

CLEARINGHOUSE

FOR MILITARY FAMILY READINESS

From Service to Safety: Phase I Deliverables & Phase II Plan

Melissa Freel

Cameron Richardson, Ph.D.

Kimberly McCarthy

Daniel F. Perkins, Ph.D.

April 30, 2026

The Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness at Penn State is the result of a partnership funded by the Department of Defense between the Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Military Community and Family Policy and the USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture through a cooperative agreement with the Pennsylvania State University. This material is produced with grant funded support from The Ross and Carol Nese Foundation.

Table of Contents

<i>Executive Summary</i>	3
<i>Introduction</i>	4
<i>Phase I Deliverables</i>	5
<i>Phase II Plan</i>	7
<i>References</i>	15
<i>Appendix A</i>	16
<i>Appendix B</i>	17
<i>Appendix C</i>	18
<i>Appendix D</i>	19

Executive Summary

This report summarizes Phase I progress and outlines the Phase II implementation roadmap for the partnership between the Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness at Penn State (Clearinghouse) and The Ross and Carol Nese Foundation. The work is grounded in the Quality Implementation Framework (QIF), an evidence-based model that emphasizes structured planning, stakeholder engagement, and continuous improvement in complex community systems.

Phase I Progress

Phase I focused on fact-finding, relationship-building, and foundational planning to address recruitment and retention challenges in law enforcement and emergency medical services (EMS) in the City of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The Clearinghouse conducted targeted interviews with public safety leaders and practitioners to better understand workforce challenges, pipeline bottlenecks, and contextual constraints.

Key findings included the following:

- Confirmation that recruitment and retention challenges persist across both police and EMS workforces.
- Identification of a potential mismatch between allotted positions (e.g., paramedic heavy) and community need (e.g., basic lifesaving), suggesting opportunities to better align training pathways with service demands.
- Recognition that flexible and innovative training models (e.g., virtual or hybrid formats) can reduce access barriers.
- Emergence of a critical concern regarding potential public perceptions of police militarization, prompting refinement of veteran recruitment strategies grounded in community trust and expansion of recruitment efforts to include other populations (e.g., local young adults).

To support planning and shared understanding, the Clearinghouse produced workforce pipeline infographics, initiated targeted literature reviews, investigated peer city models, identified veteran-focused recruitment strategies, and developed a workplan and position description for a Police Recruitment Specialist (Pipeline Manager).

Phase II Objectives

Phase II will transition the project into structured implementation planning and execution, with the Clearinghouse serving as a neutral facilitator.

Key objectives included the following:

- Securing leadership buy-in and formally establishing a Steering Committee and two working groups: Law Enforcement Recruitment/Retention Workgroup and EMS Workforce Recruitment/Retention Workgroup.
- Facilitating collaborative development of an implementation plan focused on recruitment, fast-tracking veterans where appropriate, and improving retention.

- Strengthening data infrastructure to ensure decision-making is driven by timely, action-oriented information.
- Implementing an evaluation plan to monitor workforce pipeline outcomes and implementation efficiency.

Evaluation and Learning

Evaluation efforts will track:

- Workforce pipeline flow, hiring, and retention for both police and EMS.
- Secondary outcomes related to administrative burden associated with data entry, cleaning, and analysis.
- Qualitative insights from plan implementers (e.g., interviews, records review) to inform iterative improvement of enacted recruitment and retention strategies and long-term sustainability of strategies determined to be effective.

Through intentional alignment with the QIF, this initiative positions the City of Pittsburgh to build durable, evidence-informed workforce solutions while strengthening cross-sector collaboration and community trust.

Introduction

In 2025, the Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness at Penn State (Clearinghouse) received an award from The Ross and Carol Nese Foundation to identify and recommend implementation-ready strategies to address first-responder workforce shortages in the City of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Like many mid- to large-sized cities in the United States, the City of Pittsburgh faces persistent staffing gaps across first-responder systems, driven by recruitment constraints, credentialing barriers, limited workforce pipelines, and retention challenges. Concurrently, many transitioning United States Service members possess transferable competencies—including technical skills, operational readiness, and organizational discipline—that align well with public safety occupations. However, insufficient alignment among recruitment, certification, and hiring systems has limited the development of accelerated pathways connecting military veterans to these high-demand roles.

The purpose of this project is to design and operationalize veteran-centered workforce pathways that facilitate entry into first-responder careers in the City of Pittsburgh, while strengthening system capacity, improving talent pipelines, and supporting veterans' successful civilian workforce integration. Concurrently, other populations will be recruited.

During Phase I, the Clearinghouse conducted a workforce systems assessment of the City of Pittsburgh's first-responder landscape and completed an ecological scan of existing programs, policies, and cross-sector partnership models. Workforce challenges and potential solutions were examined across law enforcement, emergency medical technicians (EMTs), paramedics, and fire services. Data collection included structured discussions with City of Pittsburgh leadership, first-responder agency representatives, and veteran-serving organizations to ensure stakeholder-informed analysis and contextual relevance.

This progress report includes two sections: (1) documentation of Phase I deliverables and (2) a proposed implementation roadmap for Phase II. From project initiation, the Clearinghouse has grounded its work in the Quality Implementation Framework (QIF; Meyers et al., 2012), an evidence-informed model that outlines core implementation drivers across exploration, installation, initial implementation, and sustainability phases.

The Clearinghouse recommends the QIF as a guiding framework due to its strong alignment with implementation science, workforce system redesign, and participatory evaluation principles. Accordingly, this report is structured using the QIF to demonstrate how Phase I activities collectively support readiness for implementation, cross-system alignment, capacity building, and continuous quality improvement within the City of Pittsburgh's first-responder workforce ecosystem.

Phase I Deliverables

Fact-Finding Conversations and Relationship Development

A primary deliverable in Phase I was connecting with local leaders and EMS experts to gather contextual information and to begin building the rapport and trust necessary for Phase II. The following individuals were key informants.

- December 2025 – Sheldon Williams
Director of Public Safety, City of Pittsburgh
 - Outcomes:
 - Director Williams agreed to participate in an additional meeting with PSU.
 - Continued light-touch communications were used to sustain engagement and relationship continuity.
- January 2026 – Molly Bode
Executive Director of KY VALOR
 - Outcomes:
 - Ms. Bode aided in conceptualizing analysis of peer cities and identification of the need for a pipeline manager.
- February 2026 – Sheldon Williams
Director of Public Safety, City of Pittsburgh
 - Outcomes:
 - Director Williams affirmed the Clearinghouse's needs assessment findings regarding recruitment and retention challenges across police and EMS workforces.
 - He requested that the Clearinghouse coordinate with his assistant to schedule a follow-up meeting involving additional City leadership, including the Director of Human Resources and the Chief of Police (Jason Lando).
 - Director Williams expressed appreciation for the Clearinghouse's collaborative, systems-oriented approach.
 - Brief communications (e.g., congratulatory outreach following the unanimous approval of Director Williams' appointment) were used intentionally to maintain rapport and trust.

- March 2026 – Gino Tambourine
Former Volunteer EMT
 - Outcomes:
 - Mr. Tambourine emphasized the importance of innovative and flexible training delivery models to address common barriers such as transportation limitations and childcare needs.
 - Specific recommendations included expanded use of virtual and hybrid training modalities.
- April 2026 – Crystal Yates-Gale
Former Director of Philadelphia EMS
 - Outcomes:
 - Ms. Yates-Gale provided historical context regarding a prior paramedic training initiative with Tower Health, which is no longer operational due to external factors, including changes in hospital ownership.
 - She noted that the majority of 911 calls do not require Advanced EMT (AEMT) or paramedic-level skills but instead rely on basic lifesaving skills (BLS).¹
 - Securing this meeting required multiple communications facilitated through an established regional connection.

Products Developed

- Infographics
 - Police employment pipeline and associated pain points (Appendix A)
 - EMT/Paramedic employment pipeline and associated pain points (Appendix B)
- Literature reviews
- Interim literature review report
- Review of law enforcement recruitment initiatives in peer cities (e.g., Cleveland, Toledo, Buffalo), including workforce challenges and veteran-focused strategies in larger cities (e.g., Los Angeles, Seattle)
- Police Recruitment Specialist (Pipeline Manager) workplan and position description

Takeaways from Phase I

As is often the case in applied, partnership-based research, project goals evolved as new information emerged. There are several key findings from our data gathering efforts in Phase I.

Law Enforcement

A key pivot involved a concern raised by Director Williams regarding public perceptions of police militarization. Evidence indicates (Gau et al., 2021; Moule Jr. et al, 2019; Phillips, 2017) that while this concern may seem legitimate, militarization is not solely caused by officers with prior military service but rather is influenced by a combination of:

¹ This finding calls into question whether the solution for the City of Pittsburgh context is a pathway to paramedic, as higher paid positions may inadvertently strain the City of Pittsburgh's budget without any requisite improvement in emergency response if few of the 911 calls require advanced medical intervention. Thus, data analyses of the City of Pittsburgh's 911 calls are required to determine the appropriate course of action.

- Organizational mindset (i.e., viewing community members as partners [guardian mindset] versus threats [warrior mindset]),
- Appearance (e.g., camouflage or black tactical uniforms),
- Equipment (e.g., armored vehicles, military-style weapons), and
- Tactics (e.g., aggressive engagement strategies).

Note, veterans are already commonly found in the law enforcement workforce (GAO, 2026). Veterans' affinity to law enforcement positions may have to do with them being accustomed to structured chains of command and that they are often motivated by a strong desire to continue serving their communities (Matthieu et al., 2021). The issue of perceived police militarization will be further explored with the Phase II Law Enforcement Recruitment/Retention Workgroup to determine whether concerns are centered on tactics and visual cues, or on personnel backgrounds, allowing for more precise and responsive implementation strategies.

Emergency Medical Services

The workforce development issues facing police and EMS are different. For police, the challenge is primarily recruitment and secondarily retention. For EMS, the workforce challenge seems to be one of low wages and retention as most leave within 2-3 months.

In terms of EMS, there is a need to examine the City of Pittsburgh's 911 data to confirm service demands. During our conversation with Ms. Yates-Gale, we learned that most Philadelphia 911 calls do not require Advanced EMT or Paramedic skillsets, rather they required basic lifesaving skills as is found in an EMT's role. Thus, the question to be answered is what is the need of the City of Pittsburgh's EMS; is it to increase the number of EMTs, paramedics, or both? Currently, there are 28 EMTs and 133 paramedics allotted in the City of Pittsburgh's 2026 operating budget. In union contracts finalized in 2025, Pittsburgh EMS implemented a new system of coupling a paramedic with an EMT on ambulances in response to staffing shortages. Other recruitment and retention factors, such as the paramedic unions' legal challenge to change the residency requirement, are being explored.

Phase II Plan

Steering Committee and Workgroup Formation

Phase II of this project involves an implementation plan that outlines a coordinated strategy to strengthen the City of Pittsburgh's public safety workforce through two targeted workgroups and a steering committee. Drawing on the evidence-informed implementation strategies in the QIF, the Clearinghouse will support the facilitation of two city-based working groups and one steering committee, whose role will be to identify workgroup members, and advise, oversee and approve the workgroup's implementation plans.

The Law Enforcement Recruitment and Retention Workgroup will focus on developing a plan to increase candidate to trained employee conversion across the hiring pipeline. The Law Enforcement Recruitment and Retention Workgroup will explore the following pilot components: (a) Hiring a Police

Recruitment Specialist (Pipeline Manager) (Appendix C) and (b) determining recruitment and retention strategies to be carried out.

The EMS Workforce Recruitment and Retention Workgroup will have a two-stage approach in developing their plan. It will involve (a) data-driven determination of the need through examining 911 data and conducting interviews and (b) establishing a solution (e.g., addressing retention of EMTs, scaling the Freedom House EMT Training Academy, establishing a structured EMT-to-paramedic advancement pathway).

The law enforcement and EMS workgroups will follow the same process as detailed below.

Step 1: Confirm and define the problem

- Stakeholders will align on the nature of workforce challenges (e.g., law enforcement shortages are driven by candidate drop-off across hiring stages, EMS shortages are driven by gaps in advancement to paramedic roles).

Step 2: Develop pipeline process maps

- Each workgroup will assess and refine the pipeline process maps, developed by the Clearinghouse, to identify where candidates are lost and where improvements are needed.

Step 3: Select recruitment and retention strategies to be piloted (see Appendix D for sample strategies/incentives)

- Each workgroup will identify which 2-3 strategies they wish to pilot. The Law Enforcement workgroup will also finalize the pipeline manager position.

Step 4: Finalize implementation plans

- Each workgroup will be comprised of key stakeholders (e.g., union members, hospital leaders) to obtain buy-in and finalize the implementation plans. The selected strategies will be enacted on a pilot basis.

Step 5: Data tracking and evaluation

- Data will be analyzed to track candidate flow and support continuous improvement. Workgroups will adjust processes based on performance data.

Step 6: Institutionalization

- Efforts will be made to formalize strategies determined to be effective and funding for long-term sustainability will be explored.

Phase II Deliverables

Finalization of the Pilot Implementation Plan

Phase II will emphasize continued relationship building, structured planning, and implementation execution. The workgroups will be the main vehicle for the development of the final pilot implementation plan. Key activities will include the following:

- 1) Leadership Engagement
 - a. Conduct meetings with City of Pittsburgh leadership to obtain buy-in and formally establish the workgroups.
 - i. *May 1, 2026*: A meeting is scheduled with the Director of Public Safety, Chief of Police, and Director of Human Resources.
 - ii. Schedule a meeting with the Director of EMS and the Director of Public Safety.
- 2) Workgroup Facilitation
 - a. Once the two workgroups are established, the Clearinghouse will serve as a neutral facilitator supporting the workgroups in developing pilot implementation plans.
 - b. Through the workgroups, the Clearinghouse will build consensus across levels of the City of Pittsburgh's existing first responder infrastructure while maintaining progress toward agreed-upon goals.
- 3) Steering Committee and Workgroup Support
 - a. Identify personnel to serve on the steering committee and in the workgroups.
 - b. Facilitate meetings and provide administrative support related to convening, documentation, and follow-up.
 - c. Develop the pipeline process maps.
 - d. Identify and enact 2-3 strategies the City of Pittsburgh wishes to pilot
 - e. Monitor workload expectations to ensure that participation does not create undue burden or negatively affect performance.
- 4) Data Infrastructure and Analytic Support
 - a. Coordinate with the City of Pittsburgh's data manager to assess current practices related to the following:
 - i. Data collection (emphasizing action-oriented data);
 - ii. Data cleaning (e.g., validation, formatting consistency, duplication detection, missingness, outliers); and
 - iii. Data analysis (e.g., descriptive and inferential analyses aligned with decision-making needs).
 - b. Provide analytic support as needed as part of a multi-informant, multi-method evaluation approach.

Evaluation Plan

Through intentional alignment with the QIF, this initiative positions the City of Pittsburgh and the Clearinghouse to build durable, evidence-informed workforce solutions while strengthening cross-sector collaboration and community trust. The evaluation effort will track the following once pilot implementation begins:

- Workforce pipeline flow, hiring, and retention for both police and EMS.

- Qualitative insights from plan implementers (e.g., interviews, records review) to inform iterative improvement of enacted recruitment and retention strategies and long-term sustainability of strategies deemed to be effective.

The pilot will involve metrics to determine success and identify areas needing course correction. The data for assessing success will involve qualitative interviews with key stakeholders and members of the workforce, as well as data collection (e.g., record reviews from available administrative records). The tentative list of data to be requested is below.

- Number of police applicants at each stage of the recruitment and training pipeline:
 - Written exam preparation
 - Written exam
 - Application packets mailed/returned
 - MPOETC reading exam
 - MPOETC fitness exam
 - Background investigation
 - Selection process
 - Structured interview
 - Conditional offer
 - Academy completion
 - 40-hour live scenario training
 - 12-week field training
- Number of officers hired
- Number of officers retained
- Number of EMT applicants
- Number of EMTs hired
- Number of EMTs retained
- Number of paramedic applicants
- Number of paramedics hired
- Number of paramedics retained

Mapping Phase I and II Activities to the Quality Implementation Framework

The table below maps completed Phase I and planned Phase II activities directly to the four phases of the QIF (Meyers et al., 2012).

Table 1

Documentation of Progress Since the Project's Start of Phase I (1 Oct 2025).

QIF Step and Guiding Question(s)	Status	Effort Status (Completed/Anticipated)
1.1 Conducting a Needs Assessment <i>What problem(s) will the project address (Police: recruitment and retention; EMS: recruitment and retention)? Who benefits (residents, staff)?</i>	☐ Not Started ☒ Investigated ☐ Community Input	Completed - Conducted a needs analysis confirming recruitment and retention challenges in police and EMS (Interim Report) - Fact-finding interviews with current and former EMS and public safety leaders Anticipated - Conversations with steering committee and workgroups
1.2 Fit Assessment <i>How well does the project match the community's needs (incorporate evidence and insider perspectives [e.g., police, EMS, and city leadership])?</i>	☐ Not Started ☒ Investigated ☐ Community Input	Completed - Confirmed law enforcement and EMS staffing challenges and determined firefighters were not an immediate need - Identified that many 911 calls may require basic lifesaving skills rather than AEMT/Paramedic credentials Anticipated - Explore EMS service demand data - Exploration of EMT-to-Paramedic pipeline feasibility
1.3 Capacity/Readiness Assessment <i>Does the community have the skills, motivation, and resources to execute?</i>	☐ Not Started ☒ Investigated ☐ Community Input	Completed - Relationship building with the City of Pittsburgh's first responder leadership (e.g., Director of Public Safety, former EMS Director) - Rapport-building communications to sustain trust Anticipated - Conversations with steering committee and workgroups - Exploration of the City of Pittsburgh's first responder data collection, management, and analysis practices
1.4 Stakeholder Buy-In	☐ Not Started ☒ Investigated	Completed Relationship building with the City of Pittsburgh's first responder leadership (e.g., Director of Public Safety, former EMS Director)

Is there buy-in from leadership, front-line staff, and the community? Can we address barriers to implementation? Who are the project champions?	☐ Community Input	Anticipated Fact-finding interviews with current and former EMS and public safety leaders (e.g., budget constraints, health system constraints, union constraints, concerns about militarization, blue sky planning)
1.5 Organizational Capacity Building What infrastructure, skills, or partnerships exist/need strengthening/are needed?	☒ Not Started ☐ Investigated ☐ Community Input	Completed - Development of Police and EMS employment pipeline infographics (Appendices A & B) - Creation of a Pipeline Manager workplan and position description Anticipated - Conversations with steering committee and workgroups
1.6 Staff Recruitment and Roles Who will implement and support the project (staff, workgroups, steering committee)?	☒ Not Started ☐ Investigated ☐ Community Input	Anticipated Conversations with steering committee and workgroups
1.7 Pre-Project Training Is sufficient training planned to support implementation?	☐ Not Started ☒ Investigated ☐ Community Input	Completed - The Clearinghouse has established expertise in implementation science, training, and evaluation Anticipated - Conversations with steering committee and workgroups to ensure implementation capacity and training for the Pipeline Manager
2.8 Project Implementation Teams Who is responsible for implementation and how are team(s) structured?	☐ Not Started ☒ Investigated ☐ Community Input	Anticipated - Conversations with steering committee and workgroups - City of Pittsburgh Steering committee: Office of the Director of Public Safety, Office of the Chief of Police, Office of the Mayor, Office of the Director of HR, Office of the Director of EMS - EMS workgroup membership: Hospital stakeholders, training center(s) (e.g., Freedom House EMT Training Academy, Community College of Allegheny County), paramedic union, Pittsburgh Bureau of EMS - Law Enforcement workgroup membership: police officer stakeholders, Pittsburgh Bureau of Police's leadership, police union - Proposed tempo: workgroups and steering committee meet once every other month²; additional communication as needed
2.9 Implementation Plan Is there a clear plan with tasks, timelines, and accountability?	☐ Not Started ☒ Investigated ☐ Community Input	Completed Phase II steps delineated, data summary and infographics for workgroup reactions

² Standing agenda items: updates on accomplishments; problem-solving issues. City leadership will act as a steering committee.

		Anticipated • Conversations with steering committee and workgroups • Facilitation of workgroups and steering committee meetings • Administrative support for meeting logistics and follow-up
3.10 Technical Assistance <i>Who will help to course correct when problems arise?</i>	☒ Not Started ☐ Investigated ☐ Community Input	Anticipated • Conversations with steering committee and workgroups • Clearinghouse support for additional data collection (e.g., surveys of officers, EMTs, paramedics) as needed
3.11 Process and Outcome Evaluation <i>Is there a plan to assess implementation quality over time (e.g., # tested, # placed, # trained, # retained, # of changes to the project made)?</i>	☐ Not Started ☒ Investigated ☐ Community Input	Completed • Phase II steps delineated Anticipated • Conversations with steering committee and workgroups • Conversation with the City of Pittsburgh data manager(s) • Monitor workload burden to prevent implementation fatigue
3.12 Feedback Mechanisms <i>How will data (process and outcome) be shared and acted upon?</i>	☒ Not Started ☐ Investigated ☐ Community Input	Anticipated • Conversations with steering committee and workgroups • Continuous updates and discussion at meetings with workgroups and steering committee • Action-oriented data analysis and feedback loops to inform adjustments
4.13 Learning from Experience <i>How will lessons learned be captured and applied to refine the original plan (e.g., sustainability planning)?</i>	☒ Not Started ☐ Investigated ☐ Community Input	Anticipated • Conversations with steering committee and workgroups • Continuous updates and discussion at meetings with workgroups and steering committee • Tracking pipeline flow, hiring, and retention outcomes • Qualitative data gathering to assess what recruitment and retention strategies worked and why • Refinement of recruitment and retention strategies based on findings • Documentation of processes to support scaling or adaptation

Note. QIF Phase 1 addresses the **feasibility of the idea**. Phase 2 encompasses the creation of the **implementation structure**. Phases 3 & 4 specify the activities required to **collect, monitor, and act on process, output, and outcome data**. QIF Phase 1, Steps 1-4 encompass the four tasks specified in the Phase I SOW submitted to The Ross and Carol Nese Foundation by the Clearinghouse (i.e., **Problem Definition and Scope; Staffing and Salary Analysis; Program Scan; Pilot Design**).

Phase II Implementation Timeline

Timeframe	Activity	Responsible Party	QIF Alignment
Month 1	Leadership meetings to secure buy-in	Clearinghouse + City of Pittsburgh First Responder Leadership	Phase 2
Month 1–2	Formalize Steering Committee and two workgroups	Clearinghouse	Phase 2
Month 2–3	Facilitate workgroup meetings and consensus-building	Clearinghouse	Phase 3
Month 2–4	Assess and refine data infrastructure and protocols	Clearinghouse + City of Pittsburgh Data Manager	Phase 3
Month 3–6	Implement selected recruitment and retention strategies (e.g., incentives)	Steering Committee (with Clearinghouse support)	Phase 3
Ongoing	Monitor outcomes and implementation burden	Clearinghouse	Phase 4
End of Phase II	Synthesize findings and refine strategies	Clearinghouse + Steering Committee	Phase 4

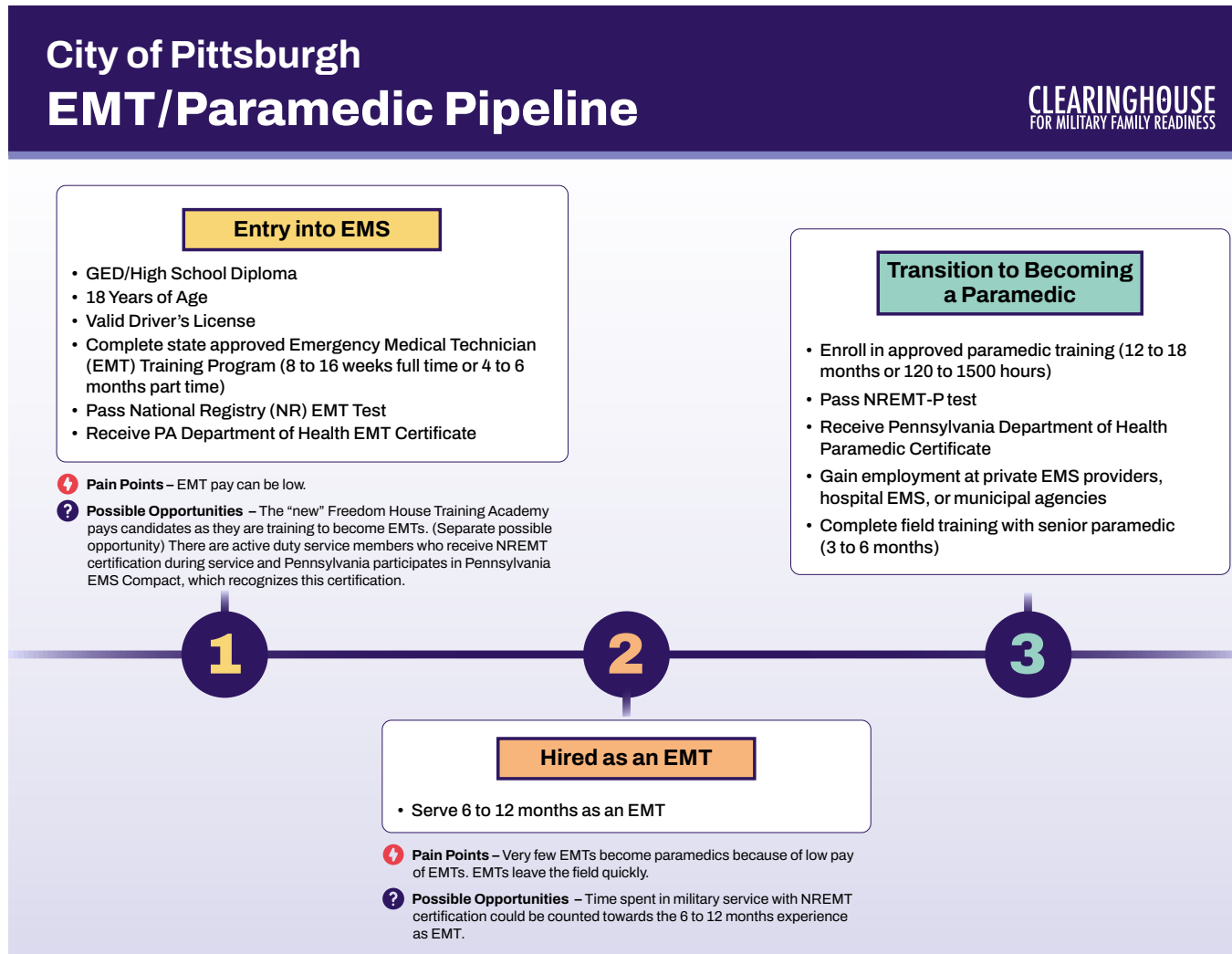
References

- Bureau of Justice Assistance & Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, U.S. Department of Justice. (2023). *Recruitment and retention for the modern law enforcement agency*. Bureau of Justice Assistance & Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, U.S. Department of Justice. https://www.scribd.com/document/701615538/Recruitment-and-Retention-for-the-Modern-Law-Enforcement-Agency#from_embed
- Gau, J. M., Brooke, E. J., Paoline III, E. A., & Roman, K. L. (2021). Military experience among police officers: an examination of veterans' attitudes toward the community. *Policing: An International Journal*, 44(6), 1060-1076. <https://doi.org/10.1108/PIJPSM-05-2021-0070>
- Government Accountability Office. (2026). *Law Enforcement Officers: Observations on recruitment and retention at the federal, tribal, state, and local levels* (GAO-26-108495). U.S. Government Accountability Office. <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-26-108495>
- Hoogesteyn, K., Hofer, M. S., Taniguchi, T. A., & Rineer, J. R. (2025). *Addressing police turnover: Challenges, strategies, and future research directions* (Publication No. OP-0096-2503). RTI Press. <https://www.rti.org/rti-press-publication/addressing-police-turnover-challenges-strategies-future-research-directions/fulltext.pdf>
- Linos, E. (2018). More than public service: A field experiment on job advertisements and diversity in the police. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 28(1), 67–85. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jopart/mux032>
- Matthieu, M. M., Meissen, M., Scheinberg, A., & Dunn, E. M. (2021). Reasons why post-9/11 era veterans continue to volunteer after their military service. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, 61(3), 405-426. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022167819840850>
- Meyers, D. C., Durlak, J. A. & Wandersman, A. (2012). The Quality Implementation Framework: A synthesis of critical steps in the implementation process. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 50, 462–480. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10464-012-9522-x>
- Moule Jr, R. K., Fox, B. H., & Parry, M. M. (2019). The long shadow of Ferguson: Legitimacy, legal cynicism, and public perceptions of police militarization. *Crime & Delinquency*, 65(2), 151-182. <https://doi.org/10.1177/001128718770689>
- National Law Enforcement Foundation (2026). *Frequently asked questions*. National Law Enforcement Foundation. <https://www.nlef.org/about/faq#:~:text=%E2%80%8DLaw%20enforcement%20agencies%20and%20municipalities,become%20fully%20independent%20and%20deployable.>
- Phillips, S. W. (2017). *Police militarization*. FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin. <https://leb.fbi.gov/articles/featured-articles/police-militarization>
- Police Executive Research Forum (2019). *The workforce crisis, and what police agencies are doing about it*. Police Executive Research Forum. <https://www.policeforum.org/assets/WorkforceCrisis.pdf>
- Wilson, J. M., Dalton, E., Scheer, C., & Grammich, C. A. (2010). *Police recruitment and retention for the new millennium: The state of knowledge*. RAND Center on Quality Policing and Community Oriented Policing Services, U.S. Department of Justice. <https://portal.cops.usdoj.gov/ResourceCenter/content.ashx/cops-p199-pub.pdf>
- Wilson, J. M., & Grammich, C. A. (2026): Financial incentives for police recruitment and retention: Perceived effectiveness and tradeoffs. *Police Practice and Research*, 1-23. <https://doi-org.ezaccess.libraries.psu.edu/10.1080/15614263.2026.2635019>

Appendix A.



Appendix B.



Appendix C.



Strategic Outreach Initiative for Addressing Pittsburgh Police Workforce Shortage

Purpose

Pittsburgh's police staffing levels trail national norms, which average 3.59 officers per 1,000 residents, as Pittsburgh employs approximately 2.5 officers per 1,000 residents. The hiring process requires more than outreach; it requires a coordinated recruitment pipeline that would move qualified candidates from interest to the academy and, ultimately, to a permanent position with Pittsburgh's police force.

The Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness at Penn State, in partnership with the Nese Family Foundation, supports the Foundation's *Service to Safety* initiative, which promotes the use of practical, data-driven strategies to strengthen this career pipeline. This effort includes the development of a dedicated Police Recruitment Specialist who would focus on veterans, career changers, and local talent.

Common Challenges: The Recruitment and Hiring Process of Law Enforcement

Similar to many locations, Pittsburgh's hiring process is multistep and time sensitive. The process moves candidates through phases: testing, eligibility ranking, background investigation, academy training, and field placement; these phases can take 1 year to complete. During this year, qualified candidates could disengage, especially veterans and second-career applicants who may lack structured support. To address the length of the process and advance the recruitment and graduation of suitable recruits, efficiencies should be identified and implemented.

The Solution: Hiring a Police Recruitment Specialist

Develop an evidence-informed recruitment strategy that aims to build an ongoing pipeline of new recruits. This recruitment strategy would be led by a dedicated, full-time civilian Police Recruitment Specialist who would be embedded within the Department of Public Safety and would manage recruitment as a structured pipeline and not a "one-time" campaign.

- Build targeted recruitment pipelines (e.g., transitioning Service members, community colleges, second-career applicants, underrepresented communities)
- Implement a skills-based hiring approach plan
- Guide candidates through each step to reduce preventable drop-off/out
- Coordinate across civil service, training, and background investigation units
- Track outcomes through dashboards and continuous improvement metrics

Why This Model Works

Peer cities, such as Cleveland, Milwaukee, Seattle, Los Angeles, and Philadelphia, use dedicated recruitment roles to increase the number of qualified candidates for their police forces.

Focus on Transitioning Service Members

Transitioning Service members are a strong and mission-aligned talent pool who possess skills that match law enforcement requirements. Nationally, nearly ¼ of police officers are veterans. The Police Recruitment Specialist would support broader community recruitment but would focus on candidates who could translate their military service experience into public-safety careers.

Appendix D.

Strategies and Incentives that Promote Police Recruitment and Retention

Recruitment



- Increased compensation and benefits
- Signing bonuses, financial allowances (e.g., uniforms, housing), relocation reimbursement, mortgage discount programs
- Family-friendly policies
- Emphasis on job stability, service to the community, and factors of current appeal (e.g., development, well-being)
- Education benefits (e.g., tuition reimbursement, higher pay for educational attainment)
- Commit to diversity/inclusivity
- Weekend recruitment days
- Active outreach and partnerships for marketing
- Assessment to determine outreach strategies (e.g., demographic trends, patterns of attrition/retention)
- Use of electronic media
- Updated website to optimize appeal to new recruits

Hiring Process



- Engagement with a pipeline manager to support applicants and accepted training candidates through the application and pre-training process
- Automate and streamline the application process
- Adjust eligibility and testing requirements (e.g., spelling tests, credit scores, distance running, visible tattoos)
- Pay stipends prior to police training academy
- Modernize with testing of evidence (e.g., measure emotional intelligence, discontinue polygraphs)
- Convert some jobs to civilian roles (e.g., application review)
- Realistic job previews (e.g., sample of daily duties, job shadowing, site visits, officer commentary on the real aspects of police work [vs. media-driven impressions])

Training



- Applied training opportunities (e.g., de-escalation)
- Mentorship and networking
- Involve community partners
- Leadership training to foster skills for information-sharing, autonomy, and organizational commitment (e.g., positive modeling, ethical decisiveness, positive communication, shared recognition, emotional intelligence, fairness and transparency in discipline and promotions, how to conduct career development conversations with officers)
- A reward system for managers who increase job satisfaction and reduce turnover
- Mindfulness and stress tolerance training (e.g., self-compassion, emotion regulation, help-seeking)
- Field-based training vs. classroom methods only

Development and Retention



- “On-the-ground” input, decision-making, and leadership opportunities for officers
- Satisfaction surveys and exit interviews for organizational learning and continuous improvement
- Well-being promotion (e.g., health club memberships, employee assistance programs, normalization of help seeking)
- Management support that fosters officers’ voice, information sharing, autonomy, and promotion
- Retirement-related tactics (e.g., improved pension plans)
- Workload management (e.g., take-home car, 4/10)
- Financial tactics (e.g., hazard pay, retention bonuses, overtime pay, specialized skill pay, stipends for single parents, driving allowances)
- Removal of onerous requirements for selection or promotion (e.g., college credits)
- Recognition opportunities
- Build public respect so community service continues to motivate
- Time off and flexible schedules when staffing stability is achieved

Images by PaliGraficas, Mohamed hassan, and Tumisu from Pixabay.