, etc.), and finally, 33% informal learning (e.g., mentoring, coaching, shadowing, podcast/webinars, case studies, books, etc.).

- **In-person leadership assessments.** Some agencies offer one-day, in-person assessments that allow Federal LEOs to exercise and measure the knowledge, skills, and abilities they need to successfully perform at the next grade level.
- **Deputy development programs.** Several agencies have established “deputy” development programs, permitting officers to complete tasks in various program areas, from level GS-5 through GS-12.
- **In-person assessment tools for improving emotional intelligence and team dynamics.** Some agencies use these assessment tools as part of their training programs. One agency uses an assessment that allows participants the opportunity to assess their ability to develop self-awareness, interpersonal dynamics, and how their strengths and weaknesses and roles within workgroups and teams affect a mission’s outcome. This knowledge then gives Federal LEOs the opportunity to better understand themselves.
- **Distance learning programs.** Participant are offered the opportunity to train virtually or via an online platform.
- **Lead assignments from current grade levels and higher (including temporary promotions).** Employees are offered an opportunity to learn new skills or apply existing skills in a new and different way. Federal LEOs can participate by applying to lead an assignment or a detail within their organization or with another Federal agency.

**OPM recommends agencies take the following actions to achieve Objective 3.**

**1. Establish or enhance existing Federal LEO professional support and development programs**

Agencies should consider developing mentorship programs for law enforcement officers and use OPM’s “Best Practices: Mentoring Guide” for an outline of the critical steps in developing and implementing a formal mentoring program.

**2. Ensure that law enforcement officers are informed of and have access to wellness and employee support services and that institutional culture promotes well-being**

Managers and supervisors are encouraged to:

- Remind Federal LEOs about the importance of cultivating healthy wellness habits, which include caring for one’s mental health on a proactive rather than reactive basis.

- Foster a healthy work environment in which personnel can readily access services, including by normalizing conversations about mental health and well-being to destigmatize obtaining mental health and other treatment.
- Promote Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) and highlight the benefits and availability of regular mental health and other counseling and resources that can help maintain positive mental health.

### 3. Build leadership capability at all levels to support effective succession management

OPM encourages all agencies to find ways to effectively develop leaders at all levels. Agencies should provide additional training opportunities for leaders of all levels on Human Resources-related technical knowledge and leadership competencies. This will reduce the need for intensive training after employees receive their first supervisory role.

### 4. Utilize the categories of leadership development interventions when designing training and development opportunities for organizational leaders

The most effective leadership development programs will be those that combine and integrate learning activities from one or more of the five categories of leadership development interventions (e.g., instructor-led, experiential activities, developmental relationships, assessments and feedback, and self-development). The [OPM Effective Learning Interventions for Developing ECQs](#) report addresses these five classes of leadership development interventions and learning activities specific to each. The report includes a Leadership Development Matrix that lists a range of leadership development activities that best develop each of the twenty-two (22) core leadership competencies and six (6) fundamental competencies within the Executive Core Qualifications (ECQs). Agencies should keep this in mind when designing their programs.

### 5. Provide supplemental development programs and services

Agencies should provide coaching services and sabbatical opportunities to supplement leadership development efforts, particularly for new Senior Executive Service (SES) law enforcement professionals during their first year.

- **Coaching** is an experiential development process that facilitates change and growth in both individuals and groups. In Federal government, coaching is used to address professional or business-related challenges and can serve as an effective tool to

develop leadership skills to promote culture change and foster inclusive workplaces. Through structured dialogue, coaches help deepen an employee's insights and translate those insights into actions. Coaches apply specific techniques and skills, approaches, and methodologies that enable the employee to develop their goals and design actions to achieve them. The employee drives the coaching agenda and is ultimately responsible for the outcome of the coaching engagement.

- **Sabbatical opportunities** are an example of professional development that can broaden professional skills and provide an opportunity for personal growth. Sabbatical activities can include teaching, study (independent or structured), research, or some combination of these at a college or university; non-institutional study or research (independent or guided); periods of relevant and developmental work experience in the private sector or with nonprofit organizations or state, Tribal, local, or territorial governments. Agencies may grant a career SES appointee absence from duty, without charge to pay or leave, to engage in study or uncompensated work experience.

## 6. Integrate the use of 360-degree evaluations

Agencies are encouraged to provide employees multisource or [360-degree assessments](#) that evaluate interpersonal skills. Further, it is recommended that employees work with a coach to develop an individual development or learning plan to address identified gaps.

## 7. Develop and utilize individual development plans (IDPs) and executive development plans (EDPs)

IDPs and EDPs can be an effective tool to assist employees in career and personal development. Agencies are encouraged to have all employees create and follow an IDP or EDP. IDPs and EDPs help employees reach short- and long-term career goals, improve current job performance, and align training and development efforts with the agency's mission, goals, and objectives.

## 8. Develop pre-supervisory training programs to meet the needs of the organization and the aspirations of individual employees

Additionally, agencies can take a broader approach to supervisory training using OPM's Federal Supervisory and Managerial Frameworks and Guidance as they design supervisory training curriculum, complete competency needs assessment, develop training solutions, and ensure compliance with training requirements.

Agencies should consider the competencies listed in the [OPM Supervisory Guide](#) when developing their pre-supervisory leadership developmental programs. Furthermore, pre-supervisory leadership developmental programs should be based on the Executive Core Qualifications (ECQs). Agencies may identify specific competencies from the ECQs and OPM Supervisory Guide and apply them to all leadership development programs starting with pre-supervisory training extending through executive development.

#### **9. Provide all Federal LEOs annual anti-bias training**

OPM encourages agencies to provide all Federal LEOs anti-bias training for law enforcement officers of the nature described in and required by section 9 of EO 14074. Training should include education on implicit bias and should increase knowledge and skills on avoiding improper profiling based on the actual or perceived race, ethnicity, national origin, limited English proficiency, religion, sex (including sexual orientation and gender identity), or disability of individuals.

## **Assessment of Agency Practices Related to Performance Evaluation and Conduct**

### **Objective 4: To enhance the effectiveness of Federal LEOs, ensuring misconduct is quickly and appropriately addressed through the adoption of performance management best practices**

The EO directed the IWG to develop best practices for ensuring that performance evaluations and promotion decisions for Federal LEOs include an assessment of officers' adherence to agency policies. Additionally, it stresses that performance evaluations and promotion decisions for supervisors should also include an assessment of the supervisor's effectiveness in addressing misconduct by officers they supervise.

Strong performance management systems are critical to ensuring that misconduct is prevented, and when discovered, addressed immediately. Additionally, effective performance management systems help establish and improve performance in employees, leading to an increase in effectiveness. By focusing on the development of employees and the alignment of agency or organization goals with team and individual goals, supervisors and managers can create a work environment that enables both employees and the agency or organization to thrive.

[Chapter 43 of Title 5](#), United States Code, contains the requirements for Title 5 performance appraisals. OPM provides several performance management resources for agencies subject to chapter 43 to assist them with managing their appraisal systems and programs. For example, OPM's "[A Handbook for Measuring Employee Performance](#)," published in 2017, is a comprehensive tool that includes step-by-step guidance on developing employee performance plans that are aligned with and support organizational goals.

OPM received input from eight agencies on their performance management system, including any self-identified promising practices. All eight agencies that responded have OPM-approved performance management systems, meaning those systems comply with all statutory and regulatory requirements for performance management.

Finally, it is important to note that there is a difference between poor performance and misconduct that violates agency policies or law. While it is appropriate and recommended that a performance requirement for a supervisor should address the misconduct of an employee they supervise, any misconduct by an employee is



addressed under [5 U.S.C. Chapter 75](#), Adverse Actions. See OPM’s guidance on “Addressing and Resolving Poor Performance,” for more information on distinctions between poor performance and misconduct.

#### **OPM recommends Agencies take the following actions to achieve Objective 4.**

##### **1. Ensure performance management systems include mechanisms to prevent and identify misconduct**

For all Federal LEOs, the creation of the performance plan means setting performance expectations and goals for groups and individuals to channel their efforts toward achieving organizational objectives. Expectations regarding adherence to agency policies and/or effectively addressing misconduct should be clearly conveyed as requirements in the performance plan, as appropriate. OPM recommends ensuring that performance elements and standards are measurable, understandable, verifiable, equitable, and achievable, so that officers are in a better position to be held accountable by:

- Ensuring all Federal LEO performance plans contain a performance requirement that assesses adherence to agency policies.
- Ensuring all Federal LEO supervisors’ performance plans contain a performance requirement that assesses their effectiveness in addressing misconduct by officers they supervise.

As part of the annual performance management process, supervisors of both supervisory and non-supervisory employees should continually monitor their employees’ performance. Monitoring well means consistently measuring performance and providing ongoing feedback to employees on their progress toward reaching their goals. Part of Agency monitoring should include assessing a supervisor’s effectiveness in addressing misconduct by officers they supervise and providing feedback to that supervisor if their effectiveness is lacking or requires additional training. OPM recommends that agency monitoring procedures include:

- Assessing the employee’s effectiveness in addressing misconduct by officers under their supervision as soon as they are informed of the misconduct.
- For Senior Executive Service employees, the agency or component Performance Review Board should play an active role in reviewing, and providing feedback on, performance requirements at the beginning of the performance period to ensure

their senior leaders' accountability in serving the public trust and interest by fostering environments free of abuse and discriminatory practices.

## 2. Take concrete steps to prevent and identify Federal LEO misconduct

The best way for managers and supervisors to handle performance or conduct issues is to take action to avoid performance problems or conduct issues before they occur. If problems arise, addressing them clearly and promptly with appropriate consequences is important to maintaining a culture of accountability. Some practices that FLEAs should take are:

- **Communicate clear performance standards and expectations to employees.** If employees do not understand what is expected, it will be very hard, if not impossible, for them to meet those expectations. Providing clear expectations does not necessarily require a manager or supervisor to lay out precisely written, detailed instructions on every performance component but should provide expectations with enough clarity and specificity so that employees understand their responsibilities and can be held accountable for them. Generally, the question managers or supervisors should ask in drafting performance standards is, "Would a reasonable person understand what is expected?"
- **Provide regular and consistent feedback on performance.** Such feedback, both positive and corrective, whether given in regularly scheduled meetings or in unscheduled discussions, is crucial to ensuring that expectations are understood. Consistent feedback lessens the likelihood that an employee will be surprised if it becomes necessary to take formal steps to resolve unacceptable performance. Supervisors and managers should always look for opportunities to confirm their employees understand what is expected.
- **Reward and recognize good performance, informally and formally.** Recognizing good performance is simply another way to clarify and reinforce expectations. Recognizing good performance boosts morale and increases the likelihood that good performance will continue. Informal, or unscheduled feedback, where you tell an employee they've done a good job or provide a suggestion for improvement, can be helpful to provide information when it is fresh in everyone's mind and a good supplement to providing formal feedback as part of the performance management cycle.
- **Make full use of the probationary period for employees.** Performance problems often first show up during the initial period of Federal employment. This period is designed to provide an opportunity for managers and supervisors to address such

problems in an expedient manner. Furthermore, removing probationary employees based on conduct and performance issues during this trial period increases efficiency since employees do not yet have the full procedures and appeal rights granted to employees who have completed probationary periods.

- **Set the desired example by the manager's or supervisor's own conduct.** Employees often follow the lead of their managers and supervisors. Demonstrating leadership through clear communication, taking initiative, and being inclusive can set the tone for the workplace.
- **Maintain a good work atmosphere.** Creating inclusive work environments where the workforce is fully engaged can support organizational success and performance.

### 3. Maintain effective lines of communication with the Human Resources Office and Agency Legal Office

While managers and supervisors are ultimately responsible for addressing performance and conduct problems, they are not expected to be subject matter experts on application of the tools discussed above. The Human Resources Office and Agency Legal Office are available to advise, assist, and guide managers and supervisors through the available processes for addressing performance and conduct issues.

## **Personnel Vetting**

**Objective 5: To ensure FLEAs use effective vetting and employment screening, consistent with the First Amendment and all applicable laws, to avoid the hiring and retention of law enforcement officers who do not adhere to agency performance management and conduct expectations**

The EO directed the IWG to develop best practices for conducting background investigations and implementing properly validated selection procedures, including vetting mechanisms and ongoing employment screening, which, consistent with the First Amendment and all applicable laws, help avoid the hiring and retention of law enforcement officers who promote unlawful violence, white supremacy, or other bias against persons based on race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sex (including sexual orientation and gender identity), or disability. Federal agencies with a law enforcement focus reported following standard vetting rules and procedures.

OPM's Director, in their role as the Suitability and Credentialing Executive Agent, prescribes government-wide suitability, fitness, and credentialing standards. Through requirements and guidance, much of which is issued jointly with the Director of the Office of National Intelligence in their role as the Security Executive Agent, vetting processes are uniform, centralized, efficient, and effective. Below, an overview of how the vetting process applies to Federal employees, including Federal LEOs.

**OPM recommends Agencies take the following actions to achieve Objective 5.**

### **1. Conduct pre-employment screening**

Agencies may consider instituting a process to screen available application-related information (e.g., Optional Form 306 Declaration for Federal Employment, resume, results of pre-employment checks, etc.) ahead of setting an onboarding date and/or requesting the required background investigation. Doing so allows agencies to identify and address potential suitability issues earlier in the process, thus saving the expense of a background investigation and time associated with training individuals who may later be found unsuitable.

When conducting screening, agencies should consider the following practices:

- Agencies may perform suitability review as part of the hiring process consistent with regulations on the timing of collection of criminal or credit history

information which, without an exception or exemption, cannot be collected prior to a conditional offer of employment. Title 5 *CFR parts 330 and 731* provide requirements that agencies must follow with respect to inquiries into an applicant's adverse credit history. Agencies must have an OPM-approved exception based upon business need to collect credit history information prior to conditional job offer. Title 5 *CFR part 920* implements the Fair Chance to Compete for Jobs Act (Fair Chance Act) which places limitations on criminal history inquiries prior to conditional job offer. The Fair Chance Act prohibits agency personnel from requesting, in oral or written form, criminal history record information from an applicant prior to conditional offer unless there is an exception. The prohibition does not apply to Federal LEO positions meeting the definition in Title 18 *U.S. Code 115(c)*.

- Screening involves reviewing available application-related information, for potential suitability issues as addressed in the suitability factors and additional considerations found in Title 5 *CFR 731.202(b) & (c)*.
- Suitability determinations require consideration of how an individual's character and conduct may impact or effect the integrity and efficiency of the service, considering any nexus between conduct and the nature of the position.
- Suitability decisions are not based upon cutoffs or thresholds, and in most instances are made upon the "whole person."
- Agency HR and Personnel Security offices can benefit from sharing information collected/generated during the application/hiring process (i.e., resumes, job questionnaires, position descriptions, reference checks, etc.) as it can be relevant to vetting.
- Agencies may collect information directly from the individual as needed to resolve potential issues.
- For positions covered by Title 5 *CFR part 731*, agencies can refer or must notify OPM of any cases with evidence of material, intentional falsification, or other conduct that may warrant a government-wide debarment. Agencies may also pursue a suitability action against applicants, which may include imposing a debarment, in accordance with part 731 and supplemental guidance.
- In supplemental guidance for Title 5 *CFR part 731*, OPM provides a model suitability screening process that agencies may follow.

## **2. Conduct background investigations and continuous vetting**

By following vetting requirements established by Executive Orders, laws, regulations, and policies, agencies gain access to information from the individual's background that is relevant to assessing the characteristics of a person who can be trusted to protect people, property, information, and mission. OPM's suitability regulations at Title 5 *CFR part 731*, in part establish, subject to investigation, requirements for an individual's initial appointment as well as rules for conducting vetting on an ongoing basis once employed. The OPM Director, who has the role of the Suitability and Credentialing Executive Agent, in collaboration with the Director of National Intelligence, who has the role of the Security Executive Agent, issues personnel vetting-related policies that are based upon the degree of risk an individual occupying a position may present to the public trust and national security. OPM and the Office of the Director of National Intelligence also issue National Training Standards for Suitability and Security Adjudicators and Background Investigators to ensure standardization and consistency in personnel vetting.

There are several requirements that agencies must abide by, including:

- Agencies must follow requirements for position designation to ensure the appropriate level of background investigation is conducted.
- Agencies must screen the investigative questionnaire for completeness and accuracy and compare it to other relevant forms (i.e., OF 306, resume) to identify any discrepancies that need to be brought to the attention of the authorized investigative service provider.
- Following applicable requirements, agencies may elect to onboard individuals ahead of the background investigation being completed.
- Individuals must be investigated by authorized investigative service providers. When onboarded, agencies must enroll individuals into continuous vetting in accordance with established requirements. Continuous vetting allows agencies to receive near real-time data to assess whether an individual's conduct throughout the course of employment may present a risk to the national security or integrity or efficiency of the service. It includes specified checks conducted by authorized investigative service providers and information provided by complementary missions (e.g., Office of Inspector General, Employee Relations, Internal Affairs, etc.).



- Information of the nature described in section 5 of EO 14074 to be centralized in the National Law Enforcement Accountability Database established by the Attorney General could be relevant to the vetting process. OPM, in consultation with the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, will prepare requirements and guidance for agencies for incorporating a check of this data source as part of personnel vetting.

### **3. Adjudicate background investigations and continuous vetting**

Depending on the position, agencies must make one or more types of adjudicative determinations. Positions may require a suitability or fitness determination, which is a decision on how an individual's character or conduct may impact the integrity and efficiency of the service. If a position is designated as national security sensitive, it will require a determination of the individual's eligibility to hold the position and/or access classified information, consistent with the interest of national security. Additionally, a decision may be needed on eligibility to be granted a personal identity verification (PIV) credential for access to government facilities and information technology systems. PIV credentialing determinations consider the protection of the Government's physical assets, information systems including privileged, proprietary, financial, or medical, and the privacy of individuals whose data the Government holds in its systems. With requirements for ongoing vetting of employees, as applicable, agencies can have access to new information from an individual's background and assess it for impact on continuing trustworthiness.

When agencies find an individual unsuitable or unfit or ineligible for a PIV credential or to hold a sensitive position, they can make a determination on employment or continuing employment, in accordance with applicable adjudicative criteria and policy. For positions covered by Title 5 *CFR part 731*, agencies also have the option of pursuing suitability actions, which includes imposing debarments from certain positions for up to three years.

In accordance with their suitability delegation from OPM, agencies abide by the following:

- Ensure that adjudicators are properly trained in accordance with the National Training Standards for Suitability Adjudicators.
- Apply reciprocity, in accordance with established requirements, to improve mobility and avoid unnecessary expenditure of government resources.

- Report adjudicative determinations into the governmentwide reciprocity system, which not only promotes reciprocity but also allows other agencies to know if an agency may be in possession of relevant information.
- Refer cases to OPM for adjudication when the issues involved indicate a government-wide debarment may be warranted. These matters will include material, intentional falsification or deception or fraud in examination or appointment or other egregious conduct. For cases that involve issues warranting a government-wide debarment, OPM may assume jurisdiction to take a suitability action including imposing a debarment from holding covered positions across the Executive Branch.

## Appendix A: Data on Law Enforcement Agencies

The agencies participating in the IWG employ 98% of Federal LEOs. The breakdown of the number of LEOs employed in FLEAs is below:

**Table 1: Governmentwide Federal LEOs as of December 2022**

Agency	Totals	Percentage
Government-wide Total	144,754	100%
IWG Agencies Total	141,762	98%
AF-Department of the Air Force	3,238	2.2%
AG-Department of Agriculture	1,123	0.8%
AR-Department of the Army	2,678	1.9%
CM-Department of Commerce	551	0.4%
DD-Department of Defense	3,501	2.4%
DJ-Department of Justice	28,110	19.4%
ED-Department of Education	104	0.1%
HE-Department of Health and Human Services	898	0.6%
HS-Department of Homeland Security	86,347	59.7%
IN-Department of the Interior	2,056	1.4%
NV-Department of the Navy	4,033	2.8%
TD-Department of Transportation	799	0.6%
TR-Department of Treasury	3,351	2.3%
VA-Department of Veterans Affairs	4,866	3.4%

Federal LEOs work in jobs that range from GS-03 to GS-15 and Senior Executive Service (SES), with positions at GS-13 and higher typically occupied by the management ranks. Here is a snapshot of the grade levels of Federal LEO positions across government.

**Table 2: Grade/Rank and Supervisory Status of Federal LEOs as of December 2022**

Grade/Rank	Non-Supervisory	Supervisory	Totals
03	1	0	1
04	26	0	26
05	1,065	0	1,065
06	1,847	1	1,848
07	7,233	17	7,250
08	1,626	300	1,926
09	8,040	484	8,524
10	2,146	162	2,308
11	8,633	306	8,939
12	44,760	483	45,243
13	30,226	9,057	39,283
14	2,944	9,223	12,167
15	178	3,089	3,267
Other	8,876	3,450	12,326
SES	0	581	581
<b>Total</b>	<b>117,605</b>	<b>27,149</b>	<b>144,754</b>

Currently, 47,583 Federal LEOs (34%) are eligible to retire in the next five years. The number of Federal LEOs employed by the Federal government has increased by 2% over the past five years. The 10 agencies that have hired the most Federal LEOs over the past five years are the following:

**Table 3: Federal LEO New Hires by Fiscal Year**

Agency	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	Total
<b>Government-wide Total</b>	<b>7,808</b>	<b>9,713</b>	<b>9,034</b>	<b>7,869</b>	<b>8,525</b>	<b>42,949</b>
HS-Department of Homeland Security	3,871	5,150	4,547	3,206	4,085	20,859
DJ-Department of Justice	1,171	1,318	1,413	1,491	1,538	6,931
AF-Department of the Air Force	786	844	860	1,084	647	4,221
VA-Department of Veterans Affairs	493	658	658	494	457	2,760
NV-Department of the Navy	591	685	526	450	364	2,616
AR-Department of the Army	240	266	235	260	300	1,301
DD-Department of Defense	147	171	196	202	366	1,082
TR-Department of Treasury	64	120	190	219	206	799
IN-Department of the Interior	50	94	101	89	145	479
OM-Office of Personnel Management	206	82	3	1	3	295

## **Appendix B: Methodology and External Stakeholder Engagement**

### **Introduction**

The creation of this action plan was informed by extensive stakeholder engagement to ensure a broad range of perspectives from FLEAs and the communities they serve. OPM engaged 35 external stakeholder organizations in 12 different focus group sessions. External stakeholder organizations included civil rights and civil liberties groups, good government groups, local and state law enforcement leaders, policing organizations, and unions to consider feedback and opportunities to make policing safer and more effective by strengthening trust between law enforcement officers and the communities they serve, and to ensure the criminal justice system protects and serves all people equally.

### **Methodology**

OPM convened the IWG, recruiting 13 FLEA participants. The agencies represented in the IWG are as follows:

- Department of Agriculture
- Department of Commerce
- Department of Defense
- Department of Education
- Department of Health and Human Services
- Department of Homeland Security
- Department of the Interior
- Department of Justice
- Department of Transportation
- Department of the Treasury
- General Services Administration
- Office of Personnel Management
- Department of Veterans Affairs

OPM tasked each IWG agency with assessing existing policies and identifying best practices used by their agency to outline the steps needed to achieve the identified goals of the EO. The IWG met 10 times from October 2022 through May 2023.

- At the initial IWG meeting, OPM convened agency staff to preview the EO requirements and expectations of the IWG.
- In November, OPM convened a Principals Meeting led by the OPM Director. At the Principals Meeting, agency heads and their representatives discussed promising practices related to recruiting, hiring, promotion, and retention.
- Also in November, OPM previewed the requirement of the data call for IWG staff existing policies and promising practices.
- The IWG then met monthly until May 2023.

To capture data on the topics the IWG was charged with addressing, OPM also created an electronic **survey** requesting information regarding the agency's: (1) recruiting and hiring practices; (2) promotion and retention processes; (3) assessment of Federal LEOs' adherence to agency policies during performance evaluations and promotion decisions; and (4) background investigations and implementation of properly validated selection procedures.

- In December, OPM issued the data call for existing policies and promising practices using an electronic survey tool. The survey link was delivered to an agency-designated representative. Agency representatives were tasked with coordinating their agency's response. Each individual agency response was required to incorporate information from each of their components into a single survey submission that was due to OPM on January 30, 2023. There was robust participation in the survey by IWG agencies.
- Beginning in January and continuing through May, OPM met regularly with the IWG and subject matter experts to discuss promising practices agencies submitted in the agency surveys and prioritize the issues to address in the action plan.

We also incorporated extensive **external stakeholder feedback**, including from 35 stakeholder organizations from law enforcement civil rights and civil liberties groups, good government organizations, local and state leaders, and unions on opportunities to make policing safer and more effective by strengthening trust between law



enforcement officers and the communities they serve, and to advance a criminal justice system that protects and serves all people equally.

- Beginning in February, OPM held stakeholder focus group sessions with several organizations. The stakeholders met with OPM in three separate groups between February and May.
- The objective of stakeholder focus groups was to consult with stakeholders as the IWG assessed existing policies and identified promising practices to determine the steps needed to achieve the identified goals of strengthening Federal law enforcement recruiting, hiring, promotion, and retention practices, performance evaluation, and vetting, with particular attention to promoting an inclusive, diverse, and expert law enforcement workforce. During the sessions, OPM facilitators took extensive notes to record stakeholder feedback and recommended actions.
- Following the stakeholder focus group sessions, OPM socialized the stakeholder feedback with the IWG to incorporate stakeholder recommendations into the action plan where appropriate.

## **Stakeholder Feedback and Recommendations**

This appendix provides a high-level summary of feedback and recommended actions for agencies collected during focus group sessions held between February and May 2023. Anecdotal data collected during these sessions include recommended actions for improving safer policing and effectiveness by strengthening trust between law enforcement officers and the communities they serve and ensuring the criminal justice system is safer and more effective, so it protects and serves all people equally. The recommended actions provided below summarize sentiments participants collectively supported and are not attributable to any one organization.

### **Stakeholder Recommendations for Objective 1: Recruitment and Hiring**

- Increase targeted recruiting for early career talent from education programs that attract public service-minded individuals who are not traditionally recruited for Federal LEO roles, such as education, nursing, psychology, epidemiology, and social work.
- Promote equitable hiring, retention, and promotion of women and people from historically underrepresented communities through strategies including:

- Ensuring that women, people of color, the LGBTQI+ community, and people with disabilities, etc., are represented in recruiting materials as part of an overall recruiting strategy that reflects the broad demographics of the community.
- Ensuring that in hiring, applicant assessment processes incorporate qualities such as embracing diversity by adopting a standardized assessment and decision-making process to ensure the same information is collected on each individual and is used in a consistent manner in employment decisions.
- Analyze demographic data at every phase of the employment process. OPM has referenced this feedback in the recruiting section of the action plan.

### **Stakeholder Recommendations for Objective 2: Promotion and Retention**

- Evaluate the necessity of degree requirements for high-ranking positions and consider whether professional training and other experience may provide candidates with the skills and abilities to perform the job.
- Introduce financial literacy into post-selection training.
  - Focus group participants shared concerns that qualified applicants from low-income and rural backgrounds had the potential of being systemically disqualified during suitability screening because of debt.
  - Stakeholders suggested the use of financial literacy training in lieu of the use of credit screening during post-selection suitability review.
- Use workplace flexibilities to accommodate women and working parents. Below is a list of issues to be addressed and suggestions for flexibilities needed as identified during focus group sessions:
  - Relocation and promotional opportunities are an issue for women and families in the workforce. Relocating to several assignments is seen as a requirement for promotional opportunities and this requirement may have negative impacts on working parents, potentially leading to career and financial limitation when relocation is not possible.
  - Provide accommodations for lactating persons. The recommendations to support people who lactate are:
    - ◇ Provide flexible schedules to accommodate for lactation and allow adequate time for officers to get to their lactation area and back to their duties.

- ◇ Train supervisors and teams on how to support lactating officers' needs.
- ◇ Provide accessible and proximate lactation stations furnished with a power source, clean water source, comfortable seating, and refrigeration.
- Allow officers to work overtime immediately after leaving the academy. Experts have shared that many officers struggle financially in the beginning of an LEO career, and this change would address financial burdens new officers experience.

### **Stakeholder Recommendations for Objective 3: Mentorship and Leadership Development**

- Hire Chief Learning Officers (CLO) and adequately resource a CLO Office to:
  - Develop and maintain training programs.
  - Develop and utilize IDPs and EDPs.
  - Create, implement, and monitor mentor programs for all employees.
- Include plans to support training in strategic planning and agency budget process to ensure:
  - Resources to fill in for officers sent to training, so positions do not remain vacant while officers are away.
  - Managers have access to required trainings, as well as trainings that improve their skill set and ability to manage, in order to improve accountability. Stakeholders spoke extensively about the challenges supervising officers have in accessing training, managing performance and conduct, and creating an inclusive work environment. See below a list of recommended training areas:
    - ◇ Developing effective communication and interpersonal skills.
    - ◇ Managing conflict, conduct, and performance.
    - ◇ Engaging and serving members of the community with disabilities.
    - ◇ Supporting and accommodating qualified individuals with disabilities that have been selected to serve as a Federal LEO.
    - ◇ Providing anti-bias training for law enforcement officers on implicit bias and avoiding improper profiling based on the actual or perceived race, ethnicity,

national origin, limited English proficiency, religion, sex (including sexual orientation and gender identity), or disability of individuals.

### **Stakeholder Recommendations for Objective 4: Performance Evaluations and Employee Conduct**

- Employees should consistently complete required training at regular intervals as well as trainings that support:
  - Expanding professional development opportunities.
  - Engaging and serving individuals with disabilities.
  - De-escalating crises, including mental health crises.
  - Interacting with populations such as LGBTQI+ individuals, persons experiencing homelessness, and people from historically marginalized communities.
  - Participating in anti-bias training for law enforcement officers on implicit bias and avoiding improper profiling based on the actual or perceived race, ethnicity, national origin, limited English proficiency, religion, sex (including sexual orientation and gender identity), or disability of individuals.
- Train supervisors on equitable, inclusive, and responsive communication skills to facilitate positive relationships with staff and strengthen trust within the Federal LEO community and communities Federal LEOs serve who may not traditionally feel comfortable expressing their needs to individuals who do not share the same identity or experience.
- Train supervising officers in the field about culturally competent community engagement. Supervising officers can then train their teams.
- Update evaluation process and implement a practice of documenting how officers are improving in their positions.

### **Stakeholder Recommendations for Objective 5: Personnel Vetting**

- Consistently implement performance management process to handle performance or conduct issues and take appropriate action to avoid performance problems or conduct issues before they occur.
- Use continuous vetting measures to become aware of new or emerging issues that impact a department's ability to maintain and establish a trusting relationship with the communities the officers serve. Continuous vetting promotes timely detection

of behaviors of concern and potential threats and vulnerabilities, which may include identification of anti-government sentiment in law enforcement including white supremacist views or sympathies.

- Improve the disciplinary review process to ensure supervisors adhere to agency policies and that performance evaluations and promotion decisions for supervisors include an assessment of the supervisor's effectiveness in addressing misconduct.

## **Appendix C: Additional Considerations for Recruiting and Retention**

### **Recruiting and Retention**

In addition to the core policies and best practices outlined in the body of this action plan, this appendix includes additional considerations for FLEAs. It includes recommended evaluation criteria that agencies can use to assess their efforts to recruit and retain Federal LEOs, including the use of compensation flexibilities (Objectives 1 and 2).

### **Evaluation Criteria**

This appendix includes recommended evaluation criteria that agencies can use to assess their efforts to recruit and retain Federal LEOs, including the use of outreach and recruitment efforts and compensation flexibilities (Objectives 1 and 2).

Recruiting strategies are only as good as the results achieved by agencies in recruiting, onboarding, developing, and retaining candidates. Agencies may consider the following steps to evaluate the effectiveness of their recruiting strategies:

- Use of data analytics to assess the impact of social media and outreach to potential applicants in the various locations across the country or local areas where the jobs exist. Data analytics can also be used to assess the quality of talent sources to ensure they are the most fruitful (e.g., colleges with specific law enforcement majors, diversity in campus recruiting, community organizations, and other sources of talent).
- Use of an evaluation survey, i.e., a simple form with multiple questions requesting audience feedback after an actual event to assess whether the intended outcomes were achieved or if messaging is resonating with the target audience.
- Use of customer surveys that meet the Paperwork Reduction Act requirements. Formal or informal surveys can be used at any time to evaluate an approach or recruiting strategy.
- Use of management surveys, such as the Chief Human Capital Officer Manager Satisfaction Survey. Formal or informal survey results can offer insights about the effectiveness of your collaboration with hiring officials on recruiting and hiring matters.

- Conduct a systematic review and analysis of the results of recruiting activities by source:
  - In-person job/virtual job/career fairs
  - Information sessions (in-person vs. virtual)
  - Social media (which ones work best?)
  - Networking and other outreach events
  - Print advertising and media
  - Agency career website
  - Word-of-mouth
- Use of recruiting metrics can provide valuable measures of what works and what can be improved. Examples include:
  - Employee attrition and turnover
  - Interview-to-offer timeline
  - Interview-to-hire timeline
  - Time-to-hire
  - Cost-per-hire
  - Manager satisfaction with applicants
  - Percent of hiring targets met
  - Offer acceptance rates

With respect to compensation flexibilities, it is important for agencies to assess if their use of compensation flexibilities are successfully in recruiting and retaining talent.

The goals of agency pay flexibility assessments may include determining whether:

- The pay flexibility is helping to address the recruiting or retention difficulties of concern by analyzing relevant workforce data to determine whether the staffing situation has improved;
- The pay flexibility is the correct tool to address the problem at hand or whether a different pay or human resources option would be more appropriate by analyzing the cause of staffing difficulties (e.g., recruitment and retention incentives and



special rates may be an appropriate tool to use when the recruitment and retention problems are due to non-competitive Federal pay rates);

- The cost of using the flexibility can be supported in future budget and funding requests based on an analysis of strategic workforce needs and budget priorities; and
- The use of the flexibility continues to meet payment criteria and other legal requirements by comparing approval documents and payment records to agency policies and relevant laws and regulations.

Reported examples of how agencies assess their use of pay flexibilities include:

- Tracking monthly vacancy, recruiting, hiring, retention, turnover rates, and retention incentive usage by organization and occupation and providing this information to leadership and hiring managers for workforce decision-making.
- Reviewing recruitment, relocation, and retention incentive payment approval authorizations annually to determine if payments are still warranted and to assess the effectiveness of the programs in meeting strategic workforce goals and objectives.
- Requiring recruiting, relocation, and retention incentives be reviewed and approved by a human resource official for consistency with law, regulations, and agency policies before payment.
- Periodically reviewing agency recruiting, relocation, and retention incentive policies and plans for consistency with laws, regulations, and policy guidance.

## **Additional Recommended Actions Agencies Can Take for Recruiting and Hiring in Support of the Recruiting of Federal LEOs**

OPM is leading several activities with agencies to implement the Biden-Harris Administration's Federal workforce agenda, as well as additional recommendations that were captured during stakeholder focus sessions that will also help improve recruiting and hiring of Federal LEOs. These recommendations are included here for consideration by FLEAs:

- Eliminate unnecessary degree requirements for Federal LEO positions. OPM is leading the Federal government's skills-based hiring effort. Most Federal jobs do not have a positive education requirement, but agencies still rely on degree requirements as a proxy for skills. Agencies should partner with human resources

experts to develop an appropriate assessment method to evaluate candidates—such as competency-based assessments—based on the actual skills they possess, rather than focusing on where they might have obtained those skills.

- Leverage the use of shared certificates that provide an opportunity for agencies with expertise in hiring for certain occupations, like law enforcement positions, to lead a hiring effort, leverage resources, and share the resulting certificate of highly qualified candidates across agencies. This process can be particularly effective when used with custom high-quality assessments informed by subject matter experts to ensure the identification of the right skills required to be successful in the position. By leveraging the size and scope of the Federal government to maximize applicant placement, this process provides applicants with more employment options and reduces the need for them to apply to multiple job announcements while still receiving consideration for multiple positions, therefore making it easier to find a job that matches their skills and interests. Agencies can combine recruiting resources and make multiple selections from a single hiring action, reducing time to hire and increasing efficiency in the hiring process. When support is needed, agencies can engage the OPM Hiring Experience (HX) Team as a resource to help them coordinate with other agencies and their assigned talent teams in order to facilitate the need for and development of pooled hiring actions as well as shared certificates across agencies.
- Partner with the Department of Labor in the development and use of registered apprenticeship programs.
  - Registered apprenticeship programs provide agencies a way to bring potential Federal LEO candidates on board and provide a combination of classroom and on-the-job training to develop them.
  - Apprentices can be evaluated throughout their program for possible hiring as a Federal LEO upon completion.
- Make strategic use of early career tools such as:
  - Pathways, the Post-Secondary Student and College Graduate hiring authorities to establish entry-level programs like the Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) to foster interest at the high school level and beyond.
  - Online tools to reach out to minority-serving institutions to inform and recruit students for law enforcement occupations.
  - Student volunteer programs to broaden student exposure to and interest in public-service law enforcement careers.

- Strategic use of multiple assessments or hurdles in the hiring process to effectively evaluate law enforcement applicants. Agencies should use competency-based assessments to evaluate Federal LEO candidates' skills at multiple phases of the hiring process to identify the best qualified candidates.
- Ensure selection panels are diverse and hiring officials complete trainings that promote adherence to merit system principles.
- Work with Department of Defense transition assistance placement centers to recruit potential law enforcement applicants.
- Identify and attend professional and/or diversity conferences that focus on job seekers that meet the specific skill sets and reach underrepresented communities.
- Offer financial literacy training or education during the recruiting and interest phase.
- Use recruiting incentives for new employees with foreign language skills needed in difficult-to-fill positions.
- Consider the broad range of available hiring authorities to bring talent onboard, including, among others:
  - [hiring authorities for veterans](#)
  - [military spouses](#)
  - [individuals with certain disabilities \(e.g., Schedule A\)](#)
  - Interns, recent graduates, [and other student programs](#)
  - [term and temporary appointments](#), and
  - the authority to reinstate former Federal LEOs.
- **Use Applicant Flow Data (AFD) to assess recruiting and selection practices:** AFD includes the demographic information applicants voluntarily provide for Federal job opportunities through the USAJOBS.gov website, combined with data on applicants' progress through the hiring process. Agencies should include a review of AFD for completed and audited hiring actions, de-identified and aggregated at the announcement level, for previous hiring actions with the hiring manager as part of the recruiting strategy and announcement/assessment development phase for each hiring action. A review of prior hiring actions may include AFD for similar positions in the organization (e.g., similar series or grade) if there is insufficient data from the hiring manager's organizational unit.



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