



## North Carolina Association of Chiefs of Police

Law enforcement excellence for tomorrow . . . today.

### **North Carolina Law Enforcement - Performance & Wellness Funding Grant Administered by the North Carolina Chiefs of Police Association**

#### **Requirements for Applicants**

Requirements for agencies who accept the grant:

1. Adopt Early Intervention software solution
2. Adopt software solution to track and analyze performance and wellness data
3. Establish and train a Peer Support Team
4. Establish a Chaplain program
5. Establish a *Health, Wellness & Safety* program and policy
6. Establish a *Performance Development* program and policy

#### **Best Practices & Recommendations for Applicants**

##### **Prioritize Wellness**

The American Journal of Criminal Justice notes that policing is one of the most mentally taxing occupations contending with long and often rotating shifts, threats of violence, increased need for hypervigilance, and a lack of public support creating chronic stress. As a result, law enforcement officers suffer from mental health problems at a rate greater than the general population.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, officers are at a higher risk for cardiovascular disease compared to other occupations, and suffer from a greater risk of on-duty cardiovascular death events.<sup>5</sup>

In its 2018 publication *Practices in Modern Policing: Officer Safety and Wellness*<sup>3</sup>, the International Association of Chiefs of Police identifies seven key considerations related to officer wellness:

1. Take a holistic approach to health, wellness and safety
2. Build top-down support to promote and model healthy behaviors.
3. Involve officers in program development and execution.
4. Take a proactive instead of reactive approach to wellness and safety.
5. Increase access to health services.
6. Adopt confidentiality as a guiding principle.

## 7. Embrace a performance mindset.

Applicants for this grant should demonstrate a clear goal related to increasing the employee wellness throughout their organization, and identify specific methods with which to measure and track improvement.

### **Performance Development**

The success of a Law Enforcement agency depends on the performance of its people. Emergency services personnel operate under a paramilitary organization system. This system provides sound structure for individual success. Employees begin learning basic skills, gain on-the-job experience, and then begin their career ladder. This process is essential to ensure each level of the organizational structure is filled with competent personnel. To succeed, employees must receive feedback through the process. Furthermore, they must receive and understand methods to improve performance and development. A system that works for the organization and the individuals must be implemented. Ultimately, individual employees' success is essential for organizational success.

Public and private sectors have wrestled with employee performance since the onset of the concept. It is likely, veterans of both sectors have participated in many different systems. Recent research has illustrated that feedback and coaching are the most effective methods to conduct performance evaluations. Many organizations have worked to change the institution all together. Choosing, to build on processes such as coaching, immediate feedback, and 360 surveys or evaluations. As history shows, the private sector is drastically ahead of the public sector organizations and began making these changes.

Applicants for this grant should demonstrate a clear goal to improve performance development through coaching, immediate feedback, and 360 feedback.

### **Early Intervention / Early Warning Systems**

In 1981, the US Commission on Civil Rights recommended that all police departments create an early warning system to identify problem officers, those “who are frequently the subject of complaints or who demonstrate identifiable patterns of inappropriate behavior”<sup>7</sup>.

Early Intervention, also referred to as Early Warning systems, track signs of officer misconduct to identify, remediate, and prevent incidents of misconduct and use of excessive force through a confidential process. The North Carolina Department of Justice published a document entitled Early Warning Systems Guide to assist in complying with SL 2021-138<sup>7</sup>, which noted that Early Intervention / Early Warning Systems should, at a minimum, require information about instances of the discharge of a firearm, instances of use of force, vehicle collisions, and citizen complaints. To formalize these steps to a formal system, an agency may decide to determine a database tool to develop a system, and determine what their EI/EWS will monitor

beyond statutory requirements. (eg. Identify officers who receive two or more citizen complaints of any kind in a single month.)

Organizations applying for this grant whose intent is to expand upon or introduce a formal EWS system must identify specific steps to that end, including specifying the types of database tools, software vendors, and other agencies or organizations involved.

### **Publish Core Values**

The process of identifying the core values of a police department is often viewed as being the ‘softer’ side of law enforcement that has no real affiliation with ‘real police work.’ However, the statement of core values is actually the bedrock of the department’s operations. Serving as its constitution, the core values clarify why the department exists, what it represents, and how it conducts itself. While there are many similarities between law enforcement agencies, there are distinct differences between each community’s expectations and how its department provides services.

### **Establish tools for publishing training opportunities**

Today’s employees view training as a highly regarded benefit and an issue of career development. Departments should bombard their officers with training opportunities. Quality training should be designed to ensure officers perform to established competency levels and build their confidence. Officers who receive increased levels of training feel valued and are more likely to stay.

### **Utilize software solution to enable feedback**

“Feedback is the breakfast of champions.” For feedback to be meaningful, it must be timely, specific, behavioral, and job-related. A basketball or football coach does not wait until the end of the year to correct a player’s performance. He or she pulls the player to the sideline, explains what he or she needs to improve, and keeps the guidance focused on the game. The same is true for the best police leaders. By immediately reinforcing good behavior and addressing poor performance before it becomes a problem, supervisors make sure their officers are working at peak performance, building their self-confidence, and anchoring them to the department.

### **Establish Awards & Commendations generation/tracking program**

Recognition – Feeling valued is a basic human need and good behavior which is recognized is more likely to be repeated. Leaders must seek out opportunities to recognize good behavior through regular meetings, passing information on to senior leadership, and informal gatherings. Supervisors frequently use letters of commendation, achievement, recognition, and thank you notes.

### **Career Assessment and Counseling**

In an effort to determine the specific training and work experiences officers need to improve their individual performance and anchor them to an agency, they should submit to a combination of assessment tools. There are a number of processes available for organizations to complete these assessments, including paper and pencil assessments, 360o evaluations, assessment centers, and mentoring programs. Using information gathered from these development programs and diagnostic exams, leaders should work with the individual to compose a personalized development plan. This plan may include work experiences, training, formal education, and the need to prepare them for short and long term career objectives. This plan should include benchmarks for evaluating progress along with responsibility assignments for the officer and the department.

### **Committee/Task Forces**

Appointing individuals to work on committees and task forces demonstrates the department respects their opinions and abilities. Equally as valuable is that this will provide officers with the opportunity to work with others, learn new networking skills, and develop new techniques to perform their jobs.

Applicants should describe how they manage, promote and track special teams and/or committee membership, publish opportunities and consider applicants.

## Guidelines

<sup>1</sup> International Association of Chiefs of Police. (2014). The President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing.

<sup>2</sup> Stogner, J., Miller, B. L., & McLean, K. (2020). Police Stress, Mental Health, and Resiliency during the COVID-19 Pandemic. *American journal of criminal justice : AJCJ*, 1-13. Advance online publication.

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s12103-020-09548-y>

<sup>3</sup> International Association of Chiefs of Police. (2018). Practices in Modern Policing: Officer Safety and Wellness.

<sup>5</sup> Kales, S. N., Tsismenakis, A. J., Zhang, C., & Soteriades, E. S. (2009). Blood pressure in firefighters, police officers, and other emergency responders. *American journal of hypertension*, 22(1), 11-20.

<sup>6</sup> North Carolina Department of Justice. (2021). *Early Warning Systems Guidance*. <https://ncdoj.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Early-Warning-Systems-Guidance.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> United States Commission on Civil Rights. (1981). *Who is Guarding the Guardians?*

<sup>8</sup> International Association of Chiefs of Police. (2018). Recruitment, Retention, and Turnover in Law Enforcement.