

FY26 Budget Proposal

Report to the Vermont Legislature House and Senate Committees On Appropriations

Vermont Criminal Justice Council Vermont Police Academy

11/5/2024



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Vermont Criminal Justice Council (VCJC) Budget Proposal FY26

Policing across the nation has experienced a cultural shift in how law enforcement approaches their work within communities. The twelve pillars of policing reported by the Department of Justice in 2020 outlined a roadmap for building trust and legitimacy within the profession and in our nation as a whole. As a revolution of change began to emerge the State of Vermont created a 24-member Council, including 12 existing members, seven Governor appointees, and five new positions. The Council member roster is included as part of this report. The Council had its first meeting in January of 2021 and has since eagerly worked to fulfill the intent of the legislature by focusing on the State mission to protect the vulnerable, and the Council's mission of transparency, legitimacy, and change.

To support the ongoing mission of the Council and to assist in identifying areas of critical need, including personnel and programmatic needs, nine subcommittees and working groups were created. These committees meet regularly, some weekly, and are working toward creating a legally defensible curriculum; compliance programs; alternate pathways to learning; professional regulation; officer wellness; canine program development; Council rule development; and entrance testing to name a few.

The Vermont Police Academy is a subset of the Council, with its Executive Director reporting to the Council Chair. The Vermont Police Academy is currently made up of twelve full-time positions. An organization chart is also included in this report for reference. The work of the Council is driven by Council members and the work is provided and supported by Academy staff as well as volunteer law enforcement instructors throughout the state.

In 2022 the State Auditor's office performed an audit on training records for the Vermont Policy Academy, through this process the Council was able to provide supporting evidence for the personnel and programmatic deficiencies in identified areas of critical need. Through the audit process, staff was able to point to outcomes in the report that identify deficiencies in the ability to provide essential needs such as compliance monitoring, alternate learning strategies, equity impact assessments, and capacity building. A paradigm shift in how training is conducted is essential to meeting the needs of the Academy, law enforcement, communities, and the State as a whole. Through Accreditation the Academy will build new models of learning, and a compliance framework on which to build critically required programs.

If required to level fund at FY 2025 levels, we would continue to struggle to meet many of the training demands of the Vermont Law Enforcement community and the public for 2025-2026 and would lengthen the process with which many legislative mandates could be accomplished as outlined within the incorporated legislative language.

The Council has identified the need for four additional positions. They are represented in the table below, followed by a detailed description of the responsibilities of each position. The Council has identified the need for program development through an internal needs assessment. They are bulleted below, followed by a detailed description of the program needs and the responsibilities of each position. The Council understands that 4 positions is a large ask so we have listed positions by their importance to our operations and overall goals.



Personnel Requests

Curriculum Developer <i>PG 25 S 2</i>	\$ 114,247
Canine Head Trainer <i>PG 25 S 2</i>	\$ 114,247
Athletic Trainer <i>PG 23 S2</i>	\$ 104,417
Administrative Program Compliance PG 23 S2	\$ 104,417

Throughout this report all legislative mandates will be highlighted in yellow.

During the previous legislative seasons leading up to FY26 the legislature has supported multiple initiatives of the Council including positions for previously unfunded programs. This support has been critical to advancing law enforcement training in the state but there is still a distinct lack of capacity in training and certification. The first area is in the funding of positions. With the granting of the one-time funds for curriculum review and development in FY23 there is a need to support the work that is being done to legitimize the current training with a curriculum developer specializing in adult education. Secondly, the Canine program has no personnel available, and a contractor is being utilized to provide current certifications for the program until a long-term solution can be provided. Our third critical area is the health and wellness of our recruits and instructors in the training environment. To ensure program completion and lifelong wellness we require an athletic trainer. Lastly, we are in need of additional administrative support, as we seek to ensure that the intent of the legislature is fulfilled in our operations, we take on more compliance, more records, more responsibility, and with only one administrative support position. We are in critical need of a compliance based administrative position to support various programs.

The Council takes the responsibility of training and professional regulation of Vermont's law enforcement officers seriously. In the State of Vermont, we have 1,164 Level III law enforcement officers, and 243 Level II officers (Appendix A provides a brief breakdown of the requirements of a Level II and Level III officer). The public deserves to know that when an officer responds to a call they are capable and accountable for their actions. The mission of the Council, although still focused on training has expanded since S. 124, the community approach to problem solving and the expansive view of long-term possibilities for change in Vermont law enforcement has also amplified the responsibilities of Council staff.



The overarching goal of the Council is to provide accessible, defensible training that provides the safety and inclusion of all Vermonters. To accomplish this goal the Council is actively working to develop training pathways, support law enforcement entities in their mission to provide public safety, build relationships with organizations, expand marketing opportunities to increase and retain the labor supply, expand our officer and community wellness initiative, and promote accessibility and outreach within the council and our partnerships.

Without these positions the ability of the Council staff to meet legislative demands, operational capacity, and safe state practices will be detrimental to the development of law enforcement professionals in the state during a time when numbers are critically low, and the safety of all Vermonters will be impacted.

§ 2351. CREATION AND PURPOSE OF COUNCIL (1) encourage and assist municipalities, counties, and governmental agencies of this State in their efforts to improve the quality of law enforcement and citizen protection by maintaining a uniform standard of recruitment basic training for law enforcement applicants and in-service training for law enforcement officers;

During the calendar years of 2022-2024 the Academy took strong strides towards legitimizing Academy training and accountability. A Professional Regulation process was developed and implemented, a process by which we verify training records was implemented, we initiated a record management system transfer, and a record schedule update to incorporate systematic changes. As a Department we gathered important information from the state on process improvements, we also conducted a third-party audit on our Canine program after the retirement of the designated Canine Law Enforcement Training Coordinator. Through these processes we identified the following:

Legislative Mandates

Basic and in-service training demands have increased. Professional development opportunities require expansion. All of Vermont's police agencies would benefit from opportunities to address supervision and leadership development, de-escalation training, mental health crisis response, and scenario-based training. When S.124 was passed to remove training from our name recognizing the function of the council expands beyond training. 20 V.S.A. § 2351 restates the definition of the purpose, powers, and duties of the Council. Though the mission of promoting and protecting the health, safety, and welfare of the public through training and certifying all Vermont Law Enforcement Officers remains at its core, there are directives and nuances to be explored and addressed at the direction of the Legislature.

§ 2355. COUNCIL POWERS AND DUTIES

(a) The Council shall adopt rules with respect to: (1) the approval, or revocation thereof, of law enforcement officer training schools and off-



site training programs, which shall include rules to identify and implement alternate routes to certification aside from the training provided at the Vermont Police Academy.

Identifying alternate routes to certification and off-site delivery of training schools requires an immense amount of study, planning, and gathering of resources. In 2024 the Council updated their rules to address the changes originating in 2021 with S. 124. Part of phase II of additional rule changes will include an evaluation of agencies because all police agencies in the State of Vermont will be impacted by changes to the certification process. A team of stakeholders, including civilian members, will need to be developed and trained to steer this process in order to produce procedures that reflect our mission of promoting and protecting the health, safety, and welfare of the public. Council staff will tackle this directive head-on but will require additional personnel to manage it.

§ 2355. COUNCIL POWERS AND DUTIES

(2) The Council shall structure its programs so that on and after July 1, 2021, a Level II certified officer may use portfolio experiential learning or College Level Examination Program (CLEP) testing in order to transition to Level III certification, without such an officer needing to restart the certification process.

Constructing a path to certification via experiential learning is a completely new construct for the Council. As the curriculum review with IADLEST continues there will be a stronger foundation for training implemented that will allow for additional studies to assist in the development of sound procedures. The ability to intake, track, and guide officers through this type of process also requires staff time. The testing process one would encounter through this path would include scenario-based assessments (which requires significant scheduling and logistics with teams of role players and evaluators, etc.). Staff who are taxed with current responsibilities, to include overnight duties at the Academy, cannot take this on without additional support.

Justification for Curriculum Development Position at VCJC

For continuity of the legislatively funded curriculum development project, an ongoing curriculum Developer will be needed for sustained training of best practices and standards, and risk management.

1. Overview of the Position The proposed Curriculum Developer will play a vital role in the Vermont Criminal Justice Academy's (VCJC) curriculum review and development process, ensuring that training aligns with 21st-century policing strategies. This position will focus on maintaining the integrity of our program amid evolving state and federal laws, while integrating best practices in adult learning and competency-based education.

2. Current Challenges The VCJC is at a critical juncture as it undergoes a comprehensive



curriculum review to support accreditation. With over 12 programs and more than 100 classes offered annually, the academy faces significant challenges in curriculum development and maintenance. The demand for online training is growing, and without a dedicated position, we risk falling behind in offering relevant, accessible training that meets the needs of Vermont law enforcement.

3. Expected Outcomes

- **Enhanced Curriculum Quality**: A dedicated developer will ensure that all training materials are current, legally defensible, and reflective of best practices.
- **Increased Training Accessibility**: Transitioning some curriculum to an online format will provide officers with flexible training options, addressing scheduling and budget constraints faced by agencies. By increasing accessibility to training officers have a more streamlined trajectory for continuous improvement.
- **Improved Officer Retention and Satisfaction**: By offering a robust curriculum that includes opportunities for career advancement, we can better support recruitment and retention efforts across the state. Proper training is linked with career success and happiness which begins with a strong foundation.
- **Maintain Educational Content**: A curriculum developer maintains educational content that shapes a learner's experience. Through analyzing educational needs, aligning learning objectives and standards and implementing best practices, a curriculum developer will ensure the content is being taught correctly and retained.
- **Initiate Accreditation**: The next step in the Curriculum Development process is initiating and implementing an International Accreditation process to promote increased advocacy, reduce liability and risk, and provide greater accountability.

4. Cost Savings Analysis

- **Development Efficiency**: Creating one hour of in-person training can take up to 43 hours. With a dedicated position, we can streamline this process, reducing the time spent on curriculum development and increasing the frequency of class offerings.
- **Online Training Development**: Transitioning to online formats requires at least 49 hours to develop one hour of content. A dedicated developer will ensure that online courses are efficiently created, maximizing our resources and reaching more officers without the need for out-of-state travel. This will alleviate agency budget pressures and officer availability within departments.
- **Reduction in Class Development Costs**: Currently, the cost to develop a single class can reach \$10,000. By centralizing curriculum development under one role, we can minimize redundancy and focus on high-quality, cost-effective course creation, potentially lowering the per-class cost.

5. Comparative Analysis The total investment in this position is justified when considering:

• The potential reduction in training development costs across multiple programs.



- Increased participation rates from local officers who can access training without travel expenses
- Improved retention rates resulting from enhanced career development opportunities, which can lead to significant savings in recruitment and training costs associated with turnover.

6. Conclusion Investing in a dedicated Curriculum Developer is essential for the VCJC to uphold the integrity and relevance of law enforcement training in Vermont. This position will not only support the accreditation process with IADLEST but also safeguard the state's investment of \$1.5 million in our curriculum review. By enhancing training opportunities and aligning with modern policing strategies, we can ensure future success and satisfaction of law enforcement officers across the state.

Justification for Canine Head Trainer Position

For continuity of Vermont's current canine teams, we are currently utilizing a contractor. The future success of Vermont's Police Canine Program is dependent on funding of this position

1. Overview of the Position The proposed Canine Head Trainer will oversee the certification and training of police canine units in Vermont, ensuring that law enforcement agencies have the necessary support and resources to maintain high training standards for their canines.

2. Current Challenges Since the retirement of the Law Enforcement Certification Training Coordinator (LECTC), the in-service training requirements have largely gone unmet. This has led to a gap in leadership for the Canine Program, putting additional pressure on other training coordinators. The absence of a dedicated Head Trainer for the Canine Program means that agencies cannot establish or maintain their canine units effectively and must rely on a contractor to fulfill the needs of the program. Contracting can be difficult due to the requirements of having specific law enforcement background and canine program operations.

3. Expected Outcomes

- Establishment of Certification Standards: A dedicated Head Trainer will provide the necessary certification and re-certification for agencies wishing to establish or maintain canine units.
- **Reduction in Financial Burden**: By offering in-state training, agencies will avoid the significant costs associated with out-of-state training programs, which can last up to eight weeks.
- Enhanced Community Safety: Well-trained police canines are vital for crime prevention, drug detection, and community safety, contributing positively to community relations.
- **Innovation**: Integrate canines into the officer wellness program to focus on a therapeutic training program that focuses on trauma impacted officers as well as community members.

4. Cost Savings Analysis

• Avoidance of Out-of-State Training Costs: Agencies currently face substantial financial burdens when sending canines out of state for training. Providing training locally will reduce



travel expenses and the associated costs of lost officer time.

- **Minimized Liability**: A properly trained canine unit reduces the risk of liability associated with improperly trained dogs, protecting the Council and agencies from potential legal issues.
- **Retention of Handlers**: With in-state training opportunities, officers are less likely to seek external training, thus retaining valuable personnel and their specialized skills within Vermont.

5. Comparative Analysis The investment in a Canine Head Trainer is justified when considering:

- **Cost of Out-of-State Training**: Agencies may incur costs exceeding \$10,000 for each canine to receive training out of state, compared to the cost of maintaining a local Head Trainer.
- **Long-term Savings**: A properly trained canine unit can lead to increased efficiency in law enforcement operations, reducing time spent on re-training and increasing the effectiveness of canine deployments in the field.

6. Conclusion Investing in a Canine Head Trainer position is crucial for the Vermont law enforcement community. This role will ensure that police canine units meet certification standards, thereby enhancing public safety and trust. Furthermore, it will alleviate the financial burdens on law enforcement agencies and provide a controlled environment for training that aligns with Vermont's specific needs. Given the increasing importance of canine units in modern policing, this position is essential for maintaining the integrity and effectiveness of law enforcement operations throughout the state.

Justification for Athletic Trainer Position

To reduce injuries related to training, we have contracted with a Human Performance company for overall wellness of recruits and minimize loss of training time. We have seen positive results in overall wellness and believe an Athletic Trainer would continue our progress for success of future Vermont officers.

1. Overview of the Position The proposed Athletic Trainer will enhance the physical and mental wellness programs for law enforcement recruits at the Academy. This role will focus on providing personalized training, injury prevention, and wellness education to ensure recruits meet the demands of the profession and support their long-term health.

2. Current Challenges Recent adjustments to training programs and physical fitness requirements have resulted in recruits entering the Academy with varying levels of preparedness. Many recruits face pre-existing conditions or injuries that lead to increased instances of injury during training, including severe conditions like Rhabdomyolysis. Additionally, the mental health crisis facing law enforcement officers necessitates a more robust approach to wellness and injury management.



3. Expected Outcomes

- **Reduced Injury Rates**: An embedded Athletic Trainer will help manage and mitigate injuries through personalized training and ongoing support, resulting in fewer recruits leaving the program due to injury.
- **Improved Academic Success**: By decreasing the number of medical visits, recruits will miss less class time, enhancing overall academic performance and reduced costs to the Academy and agencies.
- Enhanced Wellness Resources: The position will provide comprehensive support in physical training, mental health, nutrition, and sleep hygiene, fostering a holistic approach to wellness.

4. Cost Savings Analysis

- **Decreased Workman's Compensation Claims**: (See attachment B) Preliminary reviews indicate that the presence of an embedded athletic trainer has reduced the number of recruits exiting due to injuries, which can lower costs associated with Workman's Comp claims for municipalities and the state.
- **Lower Medical Costs**: By addressing injuries proactively and minimizing downtime, the Athletic Trainer will help reduce the internal medical costs associated with recruit injuries.
- Enhanced Retention and Reduced Turnover: Supporting recruits' physical and mental wellness will improve retention rates, saving costs related to recruiting and training new officers. By ensuring officers are graduating without injuries that prolong into their employment agencies are reducing the need for lost time and overtime costs.
- **Increased Officer Wellness**: There is an opportunity to assist agencies in increased fitness and education for lifelong learning to sustain a foundation for officer's mental wellness. Research has shown that even 22 minutes a day of moderate exercise can have the same effect as anti-depressant medication and reduced health risks.

5. Comparative Analysis The investment in an Athletic Trainer is justified when considering:

- **Current Staffing Challenges**: With only two staff members managing 40-50 recruits, the Athletic Trainer will provide essential support in health, wellness, and injury management, allowing Training Coordinators to focus on academic success and other responsibilities.
- **Cost of Alternative Solutions**: Currently, contracting external resources (like O2X) incurs additional costs. Having an in-house Athletic Trainer will streamline services and potentially reduce long-term expenses.

6. Conclusion Establishing an authorized position for an Athletic Trainer is crucial for enhancing the health and wellness of law enforcement recruits. This role will not only help mitigate injuries and improve academic success but also foster a resilient workforce that positively impacts community policing efforts. By investing in this position, we can ensure that Vermont law enforcement officers are better prepared for the challenges of the job, leading to improved overall outcomes for both officers and the communities they serve.



Justification for Administrative Program Compliance Position

To stabilize and maintain the integrity of the training programs. Our lone administrative position does not have capacity to meet compliance directives, State Auditor's Office recommendations, and manage our ongoing programs. A position directly administering compliance and data collection will greatly increase our ability to provide data driven information.

1. Overview of the Position The proposed Administrative Program Compliance Coordinator will enhance the operational efficiency of the Academy by managing training records, ensuring compliance with legislative requirements, and supporting data management processes. This role is critical for overseeing training programs, particularly as they expand and evolve.

2. Current Challenges Currently, there is only one administrative program coordinator handling a vast array of responsibilities, including records management for over 150 classes annually and more than 1,000 participants. The recent state audit highlighted significant areas needing improvement in compliance processes, emphasizing the urgency for dedicated support in training and compliance management. Statutes with direct compliance impact include 20 VSA 2359,2366(d), 2367(d).

3. Expected Outcomes

- **Improved Compliance Monitoring**: A dedicated coordinator will ensure adherence to compliance requirements outlined in statutes, such as collecting roadside stop data and reporting serious incidents, reducing the risk of non-compliance penalties.
- Enhanced Data Management: This position will lead the transition to a new record management system, automating data processes and improving data integrity across training records.
- **Streamlined Administrative Operations**: By taking on record-keeping, accounts payable, and training support, the coordinator will free up the current administrative staff to focus on more strategic tasks, ultimately increasing productivity.
- **Integrity of Training**: This position will collaborate on integrating training benchmarks into multi-modal delivery for retention and compliance, stabilize data integrity, and training staff on processes for compliance SOP's and record hierarchy conventions.

4. Cost Savings Analysis

- **Reduction in Compliance Violations**: By implementing systematic compliance checks and training, this position will help reduce Category C professional regulation violations, which can lead to significant certification penalties.
- Efficiency Gains: Automating record-keeping processes will reduce the time spent on manual data entry and filing, allowing staff to allocate resources more effectively and decreasing operational costs.
- **Long-Term Training Investment**: Improved compliance and data management will lead to better training outcomes, reducing the need for costly remedial training and enhancing officer readiness.



5. Comparative Analysis The necessity of this position is underscored by:

- **Current Workload**: One administrative coordinator cannot effectively manage the volume of work required for 12 programs and 100 classes. The new position would ensure that compliance and records management are handled efficiently and accurately.
- **Future Demands**: With new programs like Community Inclusion and Investigator training being introduced, the administrative workload will increase. Investing in this position now will prevent potential bottlenecks and ensure the Academy meets future training demands.

6. Conclusion Establishing an Administrative Program Compliance Coordinator is essential for the Academy to maintain its operational integrity and enhance compliance with training standards. This position will provide much-needed support for managing records, ensuring compliance, and developing data management processes that align with current and future training initiatives. Investing in this role will ultimately lead to more effective training outcomes, reduced compliance risks, and better resource allocation, supporting the Academy's mission to deliver high quality training to Vermont law enforcement.

Programmatic Needs

Language Access	\$ 8,000
One time Expenditures	\$ 800,000
RFP's	\$ 600,000
Professional Development	\$ 75,000

Language Access

The Council would request funds for translating statewide policies and professional regulation processes for the community to the Tier 1 and Tier 2 languages recognized by the AHS LEP Committee. We would also request translation for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community at council meetings and graduation events.

<u>One Time Expenditures</u>

Our request for one time funds includes technology upgrades for training: body worn cameras, digital radios, I-Pad charging cart, I-Pads for Level II program and testing, safety ear covers for firearms instructors, TV screens for instructors in the classroom, camera equipment for marketing, a refrigerated salad bar for the cafeteria, food processor for the kitchen, and audio upgrades to the gym for training and community events. We would also request two new law enforcement vehicles (x2) to increase the driver training program which currently utilizes two 2014 vehicles for 44+ students.



One Time RFP's

We would request funding for one-time RFP's for Internal policy assessments, curriculum project completion, mental health and crisis response program assessment and development, and online training program development.

Professional Development

To expand the responsivity of VCJC staff professional development is essential to their retention and development as state of Vermont professionals. Academy professionals impact many vocations and not just law enforcement, for this purpose employees must retain knowledge in areas of education and law enforcement skills at a minimum. Support in this area of professional development is crucial to maintaining high standards for professionals that represent the State of Vermont. The funds would pay for courses, materials, and travel fees.



Vermont Criminal Justice Council (VCJC) Appendix A



Level II and Level III Training



Vermont Criminal Justice Council (VCJC) Level II and III Certification Summary

Level I and II Certification: A Three Phase Process

With Level II Certification an officer has a limited scope. They can practice all law enforcement functions except for investigating felonies.

To obtain Level II (formerly Part-Time) certification, one must successfully complete a three-phase process. The Council has stipulated they must attend a minimum 80-hour academy (Phase One). Upon successful completion of Phase One, they must take a minimum 50 hours of additional training consisting of required and elective courses (Phase Two) and 60 hours in a Field Training and Evaluation Program with a Council certified Field Training Officer (Phase Three). To maintain their certification, Level II officers must have a minimum of 30 hours of training each year, which includes firearms re-qualification under the supervision of a Council- certified firearms instructor, first aid training (unless currently certified in first aid), and biennial Council- certified domestic violence training.

Level III Certification

With Level III certification an officer has a full scope of law enforcement authority. To obtain Level III (formerly Full-Time) certification, individuals attend a comprehensive 16-week residential Basic Training Academy. If they have no previous training, they also attend approximately three weeks of post- basic classes. In addition, individual police agencies may have a pre- and/or postbasic training program. The Vermont Police Academy conducts two Level III basic training classes each year. The sixteen-week course is conducted in an environment consisting of both police discipline and academics, designed to prepare an individual for a career in policing. The curriculum includes Criminal Law, Defensive Tactics, Conflict Management/Crisis Intervention Training, Community Policing, Investigative Procedures, Motor Vehicle Law, Patrol Procedures and much more.



Vermont Criminal Justice Council (VCJC) Appendix B

APPENDIX B

Workman's Comp



<u>Workman's Comp Data Municipalities</u> – Total Cost Annually

2019	\$8,012.99
2020	\$3,606.79
2021	\$18,659.50
2022	\$14,786.40
2023	\$67,242.53

**For 2023 there is an estimated \$219,792.17 in future expenses pending.

Workman's Comp Data State

Total Cost from 2019-2023 \$406,098.29



Vermont Criminal Justice Council (VCJC) Appendix C

APPENDIX C

One-Time Asks



800K Breakdown

auto follow camera and mount - Training cameras for scenario building	\$5,500.00
Fit bits for officer wellness (44)	\$4,500.00
Inbody scanner	\$22,000.00
Digital Radios	\$17,600.00
Ipad Charging Cart	\$3,082.00
Ipads with keyboards - Level II and Testing	\$15,000.00
Safety Ear Covers for Firearms Instructors (6)	\$6,500.00
TV Screens for Classroom (3)	\$2,500.00
Camera Equipment	\$8,000.00
Salad Bar, single serve refrigerator, and food processor	\$24,545.00
Commercial Dishwasher	\$65,000.00
Audio for gym	\$35,000.00
Skid Car System and storage	\$145,000.00
Outdoor training gear EVOC, Patrol Pro, and Firearms	\$25,000.00
Marketing/Promo Items	\$75,000.00
Office and classroom Furniture	\$50,000.00
reflective safety vests replacement	\$2,332.00
VR Headsets for Training (public awareness campaigns)	\$15,000.00
Dail accessible building entry - video intercom system	\$5,000.00
Outdoor and indoor signage rebrand - wayfinding	\$100,000.00
Tactical vests for Instructors	\$2,800.00
Weapons locker upgrades	\$6,700.00
Taser Training Devices	\$5,100.00
Red man suits (4)	\$11,600.00
EV Charging Station	\$5,700.00
Pipe and Drape Kit for Graduations	\$9,600.00
LEO Vehicles (x3) for training	\$135,000.00
	\$803,059.00