



**The City of Ithaca and  
Tompkins County, New York**

# **Strategic Plan Recommendations Recruiting and Retaining Law Enforcement Officers**

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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## Introduction

The City of Ithaca and Tompkins County, New York, are currently facing several challenges in the recruitment and retention of law enforcement. Municipalities across the United States are currently experiencing difficulty attracting law enforcement personnel. According to a report by the Police Executive Research Forum, in 2021-2022, on average, law enforcement agencies only filled 93 percent of the positions available. At the same time, there was a significant increase in both the resignation rate (18 percent increase) and the retirement rate (45 percent increase) compared to the previous period.<sup>1</sup> National recruitment and retention obstacles stem from several factors: compensation, workplace culture, restricted career advancement opportunities, insufficient equipment, and policy. Additionally, division in public perception towards law enforcement exacerbates recruitment difficulties.

HCH Enterprises has prepared this strategic report for the City of Ithaca and Tompkins County to identify key areas with the potential for improvement. The proposed strategies are designed to enhance the appeal of the Police department to prospective recruits and bolster the retention of current staff. This report provides specific recommendations based on research, industry best practices, and information provided by community leaders and law enforcement officials. Recommendations focus on empowering the city and county law enforcement agencies to attract diverse and qualified recruits while retaining experienced personnel.

## Summary of Key Recommendations

**Streamline Hiring Process:** Recent years have brought widespread changes to hiring process expectations. By implementing targeted measures to make the hiring process more transparent, convenient, and communicative, the departments can improve their appeal to current law enforcement officers and those considering starting a career in the field. Several interviewees indicated that doubts about their ability to meet exam requirements was a significant deterrent. There is an opportunity to outline qualification requirements while providing ongoing support and guidance to facilitate applicants meeting requirements with more transparency.

**Enacting Recognition and Rewards Programs:** Employees are more engaged when recognized for their achievements. Developing and enacting a process to recognize and reward personnel for their excellent work increases workplace morale and productivity.

**Improve Professional Image:** Law enforcement officers indicated a negative perception of work conditions at the Ithaca Police Department (IPD) and Tompkins County Sheriff's Office (TCSO) within the law enforcement community. There have been successful

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<sup>1</sup> Survey on Workforce Trends. (2021, June 11). Police Executive Research Forum. Retrieved from <https://www.policeforum.org/workforcesurveyjune2021>.



initiatives to improve work culture, such as the 2017 policy overhaul, but negative perceptions persist. There are signs of improved department standing, including recent lateral transfers to the IPD after an extended period without success. However, shortcomings still exist- most prominently understaffing leading to stressful and demanding working conditions. Officer relief and support initiatives are recommended to improve morale and department reputation within the law enforcement community.

**Improve Community Image:** Community members interviewed expressed a divergent perception of police-community involvement levels compared to law enforcement personnel. Our interviews and research indicate that the IPD and TCSO have opportunities to self-promote and communicate with their communities more effectively. Recommendations include an online strategy overhaul, including an expanded social media presence.

**Additional Promotion of Good Neighbor Next Door Program:** The Good Neighbor Next Door Program is a Housing and Urban Development program available to law enforcement officers, firefighters, teachers, and emergency medical technicians. This program offers substantial incentives in qualifying neighborhoods, such as a 50% discount on a home's list price. There are currently 42 neighborhoods in the City of Ithaca that qualify, with additional qualifying opportunities throughout Tompkins County.<sup>2</sup>

**Driving improvements to the Workplace Culture:** Cultivating a workplace culture supporting inclusivity, strong leadership, and mutual respect is central to employee retention. A positive workplace culture can be as important to staff as pay and benefits. The city and county can improve workplace culture and employee morale by assessing the current work environment and implementing meaningful initiatives. Recommended initiatives include minority empowerment, leadership development, and the development of open feedback systems for continuous improvement.

**Leveraging Modern Tools for Employee Recruitment:** Job seekers today are more likely to follow through with a job application process when it is efficient and accessible. In addition to traditional means, the city and county can use modern platforms – social media, digital job applications, and SMS (text-to-apply) – to draw interest from a younger pool of applicants.

**Reassessing Current Screening Processes:** To remove potential barriers to recruitment, the County and City may assess its current screening requirements to identify and amend any policies that may be unnecessarily restrictive. Many jurisdictions have opted to eliminate polygraph examination requirements, remove past cannabis use as a disqualifier, and loosen physical requirements to expand the pool of job candidates.

**Offering Competitive Compensation and Benefits Packages:** This report recommends that Tompkins County and the City of Ithaca implement policies to regularly review salary and benefits structures to ensure personnel are compensated competitively. This regular

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<sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development 'HUD Good Neighbor Next Door Program', Available at: [https://www.hud.gov/program\\_offices/housing/sfh/reo/goodn/gnndabot](https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/housing/sfh/reo/goodn/gnndabot) (Accessed: 2 December 2023)



analysis policy reflects a commitment to maintaining competitive salaries and benefits packages that inspire confidence in the future for personnel.

**Promoting Career Advancement Opportunities:** Creating clear pathways for career progression is crucial for retaining motivated employees. It is recommended that the city and county invest in comprehensive professional development programs, mentorship initiatives, and performance evaluation systems.

**Implementing Policies That Promote Diversity:** By implementing diversity-promoting policies, the City of Ithaca and Tompkins County can improve their appeal to diverse candidates.

**Increased Community Outreach:** Both the community and law enforcement personnel interviewed unanimously identified this as something they wanted. Law enforcement personnel cited outreach efforts as one of the most satisfying aspects, while the community expressed that more could be accomplished in this area.

The recommendations we present will allow Tompkins County and the City of Ithaca to address the challenges associated with recruitment and retention while also enhancing community relations and safety. This document is a comprehensive roadmap for attracting and retaining high-quality personnel while fostering an inclusive and supportive workplace culture. By embracing these strategies, the City of Ithaca and Tompkins County can expand their pool of qualified candidates and retain existing talent – putting the police department and the public safety of the entire community in a position for success.



## REPORT FORMAT

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This report addresses the factors contributing to recruitment and retention success by reviewing current policy and recommended enhancement opportunities.

A brief description of report sections:

**Workplace Culture:** Discussion of current department work conditions with recommendations on how to improve work conditions, empower community relations and service quality, and optimize organizational effectiveness.

**Recruitment:** Discussion of current hiring conditions with recommendations to improve online material, optimize the hiring process, entice candidates, and engage the community to build interest in police work.

**Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion:** Discussion of current DEI policies with recommendations for recruiting and retaining a diverse workforce with continuously improving DEI standards.

**Compensation:** Discussion of current compensation status with recommendations for continually competitive compensation as well as soft benefits that can make the IPD and TCSO more competitive.

**Equipment:** Discussion of the importance of equipment in law enforcement with recommendations for best practices of tracking and regular updating.

**Accessibility:** Discussion of the importance that IPD and TCSO are accessible workplaces with recommendations for specific accommodations that ensure the workplace is accessible for all.

**Recognition and Rewards:** Discussion of the importance of employee recognition with recommended programs to promote employee excellence.

**Monitoring and Metrics:** System for strategic, data-driven tracking of initiative success.

**Strategic Plans:** Project timelines for data-supported implementation of select recommendations.

**Methodology:** Report development process, including areas identified as potential challenges for IPD and TCSO.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

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### Workplace Culture

As part of this report's research and discovery process, city and county employees and law enforcement personnel participated in in-depth interviews. In these interviews, several employees expressed a strong connection to their colleagues and indicated a great willingness to contribute to a healthy work environment. Still, several respondents reported significant issues that negatively impacted the workplace. Among the concerns expressed were a perceived lack of support from city and county officials, dissatisfaction with the pace of project implementation, insufficient staffing, reducing officers' ability to receive personal time off and police effectively.

According to recent research published in the MIT Sloan Management Review, workplace culture has an extraordinary impact on attrition. While salary often motivates people to leave their jobs, toxic workplace cultures were found to be more than ten times more predictive of high attrition.<sup>3</sup> In 2017, the Work Institute conducted a workforce retention study interviewing 34,000 individuals who voluntarily left their jobs. They found that 74 percent of the reasons for employee turnover are preventable.<sup>4</sup> Toxic workplace culture was not reported during our interviews with Tompkins County or the City of Ithaca. However, every workplace needs robust processes for continuous self-reflection and improvement. From an operational perspective, there are concerns, particularly morale suffering due to insufficient staffing. Recognizing the impact of a challenging work environment on employee retention, Tompkins County and the City of Ithaca must continue to proactively work to promote positive and communicative workplaces. Effective leadership plays a pivotal role in shaping a positive workplace culture. Leadership must prioritize effective communication, transparency, active listening, inclusivity, and respect in the workplace.

### Workplace Culture – Recommendations

This section includes a series of recommendations – based on research, data, and comparative analyses – that aim to enhance the workplace culture for Tompkins County and the City of Ithaca's Police Department. The implementation of these recommendations will enable the police departments to foster a positive work environment, enhance the effectiveness of leadership, and improve staff retention and recruitment prospects.

**Implement Officer Support Services:** Interviews have identified short staffing as one of the leading workplace frustrations for officers. The current staff shortage is causing significant morale issues within the departments.

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<sup>3</sup> Sull, D.; Sull C.; Zweig, B. (2022, January 12). MIT Sloan Management Review: Toxic Culture Is Driving the Great Resignation. Retrieved from <https://sloanreview.mit.edu/article/toxic-culture-is-driving-the-great-resignation/>.

<sup>4</sup> Sears, L. (2017) Work Institute: 2017 Retention Report: Campaign. Retrieved from <https://cdn2.hubspot.net/hubfs/478187/2017%20Retention%20Report%20Campaign/Work%20Institute%202017%20Retention%20Report.pdf>.





The city and county should consider their options for the immediate relief of on-duty police officer workload. To relieve this overburden and perceived need for officers to “chase the radio,” it is essential to implement programs to reduce public assistance requests as well as expand response services.

**Reduce Police Response Requests:** The city and county should consider implementing or expanding community mental health and wellbeing programs, homeless supportive services, drug rehabilitation services, and food access programs. A study conducted by the Becker-Friedman Institute found that losing Supplemental Security Income at age 18 resulted in a statistically significant 20% increase in several criminal charges over the following two decades.<sup>5</sup> By proactively seeking to promote the wellbeing of all residents the community can simultaneously improve the community while potentially reducing the burden on the police force.

The departments should perform an assessment of service requests to determine trends in community needs. A thorough needs analysis could identify areas for targeted intervention initiatives or highlight opportunities for the strategic reallocation of staffing resources.

Another implementation tactic would be to streamline and expand officers’ ability to connect with a social service worker when they feel they do not have adequate time to fully address the resident’s needs. Ensuring that officers have backup resources to assist the public even during busy moments would ameliorate many officer and community frustrations.

The CARE team currently being implemented by the Tompkins County Sheriff’s Office follows a co-response model applied in 2016 in Denver, Colorado. A 2023 Urban Institute report on the program highlights key success in call outcomes including de-escalation and a mutual learning experience between officers and clinicians. Community stakeholders affirmed this endorsement. Shortcomings identified include a lack of community awareness of the resource.<sup>6</sup> The CARE team is currently being expanded to IPD, though further expansion at both TCSO and IPD should be considered.

**Assessing Workplace Culture:** By conducting a comprehensive workplace culture assessment, the city and county can identify and address areas of concern that impact morale, engagement, and productivity. Addressing these concerns may improve attrition rates, particularly for diversity. Essential assessment elements include employee surveys, focus groups, and one-on-one interviews to develop a thorough understanding of the perspectives and concerns of the current Police Department personnel. Leveraging

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<sup>5</sup> Deshpande, M., & Mueller-Smith, M. (2022). Does Welfare Prevent Crime? The Criminal Justice Outcomes of Youth Removed from SSI [Economic Finding]. Based on BFI Working Paper 2022-28. Retrieved from <https://bfi.uchicago.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Does-Welfare-Prevent-Crime.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> Gillespie, S., McGilton, M., and Rogin, A. (2023) 'Understanding Denver’s Co-Responder Program', Metropolitan Housing and Communities Policy Center & the Urban Institute, August 2023. Updated October 2023 Retrieved from <https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/2023-10/Understanding%20Denver%E2%80%99s%20Co-Responder%20Program.pdf>





insights from the HCH Enterprises-led interviews may serve as a solid foundation for larger-scale initiatives, providing valuable guidance into the experiences and needs of personnel.

**Bridging the Gap between Officers and Leaders:** Leaders who understand officers' duties, challenges, and experiences can better implement strategies to reduce officer burnout and turnover. By addressing issues such as workload, stress management, and career development, leaders can create an environment where officers feel supported and motivated to stay with the department. It is recommended that law enforcement *leaders directly engage with patrol work*. Participation in patrols helps leaders gain invaluable insight into the impact of department policies. Equipped with first-hand experience, leaders can make more informed decisions and effectively support their officers.

**Review Exit Interview Process:** Conducting thorough exit interviews with carefully targeted questions will provide valuable insight into the current workplace environment. The city and county currently have an exit interview process; however, this process should be reviewed to ensure it is adequately identifying shortcomings. Exit interviews provide a platform for employees to share their experiences and perceptions of the organization's culture. By analyzing this feedback, organizations can identify cultural strengths and weaknesses and take steps to foster a positive and supportive work environment.

**Improving Leadership Efficacy:** The City of Ithaca is recommended to prioritize the recruitment effort for a Police Chief. Additionally, it is recommended that the City of Ithaca and Tompkins County offer training and coaching programs for leaders, particularly workshops that focus on effective communication, conflict resolution, and relationship building. Numerous participants have noted that training opportunities are abundant in both departments. However, if these resources are underutilized, it may be necessary to raise awareness or consider additional incentives to encourage greater participation.

**Establishing Clear Expectations and Standards:** Clear expectations and standards for behavior and communication are foundational elements of a positive and supportive work environment. According to a 2015 survey conducted by Gallup, only about half of employees strongly agree that they know what is expected of them at work.<sup>7</sup> Further, a 2022 study by *Officevibe* indicates that 43% of highly engaged employees receive feedback at least once a week compared to only 18% of employees with low engagement.<sup>8</sup> Clearly defining expectations and performance standards while implementing regular feedback cycles can significantly boost employee engagement and reinforce high policing standards. Embracing best practices in policing not only serves the community but also instills confidence in officers, assuring them that they are fulfilling their duties as expected. Training programs addressing workplace ethics, communication, and conflict resolution empower officers with essential skills for effective collaboration and problem-solving. By promoting teamwork and cultivating higher-quality work products,

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<sup>7</sup> Gallup. (2015). Gallup Q12 Employee Engagement Survey. Retrieved from <https://www.gallup.com/workplace/356063/gallup-q12-employee-engagement-survey.aspx>.

<sup>8</sup> Officevibe. (2022). Statistics on the Importance of Employee Feedback. Retrieved from <https://officevibe.com/blog/infographic-employee-feedback>.



these standards contribute to an overall positive work environment.

**Providing Support and Resources for Officers:** Tompkins County and the City of Ithaca Police Department can empower personnel by developing robust support systems and resources for professional development. These supports and resources may include mentor/mentee programs, employee assistance programs, fitness, and health memberships, as well as initiatives to promote mental health, wellness, and work-life balance. A 2022 Gallup poll revealed that 61 percent of respondents ranked “greater work-life balance and better personal wellbeing” as very important factors for employees seeking new jobs – second only to significant increases in compensation and benefits.<sup>9</sup> By making available such programs and resources, the city and county create a culture that prioritizes overall well-being and creates a positive work environment. Interviewees noted these resources are especially important and necessary for mental health services divisions. For departments particularly prone to burnout, such as mental health divisions, it is recommended to schedule these services as opt-out meetings to encourage utilization.

**Cultivating Community Pride and Team Spirit:** There are several ways the city and county can develop team spirit among employees and law enforcement personnel. Communal activities can instill a sense of community pride among its residents.

- Organized team-building activities represent opportunities to improve communications and encourage collaboration among colleagues.
- Promoting volunteerism enables opportunities for community engagement and a shared sense of purpose between personnel and residents.
- Hosting social events offers opportunities for informal connections from colleague to colleague and from personnel to residents.
- Mentorship programs help build relationships and develop mutual understanding between new personnel and veteran members of law enforcement.

**Promoting Open Communication and Conflict Resolution:** Open communication and effective conflict resolution are vital pillars of a thriving work environment. Fostering a culture of active participation in organizational decisions empowers workers and provides a valuable source of ideas for continuous improvement. Suggested channels for feedback include suggestion boxes, regular check-ins, or anonymous surveys for staff to address concerns. To further develop communication skills, offering training sessions focused on conflict resolution and collaborative problem-solving can empower the workforce to navigate challenges and enhance overall productivity.

**Improved Communication Pathways with City Hall and Elected Officials:** To enhance collaboration and mutual understanding, it is recommended the IPD develop a more structured and continuous communication channel between City Hall, elected officials, and senior law enforcement officers. The dynamic nature of elected positions underlines the need for a formalized policy that encourages consistent dialogue and cooperation. By fostering open and proactive communication, misunderstandings can be minimized,

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<sup>9</sup> Wigert, B. (2022, February 21). Gallup Workplace: The Top 6 Things Employees Want in Their Next Job. Retrieved from <https://www.gallup.com/workplace/389807/top-things-employees-next-job.aspx>

ensuring that public statements are well-informed and reflect an impartial perspective of law enforcement activities. This approach will contribute to a more harmonious and effective partnership, benefiting both the community and law enforcement agencies.

Implementing the recommended strategies and developing the programs described above will contribute to a workplace culture that attracts and retains highly qualified law enforcement personnel. These recommendations are based on community interviews, research, industry best practices, and a review of successful initiatives in similarly positioned municipalities.

## Recruiting

Nationwide, law enforcement agencies face significant challenges in attracting recruits and retaining existing personnel. According to the Police Executive Research Forum, between 2014 and 2019, 36% of member agencies reported a "substantial reduction" in applications, and another 27% reported at least a "slight" decline.<sup>10</sup> An additional challenge when attempting to recruit a diverse police force is the lack of public trust from minority communities. According to a 2020 panel by Gallup, 48 percent of adults in the United States say that if they have an interaction with a police officer, they are very confident that they will be treated with courtesy and respect. That number drops to 18 percent for Black Americans.<sup>11</sup>

The lack of applicants is a long-term problem that cannot be remedied by hiring organizations using conventional methods. Small and rural communities face the same challenges as their larger urban counterparts, such as substance misuse, violent crime, and homelessness. However, these communities often lack the resources of larger cities and, therefore, are disproportionately impacted by these problems.

The United States Department of Justice has recognized that three significant factors drive the challenges of recruitment and retention of law enforcement personnel: 1) a decrease in officer applications, 2) officers leaving before retirement age, and 3) an increase in the number of retirements.

Tompkins County and the City of Ithaca face challenges like those highlighted above, necessitating significant changes to the process of recruiting new law enforcement personnel. Through decisive action and strategic alterations to the hiring process, the police department can better align itself with practices being adopted by other similarly positioned agencies and likely increase the pool of high-quality candidates.

## Recruiting — Recommendations

To successfully attract and retain high-value law enforcement personnel, the city and

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<sup>10</sup> Police Executive Research Forum. (2019, September). The Workforce Crisis, and What Police Agencies Are Doing About It. Retrieved from <https://www.policeforum.org/assets/WorkforceCrisis.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> Saad, L. (2020, August 5). Black Americans Want Police to Retain Local Presence. Gallup. Retrieved from <https://news.gallup.com/poll/316571/black-americans-police-retain-local-presence.aspx>



county must evaluate its recruitment process to realign with shifting application convenience standards. This report identifies several recommended actions that aim to increase interest, generate more applicants, and streamline processes for recruiting and retention.

## Community Engagement

In our investigation, a notable disparity exists between community members' and IPD's perspectives on the degree of law enforcement community involvement. Community respondents express a perception of gradually diminishing community engagement, attributing changes to the increased reliance on officers from outside Ithaca. Conversely, within the departments, staff maintain that law enforcement has an active presence at community events. One common theme identified by both community members and law enforcement officials is a desire for police officers to spend more time outside of their cars and in community spaces.

One potential remedy for this disconnect is an increased online representation of law enforcement involvement in the community. Currently, there is limited visibility of community engagement efforts, primarily reliant on Facebook. While Facebook remains widely used, especially among the general population, trends show a decline in its appeal among younger demographics. According to Pew Research, Facebook use among teenagers (13-17) the percentage who report active use of the platform has dropped from 71 percent in 2015 to 32 percent in 2022.<sup>12</sup>

## Community Engagement – Recommendations

**Conducting Youth Outreach:** Recruitment through schools and institutions of higher education is often a highly effective recruiting strategy. According to research from the Institute for Excellence in Government, law enforcement recruitment should start as early as elementary school, particularly for agencies looking to recruit a more racially and ethnically diverse police force.<sup>13</sup> It is recommended that Tompkins County and the City of Ithaca develop a program for connecting with elementary-aged students in the Tompkins District and neighboring communities to inspire students to pursue careers in law enforcement. For middle school- and high school-aged students, the police department may wish to consider programs such as police explorers – which provides an opportunity for youth to explore police work – or internships for students to learn more about the field and stay involved until they are eligible to apply for a job in law enforcement.

**Designing a More Efficient Hiring Process:** A study by the Office of Community-Oriented Policing Services (COPS) emphasizes the importance of a shorter, easier, and more

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<sup>12</sup> Pew Research Center. (2022, August 10). Teens, Social Media, and Technology 2022. Pew Research Center. Retrieved from <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2022/08/10/teens-social-media-and-technology-2022/>

<sup>13</sup> Wiseman, J. (2021, August). Recruiting for Diversity in Law Enforcement: Selected Recent Research Insights. Retrieved from [https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/janewiseman/files/police\\_recruiting\\_research\\_summary\\_august\\_2021.pdf](https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/janewiseman/files/police_recruiting_research_summary_august_2021.pdf)



efficient hiring process.<sup>14</sup> The same study also advocates for law enforcement agencies to develop procedures to support recruits through the hiring process to avoid recruits abandoning the process. The city and county may consider re-evaluating requirements, including training academy attendance, education, residence, and physical standards. The city and county should also re-evaluate policies disqualifying non-violent offenders and possibly exclude cannabis from drug screenings. Many police forces, including New York City and Atlanta, have discontinued the practice of screening for cannabis as part of the recruitment process. By removing outdated or unnecessary barriers to the hiring process, Tompkins County and the City of Ithaca can appeal to a broader and more diverse pool of candidates.

Respondents report that this is one of their biggest concerns regarding barriers to entry.

**Providing Detailed Job Descriptions and Benefits:** To avoid inefficiencies associated with recruits abandoning the hiring process, it is essential that the city and county review its communications for hiring and clearly outline the job description and hiring requirements. Establishing clear expectations — including a polygraph examination, physical standards, and other criteria outlined in the job description — may alleviate potential intimidation, reduce process abandonment, and encourage more qualified candidates to apply. It is also recommended that the city and county highlight the benefits of working in law enforcement, such as career growth opportunities and community involvement.

**Presenting the Relatable Side of Law Enforcement:** Recruiting brochures can serve an essential role in the perception of police officers for potential candidates as well as the community at large. These resources should be available in physical and digital form to improve accessibility and expand reach. Brochure images should depict police officers as relatable and engaged community members. Including pictures of officers helping and serving the community can have a powerful impact, highlighting the positive influence of the job. By highlighting the agency's dedication to community welfare, the city and county can attract candidates who value public service and community engagement. Community representatives recommend that these resources accurately highlight the diversity within the department without misrepresenting diversity rates.

**Engaging with Potential Candidates:** While the value of recruitment efforts via digital platforms must be recognized, face-to-face interaction must be considered. It is recommended that the police department participate in career fairs and connect with the career centers at local colleges — such as Ithaca College and Cornell University. Participation at this level allows for honest and open conversations between current personnel and potential recruits and serves as a medium for questions and feedback. This type of engagement can significantly increase candidate interest.

Interviewees suggest expanded access to the police departments, allowing candidates to receive information via text and video calls. They advise that they implemented these policies during the pandemic but have found them effective tools and have continued their usage. They believe that these policies will translate well to law enforcement.

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<sup>14</sup> Morrison, K. P. (2017). *Hiring for the 21st Century Law Enforcement Officer*. Washington, D.C.: Office of Community Oriented Policing Policies (COPS).





**Leveraging Local Media to Improve Public Perception:** By working with local media outlets such as Ithaca College’s WICB and Cornell’s WVBR can enhance the public perception and showcase the existing police force opportunities to an age range ideal for candidacy.

**Clear and Consistent Communication Throughout the Hiring Process:** To reduce the uncertainty and anxiety candidates experience, it is recommended that the city and county deliver clear and consistent communications throughout the testing and hiring process. It is essential to provide detailed information about the timeline, requirements, and expectations for each stage of the process. Prompt acknowledgment of receipt of applications, regular touchpoints, and updates will keep candidates engaged and demonstrate a commitment to transparency. Additionally, tentative offers of employment serve to generate interest and build candidates' investment in the hiring process.

Law enforcement respondents indicated that requirements like the civil service exam are a significant source of application anxiety for many potential candidates. Issues identified are uncertainty about when the test will be proctored and doubt about accepting a job for which they may not be able to qualify. While these tests have these drawbacks, they also felt they provide an important step to identify candidate proficiency in key areas such as physical fitness, memory recall, and accurate reporting.

Suggested recommendations from respondents include the reinstatement of training days where the community can meet law enforcement officers to work out and gain a better understanding of physical requirements. This serves as an opportunity to connect with the community, improve officer health, and connect with potential candidates. The program was previously implemented in public spaces across the county to improve accessibility. Additionally, more preparatory training is needed for candidates taking the written test to provide them with confidence in their ability to qualify for the position.

Lastly, the city and county may consider covering the cost of the Civil Service Exam to incentivize applicants.

**Reassessing the Polygraph Evaluation Process:** Tompkins County and the City of Ithaca currently subject police department applicants to a polygraph examination. To ensure fair and effective candidate evaluation, it is essential to review the city’s current provider, process, and evaluation criteria for polygraph evaluations. According to data from the U.S. Department of Justice, among municipalities of similar size to IPD and TCSO, only 26 percent of local law enforcement agencies require a polygraph examination as part of their screening process for new officers.<sup>15</sup> The city may wish to discontinue this screening element or consider reassessing the criteria for disqualifying candidates based on polygraph results.

Respondents expressed belief that the polygraph test was a valuable tool when used correctly without overreliance. One example provided was a recent incident where the polygraph test detected untruthfulness regarding THC.

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<sup>15</sup> Bureau of Justice Statistics. (2009). Law Enforcement Officers Killed and Assaulted, 2007, <https://bjs.ojp.gov/content/pub/pdf/lpd07.pdf>



**Hosting Open Houses:** To provide potential candidates with a realistic understanding of the police department's operations and the job requirements, the city and county may wish to host open houses. These events allow candidates to gain insights into the nature of law enforcement work, the agency's culture, and the challenges and rewards involved. By setting accurate expectations upfront, the city and county can build investment in candidates while preparing them for the realities of police service. Open houses can drive interest while increasing new hire retention rates and job satisfaction.

Interviewees also recommend job talks where different people in various positions provide day-to-day insight into the law enforcement profession. Additional solutions proposed include public access, informal lunch sessions, or video conferences to open dialogue.

**Building a Pipeline through Ride-Along and Civilian-to-Sworn Pathway Programs:** To build a sustainable pipeline of potential officer candidates, it is recommended that the city and county implement ride-along programs and civilian-to-sworn pathway programs.

Ride-along programs allow civilians to experience firsthand the realities of the job, fostering interest and understanding. Civilian-to-sworn pathway programs offer structured opportunities for individuals to join the field without a traditional law enforcement background. By providing a clear pathway and necessary training, the city and county can attract candidates with diverse backgrounds and skill sets and develop a broader range of perspectives in the police force.

Ride-along programs may provide opportunities for engagement with elected officials as a team-building starting block and an opportunity to come to a mutual understanding of community policing goals.

**Promoting Affordable Housing and the Good Neighbor Next Door Program:** Considering the difficulties experienced by police officers in securing suitable housing, the City could explore avenues such as promoting homebuying programs, providing housing stipends, or establishing partnerships with local landlords to offer affordable housing solutions. There are existing programs to assist law enforcement officers in purchasing homes in the communities they serve. One such program, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) Good Neighbor Next Door, allows law enforcement officers, teachers, firefighters, and emergency medical technicians to contribute to community revitalization while becoming homeowners. HUD offers a substantial incentive in the form of a discount of 50 percent from the list price of the home. In return, an eligible buyer must commit to live in the property for 36 months as their principal residence. There are currently 41 eligible neighborhoods in Ithaca alone. The availability of this program should be extensively advertised to potential candidates and current personnel.<sup>16</sup>

**Employee Referral Programs:** Some municipalities implement employee reference

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<sup>16</sup> HUD Good Neighbor Next Door program. HUD.gov / U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. (n.d.). Retrieved from [https://www.hud.gov/program\\_offices/housing/sfh/reo/goodn/gnndabot](https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/housing/sfh/reo/goodn/gnndabot)





programs to generate applicants. We do not recommend this approach but would like to proactively address the drawbacks of referral programs.

Proponents of these programs would make the following argument:

*Recruiting could be a collaborative effort involving existing networks and leveraging employee referrals. A study published in the Harvard Business Review confirmed the value of employee referral programs; for every 100 applicants, referrals generated 70 percent more quality hires than non-referrals.<sup>17</sup> By involving existing personnel in the recruitment process, the police department stands to increase the candidate pool. Incentivizing employee referrals and recognizing employees who refer successful candidates promotes engagement in the recruitment process. In some organizations, employee referrals can help determine cultural fit and enhance retention rates within the agency. By incentivizing the successful recruitment and retention of candidates the city and county may increase their available candidate pool.*

Respondents have voiced clear apprehension about referral programs and expressed that are already concerned with preferential hiring within the department. Interviewees suggest that any sense of unfairness or bias in the application process creates division between the community and law enforcement.

These concerns are well founded; HCH recently worked with a municipal fire department that is struggling to undo the disproportionate representation that resulted from the implementation of referral programs. Law enforcement agencies that have not attained proportional representation are likely to see the problem exacerbated by a referral program. These drawbacks should be carefully weighed against the potential increase in the candidate pool.

Implementing the recommended strategies and developing the programs described above put the City of Ithaca and Tompkins County in a position to expand the reach of their recruitment efforts, increase the size of their candidate pool, improve the quality of applicants, and promote a more diverse workforce within the police department. These recommendations, grounded in research, industry best practices, and successful initiatives in comparable municipalities, aim to bolster a more robust, engaged, and sustainable recruitment process.

## Comprehensive Digital Update

### Social Media Community Engagement

In our investigation, a notable disparity exists between community members' and IPD's perspectives on the degree of law enforcement community involvement. Community respondents express a perception of gradually diminishing community engagement, attributing changes to the increased reliance on officers from outside Ithaca. Conversely,

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<sup>17</sup> Gautier, K., Munashinghe, L. (2020, May 26). Build a Stronger Employee Referral Program. Harvard Business Review. Retrieved from <https://hbr.org/2020/05/build-a-stronger-employee-referral-program>



within the departments, staff maintain that law enforcement has an active presence at community events. One common theme identified by both community members and law enforcement officials is a desire for police officers to spend more time outside of their cars and in community spaces.

One potential remedy for this disconnect is an increased online representation of law enforcement involvement in the community. Currently, there is limited visibility of community engagement efforts, primarily reliant on Facebook. While Facebook remains widely used, especially among the general population, trends show a decline in its appeal among younger demographics. According to Pew Research, Facebook use among teenagers (13-17), the percentage who report active use of the platform has dropped from 71 percent in 2015 to 32 percent in 2022.<sup>18</sup>

The enthusiasm surrounding social media marketing for recruiting purposes, especially when targeting younger demographics, is understandable, given the pervasive use of these platforms. However, it is crucial to recognize that the medium is only a part of the message. The objective is not just to generate a high volume of posts and blogs but to develop a compelling, comprehensive campaign where social media is one of several effective communication channels.

A successful recruitment campaign via social media must go beyond the superficial layer of frequent posting. It should be strategically designed to resonate with the target audience, in this case, young potential recruits. This involves crafting messages that not only inform but also engage and inspire. Young people are looking for careers that offer more than just a paycheck; they seek purpose, growth, and a sense of belonging. The campaign should highlight aspects of police work that align with these values, such as community service, personal development, and being part of a team that makes a real difference.

Moreover, authenticity is key in social media communication. Young audiences are particularly adept at discerning genuine messaging from mere advertising. Hence, content should be relatable and honest, showing real aspects of police work and the positive impact it has on communities. This could include stories from current officers, behind-the-scenes glimpses of the job, and insights into the challenges and rewards of the profession.

In addition to content, the choice of platforms is also important. Different social media channels have varying demographics and usage patterns. Understanding where the target audience spends their time online (be it Instagram, Twitter, or elsewhere) and tailoring the campaign to fit the specific dynamics of these platforms is essential.

Furthermore, integrating social media efforts with other recruitment strategies is crucial. Social media should not operate in a vacuum but rather be part of a larger, multi-channel approach. A multi-channel strategy broadens reach and reinforces the campaign message

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<sup>18</sup> Pew Research Center. (2022, August 10). Teens, Social Media, and Technology 2022. Pew Research Center. Retrieved from <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2022/08/10/teens-social-media-and-technology-2022/>



across different touchpoints.

Finally, measuring the effectiveness of social media campaigns is vital. Monitoring metrics such as engagement rates, click-throughs, and conversion rates to applications can provide valuable insights into what works and what does not, allowing for continuous refinement of the strategy.

**Social Media Management:** Recognizing the need for targeted communication, it is recommended that a dedicated social media manager be established. An individual skilled in multimedia content creation can leverage social platforms to bridge the communication gap with the community. Research conducted by Pew Research indicates a preference for Instagram, Snapchat, and YouTube among the 18-34 age group.<sup>19</sup> Creating a presence on these platforms is a valuable opportunity for the departments to reach young people. This role could be implemented by an officer as a part-time duty.

Data from the Police Executive Research Forum indicates that of social media users aged 18-29, one-third expressed that social media is their preferred communication channel with businesses.<sup>20</sup> Further, nearly half of all Millennials (born between 1981 and 1996) and Gen Z (born between 1997 and 2012) workers have applied to jobs they found through social media, and 92 percent of employers use social networks to find new talent.<sup>21</sup> Implementing digital solutions will increase candidate engagement, and proactively connect with qualified candidates who may be unaware of current career opportunities in law enforcement.

Outreach to this demographic poses challenges. A Statista study conducted following the murder of George Floyd in 2020 found that 27 percent of 18–34-year-olds expressed "strong opposition" to the police.<sup>22</sup> Accordingly, content produced to engage with young people must be carefully curated. We recommend focusing on positive interactions, officer camaraderie, slices of life, and engaging comedy skits while avoiding any content that may be perceived as militarized or insensitive. Controlled substance enforcement has proven controversial for departments across the country and is not a recommended area of focus. We recommend implementing thorough review guidelines to ensure post-consistency with department goals and privacy law.

To facilitate a revitalized online engagement effort, we recommend speaking to staff requesting they try to actively capture photos and videos of positive interactions with the community. Interviews identified the ability to show off successes as a weakness for both departments. It is essential to improve this skill within the department and the photos

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<sup>19</sup> Pew Research Center. (2023, November 15). Social Media and News Fact Sheet. Pew Research Center. Retrieved from <https://www.pewresearch.org/journalism/fact-sheet/social-media-and-news-fact-sheet/>

<sup>20</sup> Police Executive Research Forum. PowerDMS by NEOGOV. Millennials in Law Enforcement: Recruiting, Training, Supervising. PowerDMS by NEOGOV, 2020

<sup>21</sup> Reiners, B. (2022, November). Social Media Recruiting: A Complete Guide. Retrieved from Built In: <https://builtin.com/recruiting/social-media-recruiting>

<sup>22</sup> Statista. (2020, June 5). Level of support among U.S. adults for the police during the ongoing protests in response to the death of George Floyd as of June 2020, by age. Statista. Retrieved from <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1122645/police-support-george-floyd-protests-us-age>



and videos taken will serve as content for a social media manager. There are several popular YouTube Short influencers to draw inspiration from, such as @FireDepartmentChronicles. Their most popular video received over 10 million views.

In addition to social media, career websites (e.g., PoliceApp) and SMS text message marketing (e.g., Text-to-Apply) are valuable tools in the recruitment process.

**Engaging a Marketing Consultant for Effective Branding:** If the city and county feel that the social media manager requires assistance or guidance, we recommend that the City and County engages with a marketing consultant as part of its recruitment strategy. A professional consultant with specialized experience providing targeted digital marketing campaigns is an effective way to reach audiences who are most likely to be interested in and qualified for the roles available in the department. Additionally, a professional marketing consultant can potentially provide campaigns to increase minority representation. Respondents indicated that New York City officers recently became eligible for lateral transfer, they may be good candidates for targeted marketing.

**YouTube and Police Website Updates:** In addition to an exploration of additional platforms, attention is required for existing department media. Adoption of standard practices for all posting will ensure effective leveraging of views into applications for the Ithaca Police Department and Tompkins County Sheriff's Office. All social media posts should, at a minimum, include a link to the corresponding department website as well as an informational link for first-time applicants. The "[2023 Ithaca Police Department Recruitment Video](#)" is a good example of the implementation of these practices.<sup>23</sup>

Tompkins County's YouTube recruitment video actively encourages individuals with no prior police experience or familial ties to apply, fostering inclusivity. However, this welcoming stance is at odds with the frustrating experience of obtaining information from the Tompkins County Sheriff's Office website.<sup>24</sup>

Presently, the website prominently features two large application links, both designated for lateral transfers. Notably absent is information for first-time applicants. Delving into the careers opportunities tab redirects users to a county-wide application system, requiring personal details for any meaningful progress. To enhance accessibility, we recommend a website update, introducing a conspicuous first-time applicant link that provides comprehensive details on hiring requirements and timelines. This adjustment will eliminate obstacles for local community applicants, particularly the younger demographic familiar with streamlined application processes.

It is important to recognize that the limitations of Tompkins' web interface are not unique and are similarly observed in neighboring counties. However, this similarity should not discourage efforts to enhance the website, offering a cost-effective way to distinguish the

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<sup>23</sup> Ithaca Police Department, "2023 Ithaca Police Department Recruitment Video" YouTube, (2023). Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=---8iG1eXUw>

<sup>24</sup> "Tompkins County Sheriff's Office." Tompkins County, Retrieved December 2023 from <https://tompkinscountyny.gov/sheriff>.



department.

## Review of Recruitment Videos

### 2023 Ithaca Police Department Recruitment

The initial segment of the IPD's 2023 police recruitment video, lasting until 1:45, effectively communicates a narrative of compassionate, diverse, and community-focused police work. This section of the video highlights several elements effectively, starting with images of officers in the community talking with residents and engaging local businesses. It highlights the natural beauty of Ithaca with sweeping drone shots. The video also underscores the sense of camaraderie and team spirit within the IPD, illustrated through scenes of officers participating in a friendly basketball game. The shot at 1:06 is particularly effective, showing officers jogging together at the majestic Taughannock Falls.

The video's production quality is notably high, and its visual appeal is commendable. However, concerns arise in the subsequent portion of the video, which shifts to a more militarized portrayal of police activities. This shift is accentuated by an increase in music volume, featuring lyrics such as "I won't back down - no, I'll never surrender," synchronized with visuals of SWAT exercises, high-speed driving, tactical breaching practices, and canine search operations.

Our assessment suggests that this representation might attract applicants whose outlooks and expectations may not fully align with the core values and community-oriented objectives of the IPD. The high-adrenaline, action-focused portrayal, especially when paired with an upbeat musical score, could be misconstrued as highlighting these aspects as primary incentives for joining the police force. It is important to consider that the public often associates fast-moving police vehicles and tactical operations with negative events, such as accidents or crimes. Therefore, it may be beneficial to reassess and potentially revise this segment of the video to ensure it aligns with the desired image and values of the IPD, focusing on attracting candidates who are committed to community service and public safety.

### Tompkins County- The Career of a Lifetime 2023 Recruitment Video

The recruitment video for Tompkins County successfully presents a narrative that aligns with the principles of compassionate, diverse, and community-centered policing.<sup>25</sup> It is both informative and professionally executed, effectively showcasing the varied roles and experiences available within the TCSO. The choice to feature a golden retriever in the video is commendable, as it offers an approachable and friendly representation of working with animals compared to more traditional police dog breeds.

To further enhance the video, especially if the goal is to attract candidates on a national level, it is recommended to incorporate more scenes highlighting recreational activities

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<sup>25</sup> Tompkins County, NY, "The Career of a Lifetime, Consider Becoming a Tompkins County Sheriff's Deputy" YouTube, (2023). Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LfBAZuNvAdA>





and the natural beauty of Tompkins County. By highlighting the scenic and leisure opportunities in the area, the video would present a more complete picture of what living and working in the county entails. This approach would emphasize not only the professional benefits of a career with the TCSO but also the appealing lifestyle and community aspects of residing in the region.

We recommend a content standardization review process be implemented for video uploads. Both the “Career Development and Advancement with the Ithaca Police Department” and “The Career of a Lifetime, Consider Becoming a Tompkins County Sheriff’s Deputy” lack a hyperlink for more information.

## Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Most professional organizations have experienced increased expectations of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) strategy. The development and implementation of these programs not only stand to improve morale and increase productivity for current staff but are also important elements of the recruitment process. According to a survey by the Society for Human Resource Management, 65 percent of respondents claimed that equality and respect are important contributors to job satisfaction.<sup>26</sup>

As municipal police departments face the challenge of recruiting qualified recruits, DEI initiatives have become essential tools to broaden the candidate pool. Tompkins County and the City of Ithaca were reported to have seen a demographic shift in recent years. The most current demographic composition (v2023) of the county is 80.9 percent white alone, 4.6 percent Black or African American, 10.2 percent Asian, and 5.5 percent Hispanic or Latino.<sup>27</sup> These numbers are similar to the City of Ithaca, which has a slightly higher minority representation. Ithaca is 64.1 percent white alone, 5.7 percent Black or African American, 16.1 percent Asian, and 8.4 percent Hispanic or Latino.<sup>28</sup> Understanding these demographic statistics is crucial when promoting community representation. Achieving greater alignment between the demographics of law enforcement and the communities they serve can substantially improve law enforcement relations.

Respondents report that the departments provide standard and specialized DEI opportunities. However, there is the sentiment that not enough is being done and that progress has been too slow. Frustration with the slow implementation of change was expressed by several respondents.

The opportunity to implement programs that support DEI within its police department to

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<sup>26</sup> Society for Human Resource Management. (2017). Employee Job Satisfaction and Engagement: The Doors of Opportunity are Open. Retrieved from <https://www.shrm.org/LearningAndCareer/learning/SiteAssets/2017-Employee- Job-Satisfaction-and-Engagement-Executive-Summary.pdf>

<sup>27</sup> U.S. Census Bureau (2023) 'Tompkins County, New York', Available at: <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/tompkinscountynewyork>

<sup>28</sup> U.S. Census Bureau (2023) 'Ithaca City, New York', Available at: <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/ithacacitynewyork/PST040222>



strengthen the current culture and expand the candidate pool. This report has identified several recommended actions to promote diversity, equality, and inclusion within the city and county police departments.

## Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion – Recommendations

Tompkins County and the City of Ithaca are recommended to develop a comprehensive DEI strategy. An effective police DEI program is multifaceted and seeks to engage with the organization and the community. This report has identified several recommended actions to make Tompkins County and the City of Ithaca a more inclusive and attractive environment for current staff and potential applicants.

**Implementing a Comprehensive Family Leave Program:** The City of Ithaca and Tompkins County's Police Department can attract personnel planning to start or expand their family by offering additional family leave benefits. According to data from the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Justice Programs, approximately 14% of full-time sworn officers and 11% of first-line supervisors across local police departments were female.<sup>29</sup> Another study by the National Crime and Justice Research Alliance estimates that 60 percent of female officers will become pregnant during their employment.<sup>30</sup> We commend the IPD for prominently featuring these benefits in their recruitment video. By offering a family leave program that meets what other employers offer and exceeds coverage offered under current state law, the IPD and TCSO stand to expand and diversify their candidate pool.

**Forging Partnerships with Community Organizations:** Building partnerships with community organizations will help the city and county connect with all members of the community. Engaging with every member of the community will provide valuable insight and establish trust among diverse communities, putting the police department in a position to make actionable changes to better reflect the community's values – promoting a more inclusive culture and enhancing recruitment efforts.

**Offering Incentives for Candidates:** The city and county should consider incentives offered to recruits including scholarships, tuition reimbursement, mentorship programs, or access to support groups that offer resources and guidance.

**Reviewing Job Requirements and Qualifications:** It is recommended that the city and county conduct a thorough review of job requirements and qualifications to eliminate any unnecessary barriers that may disproportionately impact recruitment from at-risk communities. The assessment of policies should weigh the alignment of requirements with the mission statement, essential skills, and competencies against potential

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<sup>29</sup> Goodison, S. (2022, November). Local Police Departments Personnel, 2020. U.S. Department of Justice Office of Justice Programs Bureau of Justice Statistics. Retrieved from <https://bjs.ojp.gov/sites/g/files/xyckuh236/files/media/document/lpdp20.pdf>

<sup>30</sup> Rabe-Bemp, C., Sears Humiston, G. (2014, January 2). A Survey of Maternity Policies and Pregnancy Accommodations in American Police Departments. National Crime and Justice Research Alliance. Retrieved from <https://crimeandjusticeresearchalliance.org/rsrch/maternity-policies-in-u-s-police-departments/>





drawbacks related to limiting the candidate pool and representation of at-risk populations among staff.

**Providing Ongoing DEI Training and Development:** To attract a diverse pool of applicants and foster an inclusive workplace culture, the City of Ithaca and Tompkins County may consider ongoing training and development opportunities centered around DEI in law enforcement. This includes diversity training, cultural competency education, and implicit bias awareness programs for all law enforcement officers. The city and county should explore the option of providing specialized DEI training to select staff members, empowering them to serve as resolute arbiters for the department. This initiative aims to foster a more inclusive office culture. Offering modest incentives may serve as an effective motivator for staff to opt-in to a half-day program.

Our investigation indicates that many of these features may already be integrated into both departments, with implicit bias training already in place for seven years. We recommend conducting an evaluation of past training to further refine the implicit bias training moving forward. Consider a mixed method approach that will allow for a broad reach and understanding of the participant experience as well as conducting focus groups to better understand the outcomes and delivery preferences of participants. Still, continuing to provide these training services while maintaining a scheduled update to ensure that the most modern DEI strategies are employed.

**Engage a DEI Consultant:** Engaging a DEI consultant may provide valuable expertise and guidance in creating a comprehensive strategy that promotes diversity, equity, and inclusion. A DEI consultant is tasked with assessing current policies and practices, working with City leadership to develop a customized plan, and providing training and education to law enforcement officers. The insights and support from a professional DEI consultant will enable continuous evaluation, identify areas for improvement, and measure the impact of the DEI strategy. A DEI consultant will also be able to advise whether structural support is required to support DEI initiatives and identify the roles that would be beneficial to implement and sustain DEI goals overall.

A robust DEI strategy drawn from these recommendations can cultivate a strong, diverse, and inclusive police force that is attractive to a large and diverse pool of applicants. In addition to improving organizational culture and recruitment prospects, an increased awareness of DEI concepts in the police force will improve the communities of Tompkins County and the City of Ithaca. DEI Policy should engage with the community, ensure policies are anti-discriminatory, and implement zero-tolerance policies for sexual harassment and discrimination.

## Compensation

Offering competitive compensation is crucial to attract and retain individuals with the necessary skills, qualifications, and commitment to serve in law enforcement roles. Compensation involves salary and benefits in addition to pathways for career



advancement, training, adequate equipment, and quality of life.<sup>31</sup>

According to the information posted on the Ithaca Police Department website compensation includes a *starting salary [of] \$57,461 (2023) with an annual increase to \$89,885 in just 3 years.*<sup>32</sup> The payment structure is similar at Tompkins County Sheriff's Office, after a year officers *receive up to 82 thousand dollars.*<sup>33</sup> Although surrounding counties offer a slightly lower cost of living, the City of Ithaca and Tompkins County are offering competitive starting salaries.

City/County	Base Salary (Dollars)
City of Ithaca	\$57,461
Seneca County	\$32,000
Tioga County	\$59,521
Cayuga County	\$54,475

The cost to increase an employee's salary is often significantly less than the cost to replace a current employee. A 2021 Gallup report suggests that the costs to replace an existing employee can range between 50 percent and 200 percent of that employee's salary.<sup>34</sup> This is of particular concern for new hires that the department has invested in for initial training. Losing personnel because of compensation can create voids in the department's knowledge base and can have a disruptive impact on team morale. This potential cost should be factored into budgetary considerations.

### Compensation of Police and Sheriff's Patrol Officers in Northeast States (May 2022)

State	Hourly Mean Wage	Annual Mean Wage	Hourly Median Wage	Annual Median Wage
<b>New York</b>	<b>\$39.30</b>	<b>\$81,750</b>	<b>\$38.56</b>	<b>\$80,210</b>
Connecticut	37.16	\$77,280	\$38.62	\$80,330
Massachusetts	\$35.23	\$73,290	\$35.28	\$73,390
Rhode Island	\$32.83	\$68,290	\$31.45	\$65,420
New Hampshire	\$30.04	\$62,480	\$28.60	\$59,480
Vermont	\$29.72	\$61,810	\$29.50	\$61,360

<sup>31</sup> Wilson, J., Dalton, E., Scheer, C., Grammich, C. (2010). Police Recruitment and Retention for the New Millennium (p.36). Rand Center on Quality Policing. Retrieved From <https://portal.cops.usdoj.gov/resourcecenter/RIC/Publications/cops- pl 99-pub.pdf>

<sup>32</sup>City of Ithaca, NY 'Recruitment', retrieved December 2023 at: <http://www.cityofithaca.org/309/Recruitment>

<sup>33</sup> Tompkins County, NY, "The Career of a Lifetime, Consider Becoming a Tompkins County Sheriffs Deputy" YouTube, (2023). Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LfBAZuNvAdA>

<sup>34</sup> Ghandi, V., Robison, J. (2021, July 22). The 'Great Resignation' Is Really the 'Great Discontent'. Gallup. Retrieved from <https://www.gallup.com/workplace/351545/great-resignation-really-great-discontent.aspx>

Maine	\$27.39	\$56,960	\$27.90	\$58,030
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Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (May 2022)

## Compensation — Recommendations

The City of Ithaca and Tompkins County can become more competitive in the recruitment process and reduce attrition rates by making some changes to the compensation structure within the police department. Financial barriers may create challenges to any compensation-related changes but there are opportunities to adjust how pay and benefits are administered that can affect meaningful change within the department. This report has identified several recommended actions to expand the pool of qualified candidates and prevent compensation-based attrition.

**Reviewing and Adjusting Compensation Structures:** The compensation structure within the City of Ithaca and Tompkins County must be reviewed at least annually to adjust salaries and benefits packages to reflect a competitive package. There should be equitable compensation to new and existing personnel with equal experience including pay raises, bonuses, health insurance, retirement plans, and other incentives such as sign-on bonuses.

**Conducting Comparative Analysis:** By understanding the compensation being offered to law enforcement personnel in agencies of comparable size and in close proximity, the city and county are better able to remain competitive in terms of pay and benefits. They may consider factors such as salaries, perks, opportunities for education and training, retirement, and union options.

**Gathering Information on Attrition:** When a member of the Police Department leaves the agency for any reason other than retirement, it is crucial to continue to gather information through an exit interview and organic research to determine the reason for leaving. If the individual will join another law enforcement agency, understand what is being offered to them. This information may provide valuable insight into other agencies' compensation packages and benefits.

**Offering Experience-Based Compensation:** By offering starting salaries commensurate with experience, the city and county will attract qualified candidates and encourage lateral moves from officers in other agencies. This can provide opportunities for experienced officers to advance their careers while bringing their developed skills and knowledge to the agency.

**Identifying Alternate Funding Sources:** To supplement the existing law enforcement budget, the city and county must consider pursuing alternate funding sources. These alternative resources include utilizing community partnerships, grants, and other available programs to provide competitive compensation packages. One such grant program is the U.S. Department of Justice's COPS Hiring Program, which made available a total of \$224.5 million in funding for the fiscal year 2023 (with the possibility of up to \$388 million in FY 2024) to directly fund law enforcement agencies to hire and/or rehire



additional career law enforcement officers to increase their community policing capacity and crime prevention efforts.<sup>35</sup> To maximize these opportunities, the city and county may consider contracting a grant management company tasked with identifying and seeking funding programs to support initiatives.

**Implementing Cost-Effective Benefits:** It is recommended that the city and county implement cost-effective benefits such as flexible work schedules and wellness programs to improve employee satisfaction without significantly increasing costs.

**Non-Monetary Incentives:** IPD and TCSO may consider offering non-monetary incentives such as additional paid time off, professional development opportunities, and employee recognition programs.

**Produce Resources Highlighting Benefits of Living in Tompkins County and Ithaca:** To entice law enforcement officials to consider positions within the community, it is recommended that the city and county develop resources exclusively showcasing the enticing benefits of residing here. These resources should spotlight the exceptional quality of life, highlighting factors such as a safe and welcoming environment, excellent schools, diverse recreational opportunities, and a strong sense of community. Emphasizing these perks, along with the area's unique cultural offerings, can create a compelling narrative that makes our community stand out as an ideal place to live. By focusing on the positive aspects of residing in the city and county, the recruitment strategy can effectively attract law enforcement professionals seeking not only a fulfilling career but also a vibrant and desirable place to call home.

By strategically deploying cost-effective quality-of-life benefits and tapping into alternative funding sources, the City of Ithaca and Tompkins County can effectively and competitively attract qualified staff within the confines of budgetary requirements. A fundamental tenet of staffing should prioritize employee retention, recognizing the substantial costs associated with staff turnover. Employee attrition is not only monetarily expensive, but it also disrupts operations and negatively impacts morale. Therefore, annual compensation adjustments to align with the competitive market are of paramount importance. Furthermore, it is crucial for the city and county to proactively communicate to potential candidates the indirect benefits of working within their agency. By implementing these measures, the city and county can present a compensation package that aligns with the current market trends in job attributes that employees value.

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<sup>35</sup> Community Oriented Policing Services (n.d.). COPS Hiring Program. Retrieved from <https://cops.usdoj.gov/chp>



## Equipment

Functional and up-to-date equipment is an important contributor to job satisfaction in police agencies. The best tools, equipment, and training mitigate the inherent dangers of the job and allow officers to perform their duties effectively. According to a 2019 study by the Bureau of Justice Statistics<sup>36</sup>:



Law enforcement personnel rely on their equipment. Outdated or ineffective tools create an unsafe environment for officers and residents and can have a significant impact on morale and productivity. Thoughtful planning and strategic resource allocation are essential to get the most value out of a budget of any size.

During our investigation, no law enforcement personnel raised concerns about the quality, condition, or datedness of the current equipment.

### Equipment – Recommendations

There may be opportunities for the city and county to upgrade, repair, or improve monitoring management for the equipment officers rely on to perform their duties. HCH Enterprises suggests the following practical approaches:

**Performing a Needs Assessment:** It is recommended that the City of Ithaca and Tompkins County conduct a needs assessment to identify any equipment the police department does not have or equipment that needs replacement, repair, or update. It is important to prioritize critical equipment such as communication devices, vehicles, and personal protective gear (e.g., external carriers). Additional emphasis should be placed on quality of life and comfort, many of these solutions are inexpensive while providing valuable morale improvement.

**Utilizing Equipment Tracking Tools:** Asset tracking software allows police departments to actively monitor the status of all equipment, from car tires to body armor. By utilizing a tracking system, it becomes much easier for municipalities to anticipate needs and implement systems to replace or maintain equipment before it reaches critical points.

**Identifying Alternate Funding Sources:** There are several available law enforcement grants through the Department of Justice, the Department of Homeland Security, and the Office

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<sup>36</sup> Davis, E., Goodison, S. (2020). Law Enforcement Management and Administrative Statistics (LEMAS). U.S. Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Statistics. Retrieved from <https://bjs.ojp.gov/data-collection/law-enforcement-management-and-administrative-statistics-lemas>



of Community-Oriented Policing Services. The City of Ithaca and Tompkins County are recommended to identify and apply for these available grants. The city and county may consider engaging a grant management consultant to assist with the process of identifying, applying, and managing grants. It is also recommended that they seek funding from individuals and businesses. One strategy that has been successfully implemented elsewhere is accepting donations to be sold or raffled off in exchange for a prominent display at police headquarters. The city and county may consider researching private foundations and organizations that provide equipment and funding.

Acquiring essential equipment is a critical and ongoing task for police agencies. Key recommendations are to seek out additional funding wherever possible, protect existing assets, and ensure that current equipment meets the officer's needs. In addition to added efficacy and efficiency, properly functioning equipment is important for workplace safety, trust in leadership, and team morale – crucial elements to staff retention.

## Accessibility

Accessible workplaces are inherently more inclusive and attract a wider applicant pool. In the United States, there are more than 15 million people of working age living with disabilities, and joint research by the *American Association of People with Disabilities* and *Disability: IN* suggests that by embracing disability inclusion, employers can grow the nation's talent pool by 10.7 million people.<sup>37</sup> Through efforts to make the City a more accessible workplace, the Tompkins County and the City of Ithaca Police Department can expand their recruitment base while improving morale and engagement among the existing workforce.

Law enforcement personnel have raised concerns about the physical accessibility of the police stations.

## Accessibility – Recommendations

Tompkins County and the City of Ithaca should take steps towards creating an accessible workplace by removing any barriers that may prevent individuals from entering these workforces. The importance of a workplace that meets or exceeds accessibility standards cannot be understated. In addition to potential legal ramifications, lack of accessibility reduces the available candidate pool and hurts team morale. This report has identified several recommended actions and practical approaches to assist the city and county in updating police departments with accessibility features.

Targeted Community Outreach to Areas with Limited Police Station Access: It is recommended to strategically deploy initiatives to areas with the least access to stations. Simultaneously, law enforcement can proactively bridge gaps and establish a stronger presence in underserved communities. These outreach programs should extend beyond

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<sup>37</sup> Accenture. (2018). *Getting to Equal: The Disability Inclusion Advantage*. Retrieved from [https://pfp-idefellowship.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/disability\\_inclusion\\_research\\_final.pdf](https://pfp-idefellowship.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/disability_inclusion_research_final.pdf)





conventional policing and function as trust-building activities. Incorporating elements such as neighborhood meetings, community forums, and collaborative events can foster open communication channels, allowing residents to engage with law enforcement in a non-confrontational setting. This approach not only enhances accessibility but also lays the foundation for mutual understanding and trust between the police and the communities they serve.

**Conducting an Accessibility Assessment:** It is recommended that the city and county assess its current state of accessibility. Facilities, workplace policies, technology, websites, and equipment should be assessed for potential barriers to accessibility. It is important to consider a wide range of disabilities to ensure a complete accessibility strategy. All new projects should be implemented with deliberate accessibility consideration.

**Addressing Barriers to Accessibility:** Once any barriers have been identified, the city and county should develop a plan to address any shortcomings in a way that is effective while also within financial capabilities. It is essential to prioritize factors based on their potential impact – legal liability, recruitment challenges, and effect on current staff. Several no-cost or low-cost actions can improve workplace accessibility, including rearranging furniture or providing adjustable standing desks. These quality-of-life improvements can significantly improve job satisfaction while potentially reducing injuries by promoting a healthy lifestyle.

**Implementing Accessible Emergency Procedures:** Emergency procedures must be accessible to employees with disabilities, including providing braille or audio instruction. It is also important to consider other forms of accessibility, such as visual alerts for individuals with hearing impairments. By broadening the scope of accessible emergency procedures, workplace safety is better achieved for all employees.

**Conducting Disability Awareness Training:** It is recommended that the city and county provide training for all employees on disability awareness and inclusion. This training provides valuable information about common challenges faced by individuals with disabilities. This understanding will help police officers have better interactions with their colleagues and the public. To enhance its impact, it may be beneficial to conduct ongoing training and support.

**Seeking Staff Feedback:** In addition to periodic reviews and updates to the workplace's accessibility policies and procedures, it is recommended that the city actively seek feedback from employees and include them in the decision-making process. By incorporating employee suggestions and experiences, the workplace may become more responsive to the evolving needs of its diverse workforce.

## Recognition and Rewards

Interviews with law enforcement personnel indicate that the City of Ithaca conducts yearly staff picnics in Stewart Park with food trucks and games. In addition, 25-year club celebration dinners are hosted in recognition of officers retiring. Both





activities receive widespread support and positive feedback.

National surveys of workplaces have found that when employees believe they will be recognized, they are two to three times more likely to be highly engaged.<sup>38</sup> There is evidence that even small recognition efforts can have a significant impact on police departments. In a 1996 doctoral dissertation, Dimitra Cornelius found that 80 percent of the officers surveyed “reported recognition, such as awards, verbal recognition, and employee of the month were motivational factors that could aid employees to increase productivity.”<sup>39</sup> Given that the cost of providing verbal recognition or formal commendations is low, providing such feedback to law enforcement personnel should be part of every department’s labor relations strategy.

A comprehensive review of employee recognition programs in law enforcement conducted by the National Institute of Justice revealed that such programs not only improve job satisfaction but also contribute to enhanced officer well-being, reduced burnout, and increased overall organizational effectiveness. The empirical evidence from academic studies and the National Institute of Justice all indicates that implementing employee recognition and rewards programs can significantly benefit every police department.

## Recognition and Rewards – Recommendations

**Implementing an Employee Recognition Process:** To implement an employee recognition program a process must be established for nominations, review, and selection. A selection committee, with a makeup of peers, leadership, and community leaders, should be tasked with reviewing all nominations and determining what actions deserve recognition. At periodic intervals formal recognition should occur through an event or ceremony, serving as a platform to present certificates, plaques, or letters of commendation extending invitations to peers, members of the City’s selectboard, department heads, and influential community leaders. This event can also function as a fundraising event and a chance for staff bonding. Be sure to include recognition of commitment to the development of DEI skill sets and reward contributions to creating more equitable and inclusive communities.

**Offering Professional Development Opportunities:** It is recommended that the city and county research relevant conferences, seminars, and training programs and create a repository for professional development opportunities. Officers should have easy access to information regarding upcoming programs’ availability and professional development opportunities. The city and county may consider a dedicated budget for such development opportunities to demonstrate the police department’s dedication to the workforce. According to a survey by the Society for Human Resources Management, nearly 80 percent of employees said they would be more likely to stay with their current employer if offered more professional development opportunities.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> 2022 Employee Benefits Survey. (2022) Society for Human Resources Management.

<sup>39</sup> Cornelius, D. Law Enforcement Employees’ Experiences of Skillful Recognition by Leaders, 1996, <https://scholarworks.waldenu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3546&context=dissertations>, p. 123

<sup>40</sup> 2022 Employee Benefits Survey. (2022) Society for Human Resources Management.



**Providing Wellness Benefits:** There is a growing need for law enforcement personnel to have access to wellness benefits, including programs that promote healthy habits and active lifestyles. Access to dedicated mental health services is also increasingly common. Mental health services must be provided in a manner that accommodates current personnel, with an emphasis on confidentiality. A 2020 study found that of 434 police officers surveyed, "12 percent had a lifetime mental health diagnosis, and 26 percent reported current symptoms of mental illness. Of these officers, 17 percent had sought mental health care services in the past 12 months, but officers reported interest in help if a few key concerns were met, including confidentiality assurance."<sup>41</sup> It is recommended that the city and county review its existing employee wellness programs and ensure personnel have confidential access to benefits and programs that align with their needs.

**Provide Career Development Plans:** Offering a well-structured career development plan requires close collaboration with supervisors and officers to identify potential career paths within the department. By establishing a comprehensive framework that outlines the necessary skills and competencies for each career stage, officers are provided with transparent guidance for their professional growth. Regular performance assessments, feedback sessions, and mentorship programs can ensure a robust career development plan that supports upward mobility.

**Participating in Community Events:** It is recommended that the police department create a calendar of community events and develop a system to encourage law enforcement personnel to participate and engage with the community. Such a system may involve scheduling flexibility or allocating specific duty time for officers to participate in these events. The goal of these efforts should be to demonstrate the agency's commitment to community outreach. These programs can foster stronger connections between officers and the communities they serve.

**Community Involvement During Police Picnics:** It is recommended that community involvement be encouraged by presenting the picnic as a community event in collaboration with the Ithaca Police Department rather than as a dedicated police event. This can potentially improve attendance and provide opportunities for organic community interaction. Implementing a relaxed uniform policy during the event could facilitate connections with members of the public who may not otherwise interact with law enforcement. However, it is strongly recommended that an alternative term is used instead of a picnic as the term picnic has historical connotations that may be triggering to particular marginalized groups. Consider the terms barbeque or cookout.

It is important to emphasize that while formal recognition and rewards programs are impactful, even simple acts of appreciation, such as regular verbal praise and acknowledgment, can significantly contribute to positive law enforcement workplaces. By adopting a comprehensive approach to employee recognition and operationalizing the

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<sup>41</sup> Jetelina, K., Molsberry, R., Reingle Gonzalez, J., Beauchamp, A., Hall, T. (2020, October 7). Prevalence of Mental Illness and Mental Health Care Use Among Police Officers. National Library of Medicine. Retrieved from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7542299/>.



recommended actions, the city and county can create a culture of empowerment. These recommendations should be viewed as low-cost, high-impact investments in staff retention.

## Monitoring and Metrics

To verify the effectiveness of the recommended initiatives, it is important to establish monitoring systems. The implementation of regular monitoring systems for initiative key performance indicators (KPIs) is recommended. By clearly defining target goals for these KPIs we can track the effectiveness of the programs introduced and modify mission objectives and strategy as needed.

To correctly identify program successes and shortcomings, it is crucial to identify the most relevant KPIs for each recruitment and retention initiative. These KPIs may include the number of qualified applicants per job posting, employee turnover rates, and employee satisfaction scores. By tracking the right KPIs, the city and county are better positioned to make data-driven decisions on recruitment and retention program strategies and resource allocation.

To establish a comprehensive strategic plan for law enforcement recruitment and retention, it is recommended that the City develop a series of specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) goals. SMART goals, first introduced by energy industry executive George T. Doran in the November 1981 issue of *Management Review*<sup>42</sup>, are designed to make goals more articulate, measurable, and meaningful.

Below is an example of a SMART goal for law enforcement recruitment:

**Specific:** Increase the number of qualified applicants from diverse backgrounds by 20 percent within the next fiscal year.

**Measurable:** Implement a tracking system to measure the applicant conversion rate at each stage of the recruitment process, aiming for a minimum of 50 percent conversion from initial application to successful completion of the hiring process.

**Achievable:** Develop strategic partnerships with local community organizations to host recruitment events and reach a wider pool of potential candidates.

**Relevant:** Enhance the recruitment messaging and materials to highlight the benefits of a law enforcement career, such as competitive salaries, comprehensive training programs, and opportunities for professional growth.

**Time-bound:** Establish a timeline to review and update recruitment strategies annually, incorporating feedback from current and former recruits, and implement the revised strategies by the beginning of the next recruitment cycle.

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<sup>42</sup> Doran, G. T. (1981). "There's a S.M.A.R.T. way to write management's goals and objectives." *Management Review*, 70(11), 35–36.



The city and county can more effectively achieve their objectives when policies and initiatives are regularly evaluated for effectiveness and consistency with the mission statement. This includes the regular, data-driven evaluation of recruitment strategies, retention initiatives, and employee satisfaction levels. Evaluation should inform regular strategy reconsideration and consistent improvement over time. Feedback through surveys and exit interviews can provide valuable insights that may help optimize recruitment and retention strategies.

## STRATEGIC PLAN PROPOSAL

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This strategic plan proposal outlines key examples of actionable recommendations for enhancing the recruitment and retention of law enforcement personnel in Tompkins County and the City of Ithaca, New York. The proposed plan covers key areas: monitoring and metrics of workplace culture, recruiting, diversity, equity and inclusion, compensation, equipment, accessibility, and reward and recognition.

### Monitoring and Metrics

Creating robust performance metrics for assessing the efficacy of recruitment and retention efforts is crucial to long-term success. It is highly recommended that the city and county systematically gather data concerning retention rates, employee satisfaction, and diversity metrics. By doing so, the city and county can monitor the current organizational climate and track the success of strategies applied to reach department goals.

**Recommendation: Establish Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-Bound (SMART) Goals**

Long-term Goal	Short-term Objective	KPI (Key Points of Interest)	Implementation Period
Develop at least one specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, time-bound (SMART) goal for each category outlined in this report	Create SMART goals in consultation with relevant stakeholders	Number of SMART goals created per category; Review status of each goal monthly	Month 1

**Recommendation: Identify the Target Recruitment Audience**

Long-term Goal	Short-term Objective	KPI (Key Points of Interest)	Implementation Period
Increase qualified applicant pool by 20% through targeted engagement	Engage with three distinct audiences through dedicated recruitment drives	Increase in applicant number compared to previous same-period statistics; Improvement in job offer acceptance rate by 10% compared to previous rate	Month 1-2

**Recommendation: Monitor and Evaluate Plan Success**

Long-term Goal	Short-term Objective	KPI (Key Points of Interest)	Implementation Period
Regularly evaluate and adjust strategic plan based on success metrics	Implement quarterly reviews of key performance indicators	Increase in goal completion rate by 15%; Improvement in offer acceptance rate by 10%; Reduction in turnover rate by 10%	Every quarter for the first year, then semi- annually

## Workplace Culture

Creating a positive workplace culture is crucial in retaining staff in the City of Ithaca and Tompkins County. It is recommended that the department undergo training and development for supervisors and staff to create a communicative and supportive workplace culture. This involves encouraging collaboration, providing feedback, and promoting work-life balance.

Recommendation: Provide Training in Ethics, Communication, and Conflict Resolution

Long-term Goal	Short-term Objective	KPI (Key Points of Interest)	Implementation Period
Improve officer well-being and effectiveness through training	Provide monthly training sessions in ethics, communication, and conflict resolution	10% improvement in internal communication scores; 15% reduction in internal conflicts and complaints	Month 3-6

Recommendation: Offer Leadership Development and Learning Opportunities

Long-term Goal	Short-term Objective	KPI (Key Points of Interest)	Implementation Period
Foster leadership skills among officers	Implement a quarterly leadership development program	10% reduction in officer burnout rates; 15% increase in officer engagement and satisfaction scores; At least 70% of eligible officers participate in leadership activities	Quarterly, starting from Q1

Recommendation: Incentivize Employee Referrals

Long-term Goal	Short-term Objective	KPI (Key Points of Interest)	Implementation Period
Improve quality of new hires through employee referrals	Implement an employee referral program	10% of total hires come through referrals; Retention rate of hires through referrals is 10% higher than other sources	Month 3-4

## Recruiting

To attract recruits, it is recommended that the city and county develop a comprehensive and targeted recruitment strategy that includes advertising career opportunities on relevant websites, social media, and career fairs. They may also consider partnering with local schools and community organizations to promote career opportunities.

Recommendation: **Implement Marketing Strategy**





Long-term Goal	Short-term Objective	KPI (Key Points of Interest)	Implementation Period
Enhance organization's public image and recruitment strategies	Develop the marketing strategy based on recommendations outlined in this report.	20% increase in the number of applications; A positive change in public perception measured through public surveys	Month 1-3

Recommendation: Organize Informative Orientations

Long-term Goal	Short-term Objective	KPI (Key Points of Interest)	Implementation Period
Effectively prepare new hires for their roles	Conduct monthly orientation sessions for new hires	90% retention rate of new hires who attended orientations; 80% of orientation attendees subsequently apply for roles	Month 3 (ongoing)

Recommendation: Partner with Schools and Offer Internships

Long-term Goal	Short-term Objective	KPI (Key Points of Interest)	Implementation Period
Establish a talent acquisition pipeline through community engagement	Collaborate with 5 local schools to offer internships	10 internships offered each year; 20% increase in diversity of program participants	Month 7 (ongoing)

## Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Any municipality can benefit from a diverse, equitable, and inclusive workplace. It is recommended that the city and county develop a comprehensive DEI strategy that includes measurable goals, regular diversity training for staff, recruitment of candidates from diverse backgrounds, and review of policies and procedures to ensure inclusivity.

Recommendation: Establish clear goals and measurable targets for workplace diversity, equity, and inclusion

Long-term Goal	Short-term Objective	KPI (Key Points of Interest)	Implementation Period
Develop a clear and measurable diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) plan outlining objectives	Develop DEI plan in consultation with internal and external stakeholders	10% increase in representation of underrepresented groups in the workforce; Improvement in employee satisfaction scores by 15%	Month 3-6

Recommendation: Develop and provide ongoing DEI training opportunities for law enforcement personnel



Long-term Goal	Short-term Objective	KPI (Key Points of Interest)	Implementation Period
Foster an inclusive and respectful workplace through regular DEI training	Organize monthly DEI training sessions for all personnel	At least 80% attendance in DEI training sessions; Improvement in employee satisfaction scores by 10%	Month 6-12

Recommendation: Create a diversity committee comprising city and community members

Long-term Goal	Short-term Objective	KPI (Key Points of Interest)	Implementation Period
Promote community involvement and ensure inclusivity in agency operations	Establish a diversity committee within 2 months	At least 5 committee members involved, each representing a different stakeholder group; At least 10 actionable items identified from community meetings per quarter; Progress toward achieving DEI goals reviewed semi-annually	Year 1

## Compensation

Competitive compensation packages will attract and retain employees in the City of Ithaca and Tompkins County. It is recommended that a compensation analysis be conducted to ensure that its salaries and benefits are competitive with other departments in the region.

Recommendation: Research Compensation Packages Offered by Competing Agencies

Long-term Goal	Short-term Objective	KPI (Key Points of Interest)	Implementation Period
Ensure competitive compensation to attract and retain talent	Conduct a biannual market analysis to assess the competitiveness of compensation packages	Salary and benefits are within the top 25% of industry standards; 10% increase in employee retention rates	Month 1-3, and then biannually

Recommendation: Offer Flexible Scheduling Options

Long-term Goal	Short-term Objective	KPI (Key Points of Interest)	Implementation Period
Improve job satisfaction and retention through work-life balance	Offer flexible work schedules where operationally feasible	30% of officers availing flexible scheduling options; 15% increase in employee satisfaction scores	Month 6



## Equipment

Providing employees with up-to-date and reliable equipment is essential for their safety and job performance. It is recommended that the city and county regularly assess its equipment needs and invest in necessary upgrades and replacements.

Recommendation: Conduct a needs assessment to identify equipment the city and county lacks or needs replacement, repair, or updating

Long-term Goal	Short-term Objective	KPI (Key Points of Interest)	Implementation Period
Ensure law enforcement personnel have access to necessary and functioning equipment	Conduct a thorough needs assessment of equipment within the first month	At least 10 high-priority equipment items identified for replacement, repair, or update	Month 1-2

Recommendation: Seek out funding or obtain a grant management service to pursue revenue from multiple sources, including federal and state grants, donations, private foundations, and crowdfunding campaigns

Long-term Goal	Short-term Objective	KPI (Key Points of Interest)	Implementation Period
Secure sufficient funding to meet equipment and operational needs	Begin funding applications immediately after needs assessment is completed	At least 5 different funding sources secured; 20% increase in overall funding compared to previous year	Ongoing; start immediately after the needs assessment is completed

## Accessibility

Law enforcement agencies have higher worker satisfaction and a larger applicant pool when workspaces are accessible. It is recommended that the city and county consider accommodations for individuals with disabilities during the recruitment and hiring processes, as well as providing language services to non-English speaking residents.

Recommendation: Conduct a thorough accessibility assessment of the workplace to identify possible barriers.

Long-term Goal	Short-term Objective	KPI (Key Points of Interest)	Implementation Period
Ensure the workplace is accessible for all law enforcement personnel	Conduct an accessibility assessment within the first month	At least 5 potential accessibility barriers identified and addressed	Month 1-3

Recommendation: Develop a plan to address the barriers identified in the assessment

Long-term Goal	Short-term Objective	KPI (Key Points of Interest)	Implementation Period
Create an inclusive workplace environment that caters to the diverse needs of employees	Develop and implement an accessibility plan within 3 months of completing the assessment	All identified barriers addressed; Improvement in employee satisfaction scores by 10%	Month 3-6

## Recognition and Rewards

Recognizing the contributions of law enforcement officials is shown to improve morale and increase retention rates. The city and county are recommended to develop a rewards and recognition program that acknowledges employee achievements and promotes a positive work culture.

Recommendation: Award public recognition and appreciation

Long-term Goal	Short-term Objective	KPI (Key Points of Interest)	Implementation Period
Foster a culture of appreciation and recognition	Implement a monthly recognition and reward program	At least 3 awards presented per month; 10% improvement in employee satisfaction scores	Ongoing

## IMPLEMENTATION RECOMMENDATIONS

Implementation Department	Supporting Department	Goal		
HR – Tompkins County and City of Ithaca	Police Department	<table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;">Recruitment Partnership</td> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;">Collaborative efforts with external organizations/agencies for officer recruitment.</td> </tr> </table>	Recruitment Partnership	Collaborative efforts with external organizations/agencies for officer recruitment.
		Recruitment Partnership	Collaborative efforts with external organizations/agencies for officer recruitment.	
		<table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;">Candidate Identification</td> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;">Strategies employed to identify individuals best suited for police roles.</td> </tr> </table>	Candidate Identification	Strategies employed to identify individuals best suited for police roles.
		Candidate Identification	Strategies employed to identify individuals best suited for police roles.	
	<table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;">Challenges of Police Work</td> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;">Examination of the difficulties and complexities inherent in law enforcement duties.</td> </tr> </table>	Challenges of Police Work	Examination of the difficulties and complexities inherent in law enforcement duties.	
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	<table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;">Realities Faced</td> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;">Insights into the practical experiences encountered by officers on a day-to-day basis.</td> </tr> </table>	Realities Faced	Insights into the practical experiences encountered by officers on a day-to-day basis.	
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Reimagining Public Safety Working Group	<table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;">Facilitate transparency to nurture trust between the police department and the community.</td> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;">                     Transparency Initiative Example:                     <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regular Community Meetings</li> <li>• Public Release of Incident Reports</li> <li>• Body Camera Usage</li> <li>• Annual Transparency Reports</li> <li>• Citizen Review Boards</li> </ul> </td> </tr> </table>	Facilitate transparency to nurture trust between the police department and the community.	Transparency Initiative Example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regular Community Meetings</li> <li>• Public Release of Incident Reports</li> <li>• Body Camera Usage</li> <li>• Annual Transparency Reports</li> <li>• Citizen Review Boards</li> </ul>	
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DEI initiative Leader	<table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;">Collaborate with HR as an appointed representative of the police department training body and as a member of the Reimagining Public Safety Working Group.</td> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;">                     Collaborative Initiatives:                     <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DEI Leader and HR Partnership</li> <li>• Representation in Training Body</li> <li>• Involvement in Reimagining Public Safety Working Group</li> </ul> </td> </tr> </table>	Collaborate with HR as an appointed representative of the police department training body and as a member of the Reimagining Public Safety Working Group.	Collaborative Initiatives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DEI Leader and HR Partnership</li> <li>• Representation in Training Body</li> <li>• Involvement in Reimagining Public Safety Working Group</li> </ul>	
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As the City of Ithaca and Tompkins County move forward with implementing the new strategies for police recruitment and retention outlined above, it is clear that a collaborative approach will be the key to success. The Human Resources (HR) departments of the city and county must lead these efforts. However, it is essential to recognize the valuable role of the police and the Reimagining Public Safety Working Group in this process.

The police department certainly has a vested interest in how new officers are recruited. Their insights and experience are invaluable, but they must work alongside, rather than separately from, the HR departments. This partnership can ensure that the recruitment process not only finds the right candidates but also reflects the practical

needs and realities of police work.

Additionally, the involvement of the Reimagining Public Safety Working Group is essential in this phase. This group can bring a public and resident perspective, ensuring that community views and concerns are considered throughout the implementation process. Their participation is vital in maintaining transparency and building trust between the police department and the community.

The HR departments have expertise in recruitment and management, making them well-suited to lead these efforts. They understand how to create effective recruitment strategies and can ensure that the processes are fair and efficient. By leading the implementation, they allow police officers to focus on their primary responsibility of ensuring public safety.

Special attention must be given to the DEI initiatives and its implementation. The identification of an individual who can lead ownership in this charge is critical. A collaborative approach alongside the HR department, a dedicated representative of the police department training body, and a representative of the Reimagining Public Safety Working Group is essential.

In conclusion, a collaborative and inclusive approach to implementing the new recruitment and retention strategies is crucial. The HR departments, police, and the Reimagining Public Safety Working Group each have a unique and vital role to play. By working together, they can create a recruitment process that not only meets professional standards but also aligns with community values and needs.



## METHODOLOGY

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The research team employed a diverse set of data collection tools, each contributing significantly to the comprehensiveness of the study. Below is an outline of the investigative techniques the team used.

**Literature Review:** The team began with a thorough literature review. This extensive review of U.S. Department of Justice materials, scholarly articles, industry reports, and relevant publications ensured that this study was grounded in the latest research and industry knowledge. This was a strategic starting point as it grounded the research in a broader national context, providing an understanding of existing challenges and best practices in police recruitment and retention. It was essential for benchmarking local practices against national standards.

**Analysis of Recruiting Videos:** Analyzing recruiting videos from the city and the county offered direct insights into the recruitment strategies employed. This method was particularly effective in assessing the appeal and messaging of these strategies to potential recruits. The content of these videos could reveal how the agencies perceive themselves and wish to be perceived, which is crucial for understanding their recruitment approach.

**Local Media Coverage Analysis:** Examining local media coverage was vital to understanding public perceptions and the potential impact of media narratives on recruitment and retention. This approach allowed the team to gauge the community's attitude towards the police, which can significantly influence recruitment and retention efforts.

**Interviews with Law Enforcement Representatives:** Speaking with the IPD interim police chief and a police union representative provided invaluable inside perspectives. These interviews allowed the team to understand the internal challenges and attitudes within the police force, offering a viewpoint that external analysis could not fully capture. The insights gained from these interviews were instrumental in identifying the specific factors most relevant to the city and county in their recruitment and retention efforts.

**Interviews with Local Professionals:** Including HR professionals from various local institutions in the study broadened the research scope. These interviews provided diverse insights into recruitment and retention, going beyond the law enforcement field. Understanding HR practices in different organizations can offer innovative ideas and strategies that might apply to police recruitment and retention.

**Informal Survey of Interested Individuals:** Conducting an informal survey among those interested in law enforcement careers was crucial for understanding the motivations and barriers faced by potential recruits. This direct feedback from the target demographic of recruitment efforts can inform more effective and targeted strategies.





Steering Group Discussions: Discussing the joint recruitment and retention strategy with city and county personnel was a wise inclusion. It ensured that the research findings were aligned with practical administrative objectives and gave the team insights into the strategic thinking and challenges at the administrative level.

Each method provided a unique and necessary perspective, contributing to a well-rounded and thorough understanding of the complexities of recruiting and retaining police officers in the City of Ithaca and Tompkins County.

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## INTERVIEW PROCESS

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The feedback that helped inform HCH of the current workplace culture and landscape related to the recruitment and retention of law enforcement personnel in Tompkins County and the City of Ithaca was obtained through a series of interviews. These interviews occurred between October 3, 2023, and December 5, 2023. A total of six interviews were conducted – two members of law enforcement and four civilian personnel – in which they provided answers to a 17-question questionnaire.

### Interview Questions

Tompkins County, City of Ithaca  
Recruitment and Retention  
Employee Interview

Name (Optional): \_\_\_\_\_ Job Title (Optional): \_\_\_\_\_  
Length of time in Position: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Your feedback is essential in helping Tompkins County and the City of Ithaca identify opportunities for growth and current effective practices. Please provide your honest evaluation in response to the following questions.

1. What aspects of your job do you find most satisfying? Why are these aspects important to you? In what ways do you believe your job satisfaction can be enhanced, especially in the context of diversity, equity, and inclusion?
2. Can you provide examples of how the city fosters diversity and equity in the workplace? In your opinion, what specific steps or changes could further improve diversity and equity within the organization?
3. If you could change one aspect of your job, what would it be? How would this change positively impact your experience, especially concerning diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts?
4. How did you become aware of your current position, and did you encounter any



obstacles during the application process? Please share any challenges you faced and how they could be addressed to promote more inclusive hiring practices.

5. In your view, do any of the city's employment policies function as barriers to hiring otherwise qualified individuals? If so, can you provide an example and suggest potential modifications?

6. For law enforcement officers: Why did you choose a career in law enforcement, and would you make the same choice today? How do you think the perception of law enforcement as a career has evolved?

7. For law enforcement officers: What influenced your decision to join the City of Ithaca Police Department, and do you believe those reasons are still relevant today? Why or why not?

8. For law enforcement officers: Have you ever contemplated leaving your law enforcement career? If so, what factors contributed to this consideration, and how can such challenges be addressed to enhance retention and diversity within the department?

9. What changes or initiatives would you propose to attract diverse candidates to the city of Ithaca? How do you anticipate these changes impacting recruitment efforts?

10. Would you recommend a position within the town or its police force to a friend or family member? Please elaborate on your reasons for or against such a recommendation, considering diversity, equity, and inclusion aspects.

11. What motivates you in your current position, and what factors have a demotivating effect? How can the town better support and motivate its employees, especially in the context of diversity and inclusion?

12. Do you believe you have been provided with sufficient growth and development opportunities in your current position, considering your role and aspirations? If not, what measures could enhance professional development opportunities?

13. For supervisors: Do you believe growth and development opportunities are adequate within your department? If not, what strategies could the city implement to improve this aspect?

14. For supervisors: What are five concrete actions or initiatives the city could undertake to increase employee retention, particularly focusing on diverse staff members?

15. For supervisors: Can you offer suggestions on how the city could recruit more qualified and diverse staff, including potential changes to recruitment strategies and practices?

16. For supervisors: What recommendations do you have for retaining the current staff, with an emphasis on fostering a diverse and inclusive work environment?



17. Is there anything else you would like to share or discuss that we have not covered in our conversation today? Please feel free to share any perspectives, concerns, or ideas that you believe are important in the context of diversity, equity, inclusion, and the city's recruitment and retention strategies.



## CONCLUSION

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This report sets forth detailed policy recommendations to bolster recruitment and retention within the police departments of the City of Ithaca and Tompkins County. These recommendations span immediate policy changes and long-term best practices, all aimed at enhancing job satisfaction for officers, improving community relations and safety, promoting transparency, and broadening the departments' capabilities in attracting skilled personnel.

It is recommended that City and county Human Resource (HR) departments spearhead select initiatives in collaboration with the Reimagining Public Safety Working Group and police departments. The HR departments are a valuable resource to support the departments, allowing them to focus on their essential services.

Retention efforts go hand in hand with recruitment capabilities. By fostering a more satisfied and committed workforce, the city and county can improve their appeal to a diverse pool of applicants. The city and county must retain existing personnel. The City of Ithaca and Tompkins County must cultivate a workplace that demonstrates appreciation and investment in staff. It is recommended that the city and county prioritize competitive compensation packages, transparent pathways for career advancement, and investment in support services for law enforcement. These elements form the foundation of a comprehensive suite of recommendations to enhance the staff's well-being and job satisfaction, ultimately maximizing the likelihood that they will stay with the department.

Accommodating a range of budgetary availability, we provide a variety of recommendations that offer exceptional value to the city and county. Many proposed measures aim to augment direct compensation by incorporating quality-of-life benefits such as recognition programs and increased work-hour flexibility. It is strongly advised that any quality-of-life benefits adopted, as well as other rewards of living in the community, are prominently featured in recruiting materials. This is particularly important in efforts to recruit from across the country.

Complementing cost-effective strategies, we recommend utilizing opportunities for financial support. Such support is available through programs like the Good Neighbor Next Door for law enforcement officers and various grants for the city and county. Many grant resources are accessible, representing lucrative funding opportunities for law enforcement agencies. Establishing a comprehensive grant acquisition and management system will enable the city and county to secure funding that directly improves law enforcement agency operations.

For effective recruitment reflecting the diversity of the community, the city and county should intensify outreach efforts. The report suggests strategies including a more substantial social media presence, hosting open houses, ride-along programs, and school programs. These initiatives, coupled with policies that enable officers to interact positively with the community, will not only boost officer morale and public relations but also foster long-term interest in community policing. Such engagement is vital in attracting a varied



applicant pool and building a police force that truly represents and understands the community it serves.

In addition to taking the actions above to increase the appeal of the City of Ithaca and Tompkins County to prospective applicants, we provide recommendations to improve the success rate of the hiring process. Strategies include streamlining the application process, community outreach programs to educate the public on law enforcement career opportunities and requirements, mentorship programs and classes, and a check-in schedule providing regular updates about the application status. Implementing these changes will make the hiring process more transparent and inclusive, particularly to community members without prior friends or family in law enforcement.

Our recommendations are based on the understanding that enhancing community relations, boosting employee retention, and attracting recruits are interrelated objectives. Improving community relations creates a more positive daily work environment for officers, contributing to higher retention rates and a stronger appeal to potential recruits.

By adopting the strategies delineated in this report, the City of Ithaca and Tompkins County can effectively address recruitment and retention challenges. Furthermore, recommendations will allow the Ithaca Police Department and Tompkins County Sheriff's Office to build community trust and capability for effective policing. By attracting and retaining qualified personnel, departments will achieve an adaptable workforce of the most talented individuals. Through data-driven implementation and continued commitment to improvement, the city and county will attain enduring success in recruitment and retention.

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