



APRIL 2024 | SPECIAL "RECRUITMENT" EDITION

THE POST DISPATCH

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LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

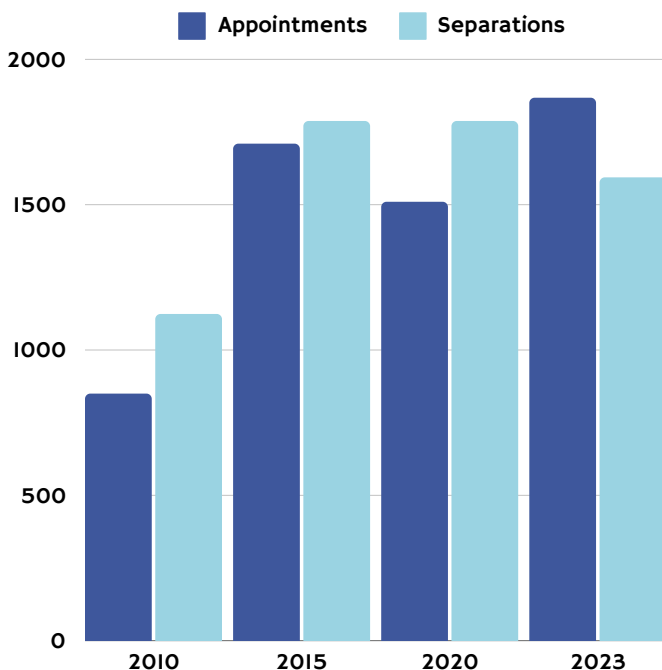
Tackling Hiring and Retention Challenges

Over the past several years, there has been a lot of discussion around recruitment and retention within law enforcement. That discussion drove me to dive into the data that POST has on hiring to better understand the empirical facts and identify any trends. I've created a table that looks at appointment and separation statistics from 2010 through 2023, which as a bit of a data nerd, I have found fascinating! The most important data set was comparing the total number of appointments versus the total number of separations over these 13 years. During this period, we have **separated 659 certified peace officers more than we hired, a 3% deficit**. According to the

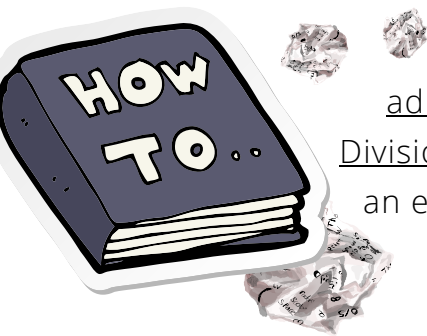


US Census Bureau, **over this same period, the population of Colorado grew by 17%.**

In 2020, I was fortunate to have been appointed to the Recruitment and Training Working Group for the Presidential Commission on Law Enforcement and the Administration of Justice. This working group consisted of rock stars within the law enforcement profession from across the nation, and I had to wonder how I had become a member of it. The months of work, study and discussion to create a set of recommendations for the Commission to evaluate allowed me to learn a tremendous amount about the challenges of modern-day recruitment, and how to (potentially) overcome them. The bottom line is that traditional methods just don't work as well in the current environment.



The “high-speed, low drag” SWAT response and thrilling pursuit videos, commonly used to entice potential applicants when I first joined law enforcement, **don’t resonate with today’s service-focused recruits!**



The SMART Grant administered by the state Division of Criminal Justice is an excellent opportunity to experiment with new recruitment methods.

By trying new methods, we may find more effective ways to recruit. While job fairs are nothing original, Lakewood PD, for example, developed a different approach to them. They started to collaborate with numerous law enforcement agencies to host the events in a location known for heavy foot traffic, like a mall. Simply genius! Shoppers, who may have never seen themselves serving in law enforcement, suddenly had the opportunity to engage with agencies directly and assess what they have to offer.

Direct marketing to those we would like to recruit into law enforcement also works.

Some agencies have placed billboards featuring peace offers that actually live or work in that neighborhood in an effort to create connection with the community. This positively impacts recruiting, because people who previously could not see themselves in that role, start considering it. Chattanooga, Tennessee, sent postcards to the Black community that included messaging about the challenging nature of police work and the meaningful career opportunities available. They saw a

four-fold increase in Black applicants. The SMART Grant allows agencies to try recruiting methods they may not have looked at due to cost or the risk of losing other recruits they could have gotten through more traditional methods. The SMART Grant enables both to happen simultaneously.

While recruitment can be a pressing matter for many of our agencies, we also have to realize it is a long-term goal. Intentionally placing our peace officers in roles where they can create positive interactions with community members, particularly our youth, can lay the foundation for future recruitment work. Traditional programs, such as Explorers or Youth Police Academies, are important, but we should also allow our peace officers opportunities to act as youth sport coaches or Scout leaders. These types of long-term mentorships create strong interpersonal bonds and build positive relations with the communities we serve on a deeper level. At the end of the day, isn't that what our profession needs?

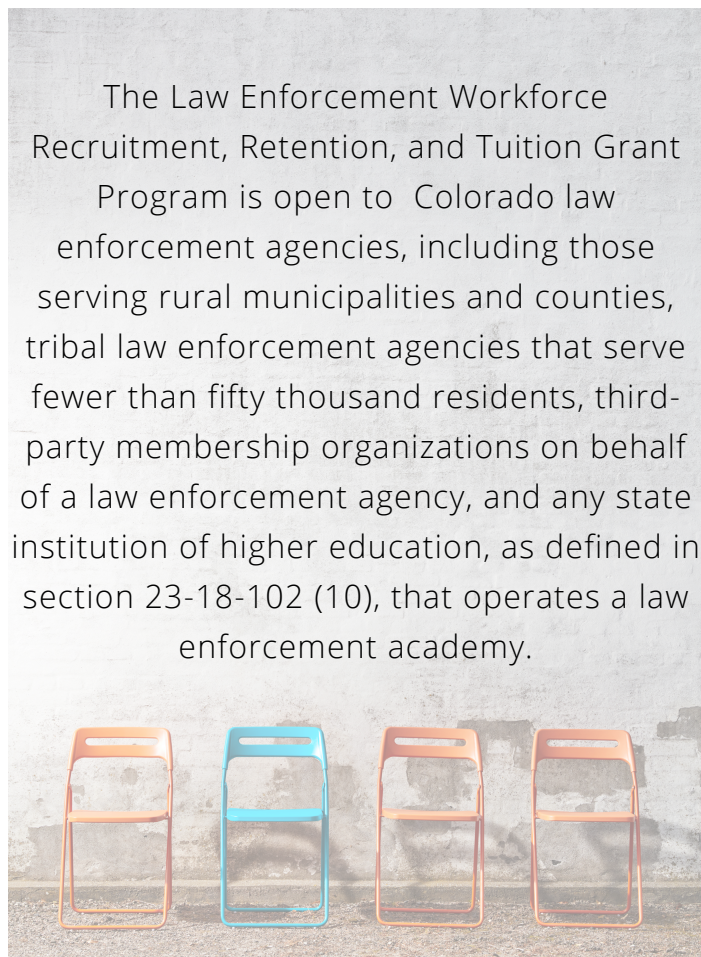
ATTORNEY GENERAL PHIL WEISER'S REMARKS

What Else Can We Do?

During and after the pandemic, law enforcement saw a number of senior officers leave the profession and **many agencies are down from their authorized levels — sometimes as much as 30%.** That's why we are facing a generational challenge in police recruitment and retention. To address this challenge, I fought hard for a **\$5 million investment**

from the state to develop strategies to **encourage more individuals to join law enforcement and to enable officers to stay in the profession.**

The Department of Criminal Justice program we fought for is now ready to issue a notice that grants will be available to advance recruitment and retention efforts. You can **find more information about the grant opportunities [HERE](#).** In short, any law enforcement agency is available to apply. But here's a more detailed description:



On the recruitment front, I have talked to a number of agencies — particularly in rural Colorado — that are developing “grow your own” programs. This can involve providing internships to high school seniors, hiring high school graduates to work in a sheriff's office, and sending that individual to the

academy. I also have talked to communities that can develop partnerships with established Law Enforcement Training Academies and integrate them with existing colleges or community college programs. If you are thinking of creative strategies to build a more robust pipeline into law enforcement, please feel free to run your ideas by our POST Director, Bo Bourgerie, who is passionate on this issue.

Law enforcement retention efforts are also critical. Many organizations have started to experiment, for example, with “stay” interviews and prioritize professional development to ensure that individuals don't feel that they have to leave their positions to advance in their careers. Such investments in providing valuable training — for example, in forensic investigations or training officers to be coaches or trainers in key competencies — can be a win multiple times over, keeping an officer with an agency and providing the agency with valuable skills. Again, if you are considering different options, you can run them by Bo at erik.bourgerie@coag.gov.

Finally, I want to acknowledge that the need to attract individuals to law enforcement will remain. A part of that work must be in developing and advancing the narrative that those in law enforcement are performing a critical public service and their motivation for service deserves the respect of the public. **We welcome your thoughts on how to continue this work, including updating and improving on the POST “My Why” initiative.** On this work, too, please reach out to Bo with your thoughts, suggestions, and ideas.

SMART Grant Program Explained

The State's Mission for Assistance in Recruiting and Training (SMART) Grant Program was established in 2022 as part of a public safety grant package aimed at making Colorado one of the safest states in the nation. SMART Grant Program provides law enforcement agencies funding to increase diverse representation of POST certified and non-certified law enforcement officers with the communities they serve and to support training for those additional law enforcement officers.

Since its inception, the **SMART Grant Program has awarded nearly \$4,170,578 to 13 Colorado law enforcement agencies** increasing its law enforcement workforce, which includes diversity and background inclusive of culture, language, gender, and additional groups lacking representation, and training supporting the roles.



Funding from the SMART Grant Program allowed the City of Grand Junction to implement a multi-layered approach to inclusivity and strengthen community bonds. **The grant contributed to the implementation of its first Latino Police Academy**, increasing recruitment within the Hispanic community, developing a partnership and cultivating collaborative engagement events with La Plaza Outreach.

In eastern Colorado, the Town of Hugo Marshals Office plans to expand and diversify the workforce with the addition of one POST Certified officer. Funding from the SMART grant program will fund the salary and health benefits, up to two years, for the addition of a new officer. The new role will require specific skills and background experience to better reflect and represent the Town of Hugo. Currently, veterans make up 21% of the town population but are underrepresented in the law enforcement workforce. The new role will help build relationships and close the gap between law enforcement and its military veteran community.

The SMART Program began accepting applications for its grants on March 25, 2024. Eligible entities include; county and municipal law enforcement agencies including those serving rural jurisdictions, tribal law enforcement agencies, and third-party membership organizations on behalf of a law enforcement agency.

To prepare potential applicants, the Division of Criminal Justice will provide an overview training of the program as well as hold periodic office hours where potential applicants can ask staff questions throughout the application period.

Applications are due April 23, 2024. Visit the [Division of Criminal Justice's website](#) for more details.



FOR NEWSLETTER INQUIRIES

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