



INCENTIVES

CNA's [Center for Justice Research and Innovation](#) led an internally funded initiative from October 2020 to September 2021 and conducted case studies of six agencies' field training officer (FTO) programs. During this assessment, CNA examined common practices and policies that law enforcement agencies use within their field training, such as the qualifications an officer must have to become an FTO, and we assessed the quality and effectiveness of communication between trainers and trainees. In this resource, an agency will learn why incentives are important, how they can benefit the agency, and the range of incentives that the case study agencies implemented.

Field training is often described as the most important stage in an officer's career.¹ The time spent with a field training officer is vital to a trainee's career development and helps shape the culture of an agency. Thus, agencies must ensure that the officers serving in this position are not only well qualified but are also motivated to continue in the position. As stated in the Field Training Officer Impact Assessment,² serving as an FTO can place an inordinate amount of stress on these officers, affecting the retention rate of trainers and the quality of training provided. One way law enforcement agencies can mitigate these effects is by reaffirming the value of the FTO position to all of their officers by providing incentives to those serving in this role. Providing officers who are assigned as FTOs some type of incentive would reward those who want to participate and engage in training, give a motivational push to the trainers to ensure the trainees receive the highest degree of training, and show that the agency is making the training a priority.

IMPORTANCE OF PROVIDING INCENTIVES

Serving as an FTO requires specific skills and should be considered specialized training as opposed to a rite of passage. Agencies task FTOs with providing thorough documentation of trainees, serving as positive role models during the training process, and directing and coordinating training on a day-to-day basis. Ideally, an FTO will motivate their trainee and communicate in a way that facilitates learning. FTOs should ensure their trainees know the goals and expectations of the department, determine their trainees' training needs, and impart knowledge to their trainees.

A department has an obligation to provide a professional standard of law enforcement service. In fulfilling that responsibility, it is essential that the department properly train its FTOs so they can teach their future fellow officers the skills and knowledge necessary to perform the job. Once trained, FTOs must create a positive environment that maximizes learning and produces officers that are competent and proactive in protecting the communities they serve.

It is important to reward officers for their extra duties because they are completing training tasks while also serving in the capacity of a law enforcement officer. That said, while incentives are one motivation for being an FTO, serving in this position can also give an FTO a sense of pride by doing their job well. The FTO thinks of their trainee's success as a job well done. Many FTOs stated they take pride in doing their job and enjoyed the opportunity.

TYPES OF INCENTIVES

MONETARY INCENTIVES

Agencies included in the case study on FTO programs used the following monetary incentives to motivate and reward their trainers:

- \$20.00 per day while training
- 5 percent shift differential while training
- Two (2) hours pay per shift, or 1.6 hours pay for eight-hour shifts. FTOs are given an incentive while attending FTO training and during any period in which an FTO is assigned a trainee.

“FTO” EPAULETS/PINS

These insignia designate an officer’s status as an FTO. This can give the FTO a sense of pride in doing the job.

PROMOTION POINTS

Some agencies that do not participate in the civil service process provided promotion points for officers who served as FTOs, or looked favorably on this in the officer’s promotion process.

VACATION DAYS/EARNED COMPENSATION TIME

Some agencies provided one hour of compensation time at the end of each day for FTOs to fill out relevant paperwork. Others provided four to six FTO extra days off to be used anytime during the year.

IMPLEMENTING INCENTIVES CAN SHAPE THE SELECTION AND EVALUATION PROCESS

In addition to motivating the trainers, when an agency establishes incentives for FTOs, it ensures they are selecting quality officers to serve and remain in this position. To address this, agencies often create a selection process in which an officer must meet requirements to become an FTO to benefit from these incentives. The selection process often includes:

- Completed applications
- Recommendations from their chain of command
- Performance evaluation
- A review of the officer’s activity for the past twelve (12) months
- A review of the officer’s leave record for the past twelve (12) months
- Interviews with an FTO selection board and/or individual interviews

The selection process helps to identify and select quality officers as FTOs by looking at the officers and their ability to demonstrate the functions of the job, as well as their ethics, morals, and integrity.

Agencies also must ensure the FTOs are remaining committed to excellence while receiving the incentives. This process can entail an FTO being evaluated, being notified of evaluations if the FTO is performing at a satisfactory or unsatisfactory level, being suspended from the field training program, or being removed from the FTO program.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Warners, R.H. "The Field Training Experience: Perspectives of Field Training Officers and Trainees." Nov. 2010. Police Chief Magazine.
- ² Jenkins, Monique, Jessica Dockstader, Sharon Oster, Thomas Woodmansee, and Mary O'Connor. 2021. Field Training Programs in Law Enforcement. Arlington, VA: CNA. https://www.cna.org/CNA_files/PDF/Field-Training-Programs-in-Law-Enforcement.pdf

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For more information please contact:
Captain Sharon Oster, Author | Oklahoma City, OK, Police Department
Monique Jenkins, Senior Research Specialist | JENKINSM@cna.org