



Much like their counterparts across the nation, state and local police departments in Washington are grappling with significant recruitment challenges and staffing shortages. One of the big barriers for local law enforcement agencies is new officer training. To tackle this problem, Gov. Jay Inslee proposes adding two new regional policy training campuses — one in eastern Washington and one in western Washington. This would open hundreds of more training slots and help more interested recruits have options to train closer to home.

Expanding law enforcement training capacity

Police agencies are often competing nationwide in recruiting officers, and many are taking extra measures to attract new officers, such as offering hiring bonuses or staging out-of-state recruitment events. In recent years, Gov. Inslee has worked with the Legislature to help Washington agencies compete for officers. For instance, they have increased state trooper pay by more than 40% since 2016 and worked to bolster retirement pay for law enforcement officers.

Still, many police departments in Washington face staffing shortages. Vacancies range from a few positions at smaller agencies to hundreds of positions in large agencies. Driven by a variety of factors – including higher retirement rates – these staffing shortages have only compounded an already challenging recruitment environment. The good news is there are hundreds of people interested in law enforcement careers in Washington. The challenge? Not enough slots to train them.

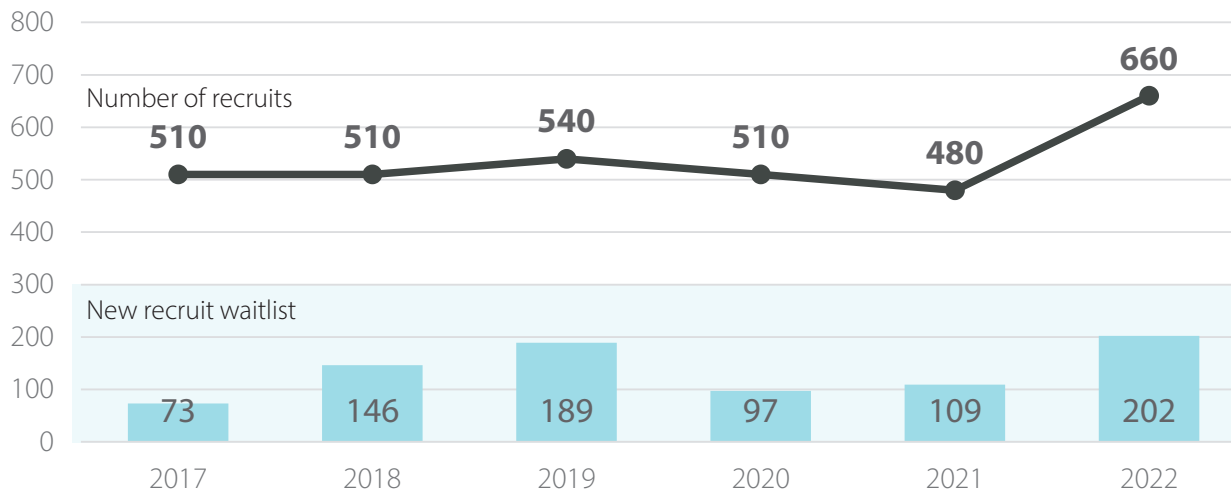
Local law enforcement professionals statewide are trained and certified by the state’s highly respected Criminal Justice Training Commission (CJTC). The commission operates its primary campus in Burien, where the majority of the



Gov. Jay Inslee joins state and local law enforcement leaders July 2022 in Burien to announce a proposed expansion of the Criminal Justice Training Commission (CJTC). (Office of the Governor photo)

Basic Law Enforcement Training Academy

Number of recruits starting training and new recruit waitlist per year



The line represents the number of new recruits starting BLEA training by year. The bars are snapshot counts for each year of the number of new recruits on the BLEA waitlist.

Data source: Criminal Justice Training Commission

state’s entry-level police officers complete a 720-hour Basic Law Enforcement Academy. The commission operates a smaller satellite campus in Spokane.

In recent years, there has been a long wait for new recruits seeking to complete the Basic Law Enforcement Academy. This creates a logjam for putting new recruits to work, and also puts a fiscal strain on local governments that must pay the salaries of untrained recruits who cannot yet work in the field. Over the last few years, the state funded CJTC to increase the number of classes it can provide each year. Today, the two existing training facilities have run out of space to hold classes. Expanding the number of facilities would increase how many classes CJTC can hold at more locations. The number of recruits who started Basic Law Enforcement Academy increased from 480 in fiscal year 2021 to 630 in fiscal year 2023.

While CJTC’s current centralized model ensures that trainees receive consistent training, it imposes travel and scheduling challenges for trainees from beyond

King and Spokane counties. Because recruits must commit to months of training in one location, many decide they can’t sacrifice the time away from family or personal obligations at home.

Expand police training capacity with two new regional campuses

By adding two new regional CJTC campuses — one in eastern Washington and the other in western Washington — Inslee’s 2023-25 budget will help local law enforcement agencies train new recruits more quickly and closer to home.

Expanding training space to increase classes each year would accelerate the training and certification process for new recruits, helping agencies fill officer vacancies. Adding regional campuses would diminish geographic barriers some trainees must overcome to attend four months of training across the state from their homes. Agencies also expect that the strategy would facilitate the hiring and retention of more local officers, helping agencies better represent the communities they serve.

The governor’s budget supports local law enforcement agency recruitment efforts by providing space for new hires to begin training more quickly. Current waitlists mean that new recruits wait up to four months before beginning training, which places a burden on the law enforcement agency and the community. The budget specifically provides funding for seven additional Basic Law Enforcement Academy classes per year, including four at two new regional campuses. This means 210 more recruits will be trained each year and it will dramatically reduce training wait times. *(\$10 million General Fund-State)*

Reduce costs to locals for law enforcement training

Local law enforcement agencies currently pay 25% of Basic Law Enforcement Academy training costs. The governor’s budget funds a grant program through the CJTC to support local agencies by providing the 25% local share. Funding would be prioritized for

smaller communities and those with greater needs. The governor also supports legislation that changes the local share tribal law enforcement agencies pay for recruits to attend training — from 100% to 25% of the costs — to align with cities and counties. *(\$3 million GF-S)*

Expand recruitment opportunities

The State Board of Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) and the Serve Washington program will establish new programs to encourage young people with diverse interests to consider careers in law enforcement and corrections. SBCTC will develop a course and an outreach program aimed at students outside of traditional law enforcement tracks. Serve Washington will work with local law enforcement agencies to build new AmeriCorps programs focused on community ambassadors and co-responder partnerships. *(\$1.3 million GF-S)*

Law enforcement support – Public safety strategic agenda

Summary of investments, 2023-35 biennial

Focus area	Items	Agency	Amount
Increase access to basic training	Regional expansion	Criminal Justice Training Commission	\$6,224,000
	Basic Law Enforcement Academy (and equivalency) funding	Criminal Justice Training Commission	\$2,656,000
Total			\$8,880,000
Fiscal support for local law enforcement agencies	Grants to local law enforcement	Criminal Justice Training Commission	\$6,000,000
Total			\$6,000,000
Diversify recruitment	Law enforcement exploratory course	State Board for Community and Technical Colleges	\$480,000
	AmeriCorps community engagement	Office of Financial Management	\$800,000
Total			\$1,280,000
Grand total			\$16,160,000