



City of Tacoma
Tacoma Police Department

Memorandum

TO: Elizabeth Pauli, City Manager
COPY: Andy Cherullo, Finance Director
FROM: Patti Jackson, Interim Police Chief
SUBJECT: Tacoma Police Lateral Incentive Request
DATE: June 17, 2025

OVERVIEW

The Tacoma Police Department continues to face a significant staffing shortfall that impacts our capacity to consistently deliver the core public safety services our community expects and deserves. To address this, we are advancing a focused lateral hiring strategy targeting experienced peace officers currently serving within Pierce County. This approach is outlined in the attached TPD Staffing Acceleration Plan: Ready to Serve.

BACKGROUND

Law enforcement agencies across the state are competing for a shrinking pool of experienced officers. At the same time, many mid-career professionals are seeking better alignment between workplace culture and personal sustainability—creating a unique opportunity to attract talent already embedded in our local ecosystem.

Meanwhile, the department has been compelled to rely heavily on overtime expenditures simply to meet essential service levels. This reactive approach diverts resources away from long-term staffing stability and toward stopgap coverage. The proposed lateral hiring plan represents a more strategic, cost-effective solution.

RECOMMENDATION

Key Proposal Highlights

The proposed lateral hiring plan includes the following elements:

- Target Audience: Experienced lateral peace officers currently serving in Pierce County
- Hiring Incentives:
 - \$50,000 bonus
- Union-Aligned Enhancements
 - Accelerated specialty eligibility
 - Structured onboarding support
- Internal Recruitment Bonus:
 - Vacation leave incentives for current TPD officers who refer successful lateral hires

Strategic and Fiscal Value

- Key advantages of this approach include:
 - Cost Avoidance: Estimated \$74,000 savings per hire compared to onboarding new entry-level recruits
- Rapid Readiness
 - Lateral hires are already certified and operationally familiar with local protocols
- Value Beyond Salary
 - This estimate reflects salary-based savings only and does not include the added value of prior field experience, Criminal Justice Training Center (CJTC) certification, or familiarity with regional systems—all of which significantly reduce ramp-up time and training costs.

Next Steps

With Council support and continued collaboration with Human Resources and Local 6, this initiative is ready for immediate implementation. Timely approval will allow Tacoma to convert current overtime-driven expenditures into strategic staffing investments—ensuring we are not just meeting the minimum, but actively rebuilding the department our community expects and deserves.

We respectfully recommend that this plan be advanced to Council as a high-impact, near-term solution to stabilize public safety staffing and restore full-service readiness.

FISCAL IMPACT

Fund Number & Name	Total Amount
1. Fund 0010 – General Fund	\$2,132,000
2. Fund 1267-FEDSF – TPD Federal Seized Fund	\$280,000
TOTAL	\$2,412,000

Attachment:

TPD Staffing Acceleration Plan