

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CHIEFS OF POLICE

Making the Case for Law Enforcement Resilience

**A Toolkit for Planning a Proposal
to Justify the Need**

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I. Introduction

Resilience strategies, initiatives, and training can promote officer and agency health and wellness, improve service delivery, and reduce stress and burnout. However, implementing new wellness components requires detailed planning, as well as support and approval from stakeholders and supervisors. Officers¹ interested in advocating for resilience programs can find themselves overwhelmed and uncertain about where to begin. This resource offers a path forward by helping officers develop a proposal and pitch for agency leadership or other decision-makers.

Specifically, the toolkit offers guidance on:

- Defining the proposed resilience strategies and what they will address.
- Communicating why the proposed program is needed.
- Preparing talking points that address anticipated questions from agency leadership, government officials, and community partners.

- Using resources and examples of effective resilience programs and strategies to strengthen the case for the proposed plan.

- Determining how the proposal will be presented.

The workbook at the end of this toolkit provides checklists, planning exercises, and additional resources to help officers develop an effective proposal to build agency resilience.

Officers can use these resources at any stage of development – whether the agency is creating a new program or supplementing an existing program. While this toolkit is focused on the justification of resilience-building strategies, the concepts can be applied to many types of law enforcement wellness programs.

II. Resilience Overview

Before working on a proposal, it is important to define resilience strategies and how they benefit agencies. Resilience is the ability to navigate adversity and grow and thrive in the face of challenges. Resilience is a valuable skill for everyone, especially law enforcement, in that it helps officers adapt to and overcome the effects of stress and trauma associated with police work. Resilience skills help officers quickly regain physiological and psychological balance after intense moments on the job. They also help officers foster supportive social connections and manage thoughts and emotions that surface long after incidents have passed.

Resilience strategies benefit officers by helping them:

- Balance responsibilities at work and home,
- Maintain a sense of purpose,
- Overcome a traumatic incident,
- Enhance problem-solving and communication skills,
- Strengthen family and social connections, and
- Reduce depression and anxiety.

III. What: Developing the Proposal

Defining the Ask

When creating a proposal, first identify the current wellness and resilience challenges officers in the agency are experiencing. For example, do officers deal with high levels of stress and burnout? Do they struggle to communicate effectively with their peers, family, or community members? Was there a particular traumatic incident that impacted the agency? Is the agency interested in proactively improving general wellness? Analyzing these questions can provide direction in setting goals for resilience strategies. After assessing the resilience challenges, create a simple problem statement that addresses the goals and objectives. An example structure of this could be:

X program lacks Y results because of Z challenges/issues/constraints

For more information on identifying wellness challenges and collecting officer feedback in the agency, refer to the [Action Planning Roadmap and Agency Assessment Tool](#).

Once the issues have been identified, think about what resilience strategies would best address those challenges. Resilience-building strategies can be incorporated into an agency through various methods. For example, agencies might organize resilience-building around one or more of the following:



Training: Resilience training helps officers build skills for avoiding common thinking traps, connecting more effectively with peers, managing energy levels, and improving work-life balance. Resilience training may be offered as a one-day to a week-long course, or short blocks of content incorporated into existing training.



Mindfulness and meditation: Resilience skills can be introduced by offering mindfulness and meditation exercises to officers before or after their shifts to help with energy regulation. These may be offered in person or via apps.



Mentoring: Experienced officers can serve as role models for applying resilience skills on the job. Mentors can help other officers process and learn from challenges, encourage proactive problem-solving strategies, and promote the use of wellness resources to help support a positive culture and social connections.



Communication and messaging: Resilience tips and skills can be included in newsletters, emails, bulletin boards, app alerts, and other communication modes to keep the skills fresh and introduce the concepts in different ways.



Family engagement events: Supportive connections with family and friends are crucial to building and sustaining resilience. Events and training sessions can prepare family members to support officers through difficult situations, while building their own resilience. Activities may include family academies, social gatherings, or topical training on resilience, trauma, financial planning, communication, and other topics that may help relieve stress on law enforcement families.

For more information about resilience strategies, program planning, and guidance on identifying current wellness challenges view the resources section at the end of this document.

Determining Resource Needs for Implementation

After deciding which strategies are best suited to the agency's needs and capacity, consider what resources the agency requires to accomplish the goal of the proposal. Being able to communicate the resources needed for implementation of the proposed strategy will be an important part of the presentation of the proposal.



Staffing: Determine what internal and external staff will be needed to implement the proposed strategies.

- Will existing wellness staff have the capacity to add resilience strategies to their duties, or will more staff be needed?
- Will an external trainer be needed?
- If officers will be pulled off shift for training, does the agency have the capacity to cover those shifts?
- Will the agency need support with data collection and evaluation to track program progress and outcomes?
- Are there other departments that can help? This could include working with the agency's internal human resources or communications department to develop and disseminate resilience messaging, collaborating with a neighboring agency to co-sponsor a training, or connecting with the parks department to assist with preparing a venue for a family event.



Time: Consider the time needed to accomplish the proposed strategies.

- How many training hours or days are needed, and how many officers will attend? Will it be direct training with an internal or external instructor or a train-the-trainer course? How much time will the agency trainers have to prepare for and lead training?
- For mentorship programs, when will officers be able to connect – between shifts, on shift, or after hours?
- For family events, what time will they be held to promote accessibility for working families?



Supplies and Equipment: Identify what resources are needed to accomplish the proposed strategy and how they will be accessed. Will the agency need:

- Manuals, handouts, or other supplies for training or mentors?
- Design programs or software for newsletters or communications?
- Food or activities for family events?

Accessing Resources for Implementation

There are many national and community resources available to provide funding, no-cost training, and subject-matter expert support for resilience programs. Having a plan in place for what resources may be leveraged to support the proposed strategy will strengthen the presentation to decision-makers.



Funding: When considering funding for the proposed strategies, think about how to leverage existing agency funding. Consider how much the proposed budget will cost and what can be achieved within the existing budget.



No-Cost Training and Technical Assistance and Resources: No-cost training and technical assistance opportunities are available through federal grants, such as those provided by the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) under the [VALOR Officer Safety and Wellness Initiative](#), which provides a variety of resources on resilience, suicide prevention, roadway safety, and general officer safety and wellness (OSW).





Stakeholders: Consider which stakeholders may be able to provide additional assistance and resources to the agency. Resources may be financial, in-kind donations, or support and advocacy to promote buy-in and sustainability of the proposed strategy.

■ External Stakeholders

- ◆ **Local Government:** Important advocates may include the mayor, city manager, city council, and other elected officials. They may be able to allocate funding, connect the agency with other departments, or apply existing wellness resources to support the program, such as health insurance or Employee Assistance Program benefits.
- ◆ **Business Owners and Community Members:** Community members and business owners can be partners in planning the program. They can offer training and provide resources and donations. Those in the wellness industry may provide guidance or training for staff on resilience, mindfulness, meditation, or yoga techniques. If a community member is offering these services in support of the program, consider if a contract is necessary. Keep in mind hours of operation, liability, and qualifications.

■ Internal Stakeholders

- ◆ **Command and Supervisory Staff:** Command staff may help with planning and allocating resources for wellness strategies. By showing an interest in resilience strategies, command staff can drive culture change and promote buy-in and engagement. Supervisors can be assets for providing real-time connections with the officers in need. They can model resilient behaviors to those they manage and encourage participation in wellness efforts.
- ◆ **Officers:** The success of these strategies and components will depend on officer engagement and participation. The best way to encourage engagement is to involve officers from the beginning. Select officers from various ranks and at different points in their careers who have expressed an interest in wellness. Asking them to help plan and implement the resilience strategies will ensure a variety of perspectives and needs are incorporated when developing the proposal. Include non-sworn personnel, as they also experience mental health challenges resulting from traumatic incidents.

IV. Who: Identifying the Audience

Identifying the Target Audience

After the strategies to propose and what resources are necessary for implementation are determined, it is time to present the proposed plan to leadership. To begin, identify the key decision-makers — those who can provide the support, approval, and resources required to implement the proposal.

The target audience will inform how the pitch should be delivered, based on their existing level of knowledge and support for adopting resilience strategies.² The audience may include the chief executive, command staff, wellness coordinators, elected leaders, or other internal or external stakeholders. In some cases, all of these stakeholders may need to be considered if the proposal must be routed through the full chain of

command. But typically, the proposal will be developed with the end reviewer and decision-maker in mind.

Be prepared to think about logistics, resources, and potential pitfalls from the perspective of those in the chain of command. While preparing the pitch, ask the following questions:

- What is their existing level of support and interest?
- How knowledgeable are they about wellness?
- What concerns will they have, and how will they be addressed?
- What benefits would appeal to their goals?
- What preparation is necessary before speaking with the audience?

V. How: Developing the Pitch

Preparing for the Proposal Presentation and Discussions

Proposals can take a variety of forms depending on the key stakeholders and decision-makers. Several forms of communication should be considered if the proposal will need to be presented or discussed with different audiences, such as the following:

- Written report or memo
- Summary email with key details
- Formal presentation
- Informal conversation

Regardless of the level of formality of the pitch, have talking points ready to address common questions that may arise. When preparing to discuss the proposal with the target audience, consider using the IDEAL model, a resilience-based communication strategy. The IDEAL model is an action-oriented guide designed to help build trust and connection with people during difficult conversations by working through what needs to be discussed and the possible outcomes. This technique will help keep the conversation focused on the critical points of the proposal and geared towards positive outcomes. Here is an example of the IDEAL model in action:



IDENTIFY and understand the situation.

We all have the shared goal of keeping our officers healthy and well so that they can be at their best for themselves, their families, and the community we serve. We need to improve resilience skills to better equip officers to overcome common stressors and wellness challenges.



DESCRIBE the situation accurately.

After the series of major traumatic incidents six months ago, some of the officers involved are showing signs of trauma or burnout. We want to help them cope with and grow from that trauma and be better prepared to navigate the next stressors they face. We have some wellness services, but there is always room for improvement. We want to send ten officers and non-sworn staff to a resilience train-the-trainer program, so that they can come back to deliver training for academy and in-service training sessions.



EXPRESS why the situation matters.

This training will provide officers with useful skills to navigate challenging situations more effectively. These skills have been shown to reduce depression and anxiety and improve optimism and well-being. By supporting this training proposal, the agency can positively affect morale and build a culture of wellness by showing that leadership prioritizes the well-being of its officers.



ASK the other person's perspective; negotiate a reasonable change if needed.

What are some challenges you see in officers and our existing wellness program? How do you see this fitting in with our existing wellness services?



LIST the positive outcomes that will occur as the situation improves.

Officers who go through resilience training will be able to identify negative thinking patterns and address them in real time. They may also become mentally resilient, which can be beneficial for them while responding to a call. If we can get ten trainers through the program within the next six months, we can have the whole agency trained in resilience within a year.

VI. Why: Supporting the Proposal with Data and Talking Points

There are numerous reasons to adopt resilience strategies and components, but it is essential to determine specific reasons why the proposal is beneficial. To determine the “why,” think about recent challenges officers may have experienced or traumatic incidents that may negatively affect their wellness. Additional reasons include being preventative and proactive to protect officers who recently joined the department or haven’t yet experienced a traumatic incident. Consider how these strategies can have an impact beyond the officer level and how they can affect supervisors, command staff, and the community.

Relying on Statistics and Research

To create the most convincing pitch, bolster the proposal with supporting documentation, including academic research on the benefits of resilience, national statistics about mental health trends and risks, and information specific to the unique needs of the department. The following section identifies data types with suggestions for how to collect and incorporate research into the proposal.



Academic Research: Research published in academic journals and professional magazines provides data on evidence-

based wellness practices that may support the proposal, as well as documentation about the mental health impact of the policing profession. To avoid the perception of bias, attempt to obtain supportive data from a variety of sources and views. A volunteer or intern from the department or a local university could assist by conducting a literature review. Examples of research-based data points include:

- *A literature review conducted by the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority determined that officers with higher levels of positivity are more likely to demonstrate resilience than officers with negative emotions.³ A 2012 study found that resilience and self-regulation skills could significantly benefit police organizations by improving judgment and decision-making.⁴*
- *An evaluation of a police mentoring program found that it reduced anxiety, built confidence, and enhanced feelings of meaning and purpose for mentors and mentees.⁵*
- *A study on burnout and stress measurement of police officers in 2020 found that 85 percent of the study sample presented high operational stress levels, 11 percent presented critical values for burnout, and 28 percent presented high distress levels, with 55 percent of the sample at risk of a psychological disorder.⁶*



State and National Statistics and Reports:

Data from national surveys and other sources, such as [Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Statistics, Law Enforcement](#) can be used to demonstrate the scale and scope of wellness as an issue in the profession. These data and talking points can lend credibility to the proposal, help normalize the conversation around resilience and wellness issues, and promote the need for specific resilience-building strategies. However, it is also important to note that there may be some limitations to the availability and recency of data. Possible sources include:

- Examples of state and national data and talking points include:
 - ◆ *A 2018 national report from the Fraternal Order of Police found that 79 percent of participants had experienced critical stress as a police officer.⁷ In addition, 69 percent reported that stressful experiences had resulted in unresolved or lingering emotional issues.⁸*
 - ◆ *In 2021, the Officer Safety and Wellness Group convened by the Bureau of Justice Assistance and Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, reported that it is vital for agencies to promote resilience to officers as it is connected to promoting the overall health and well-being of their workforce and will positively impact the community.⁹*

Tailoring the Message to the Agency's Needs

While academic research and national trends data are important, command staff and other decision-makers care most about their department and jurisdiction. Consider the following questions specific to developing agency-specific justification for the proposal.

- Why is this an important issue for the agency?
- Why should the agency implement these changes and strategies now?
- What are some common concerns with adding these strategies?
- What tangible benefits are expected for officers, the agency, and the community?
- What is the risk or adverse effect of not implementing these strategies?

An agency's data and history with wellness programs can also provide raw material for talking points.



Prior Successes and Gaps in the Agency Wellness Program: If the agency collects data on its existing wellness efforts, incorporating some of this data can highlight the value of the wellness program and capacity to take on the new proposed

work. Agency wellness program data can also highlight gaps where the existing programming is insufficient to meet the needs, justifying the new proposed plan. *The following statistics are provided as examples of how to present historical data and do not come from an actual survey.*

- Examples of agency-specific data points could include:
 - ◆ *Wellness program engagements with peer support and the agency mental health provider have increased by 50 percent over the past six months.*
 - ◆ *A recent survey of the wellness program showed that 86 percent of the respondents found the program's components helpful. In the survey, the respondents noted they want to see the components expanded to their families.*
 - ◆ *Twelve officers completed a pilot of the proposed resilience training. The training evaluation found*

that 100 percent agreed or strongly agreed that they learned skills that will benefit their personal and professional lives.



Officer Feedback: Staff engagement and buy-in are important factors for the proposed strategies to be effective. It can be helpful to use existing agency data and staff survey results to highlight agency needs and interests. Reaching out to neighboring agencies about officer feedback on their wellness and resilience programming can provide anecdotal data and benchmarks for similar goals.

- Examples of officer feedback data points include:
 - ◆ *A neighboring agency has a mentoring program for new officers to learn wellness and resilience strategies they can use throughout their careers. The officers who have completed the mentoring program reported that they found the skills very applicable in their personal and professional lives.*
 - ◆ *The agency conducted a survey of its officers and found 76 percent of respondents have experienced a critical incident within the last year. The respondents noted they would like to see more support from the agency, with the creation of a resilience program so they can learn how to be better prepared to cope with a future incident.*



Incorporating Personal Stories from Fellow Officers: Testimonials and quotes from agency members or from neighboring jurisdictions who have used resilience strategies successfully can help illustrate the proposal's goals in a way that resonates on a personal level with command staff and decision-makers. Use only de-identified stories, or quotes from officers with their approval, to preserve confidentiality. *The following examples were developed to illustrate how to share personal stories and do not come from any actual individuals.*

- Examples of officer stories or testimonials include:
 - ◆ *A sergeant who recently completed resilience training reported learning techniques that allow him to better connect with his officers and support them in proactive problem-solving.*
 - ◆ *A detective who practiced mindfulness and deliberate breathing exercises before and after*

her shift over the last two weeks reported feeling more relaxed with her family and prepared for work each day.

- ◆ After struggling with mental health symptoms following a critical incident last month, one officer noted the value of having an informal mentor to reach out to for help understanding wellness resources.

This toolkit is meant to provide a foundation of knowledge to think through resilience strategies and create a proposal. Included in this toolkit is a workbook that provides templates for planning and creating a successful proposal.

Endnotes

- 1 While the term “officers” is used throughout this resource, the information provided herein is applicable to anyone associated with an agency who is interested in developing a wellness program.
- 2 “6.1 Purpose, Audience, Tone, and Content,” in *Writing for Success* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Libraries Publishing, 2015), 262, <https://open.lib.umn.edu/writingforsuccess/chapter/6-1-purpose-audience-tone-and-content/>.
- 3 H. Douglas Otto and Alysson Gatens, “Understanding Police Officer Stress: A Review of the Literature,” last modified May 24, 2022, <https://researchhub.icjia-api.cloud/uploads/Understanding%20Police%20Stress%20FINAL-220523T17244145.pdf..>
- 4 Rollin Mccraty and Mike Atkinson, “Resilience Training Program Reduces Physiological and Psychological Stress in Police Officers,” *Global Advances in Health and Medicine* 1, no. 5 (2012), 42–64, <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/27257532/>.
- 5 Michael J. Gill, Thomas J. Roulet, and Stephen P. Kerridge, “Mentoring for Mental Health: A Mixed-Method Study of the Benefits of Formal Mentoring Programmes in the English Police Force,” *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 108 (2018): 201–213, <https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Mentoring-for-mental-health%3A-A-mixed-method-study-Gill-Roulet/6e18e1ce2796e6dbd66770e1a65c36c23183ca44>.
- 6 Christina Queirós et al. “Burnout and Stress Measurement in Police Officers: Literature Review and a Study with the Operational Police Stress Questionnaire,” *Frontiers in Psychology* 11 (2020): 1664–1078, <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/32457673/>.
- 7 Fraternal Order of Police, *Report on FOP/NBC Survey of Police Officer Mental and Behavioral Health* (2018), <https://files.fop.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/OfficerWellnessSurvey.pdf>.
- 8 Fraternal Order of Police, *Report on FOP/NBC Survey of Police Officer Mental and Behavioral Health* (2018), <https://files.fop.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/OfficerWellnessSurvey.pdf>.
- 9 Kelly D. Bradley, *Officer Safety and Wellness Group Meeting Summary: Pandemic Policing – Emerging Issues and Recommendations* (Washington, DC: Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, 2022), <https://portal.cops.usdoj.gov/resourcecenter/RIC/Publications/cops-p457-pub.pdf>.

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Workbook for Planning and Pitching a Proposal

The following section includes a series of worksheets to put the concepts from this toolkit into practice.

What: Developing the Proposal

Consider the following questions to clearly define the type of program or strategy for agency implementation. This checklist will help with critical questions and outline essential details about the goals of the proposal.

What is the goal of this proposal?

What types of resilience-building strategies will be proposed?

- | | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Training | Communication and messaging |
| Mindfulness and meditation | Family engagement events |
| Mentoring | Other |

What resources are needed for implementation?

- **Staffing:** What internal and external staff will be needed to implement the proposed strategies?
- **Time:** How much time is needed to accomplish the proposed strategies?
- **Supplies and Equipment:** What resources are needed to accomplish the proposed strategies and how will they be accessed?

What resources are available or must be acquired to implement the strategy?

- **Stakeholders:** What stakeholders can provide additional assistance and resources to the agency? Resources may be financial, in-kind donations, or support and advocacy to promote buy-in and sustainability of the proposed strategies.
- **Funding:** How could existing agency funding be leveraged, and where might new funding be accessed?
- **Existing Training and Resources:** What training and technical assistance opportunities are available through federal grants, such as those provided by the Bureau of Justice Assistance under the [VALOR Officer Safety and Wellness Initiative](#)?

Who: Developing the Pitch

Define the Target Audience

Who are the key decision-makers that can provide the support, approval, and resources required to implement the proposal?

Decision-Maker	Existing level of support for agency wellness (high/medium/low)	Existing knowledge about officer wellness (high/medium/low)	What concerns might they bring up?	What information will address those concerns?

Preparing for the Proposal Presentation and Discussions

What formats will be used to present the proposal to key decision-makers?

Formal presentation

Written report or memo

Informal conversation

Summary email with key details

Why: Supporting the Proposal with Data and Talking Points

What academic research sources can be cited to support the proposal?

What state and national statistics can help demonstrate the scale and scope of the issue for the profession?

What prior successes and gaps in the agency wellness program can be incorporated to support the proposal?

What officer feedback can be incorporated to show the need and interest in adopting the proposed resilience-building strategies?

Would any officers be willing to speak to the value of the proposed strategies based on their own experiences?



Additional Resources:

[VALOR Officer Safety and Wellness Initiative Homepage](#)



[IACP Officer Safety and Wellness Homepage](#)



VALOR Initiative Resources

[VALOR Program Home Page](#)

[VALOR Foundational: Laying the Groundwork for Your Safety and Wellness](#)

[Safer Together Challenge](#)

[Safer Together: Strengthening the Foundations of Officer Safety and Wellness](#)

[Suicide Awareness for Law Enforcement Officers \(SAFLEO\) Homepage](#)

Federal Grants and No Cost Training and Technical Assistance

[Officer Safety and Wellness Resources: Office of the Associate Attorney General](#)

[Funding & Awards: Bureau of Justice Assistance](#)

[Law Enforcement Mental Health and Wellness Act \(LEMHWA\) Program: COPS Office](#)

[Collaborative Reform Initiative for Technical Assistance Center: COPS Office](#)

IACP Resources

[Addressing Law Enforcement Mental Health](#)

[Agency Assessment Tool and Action Planning Roadmap](#)

[Enhancing Officer Wellness and Resiliency in Policing](#)

[Identifying and Managing Anxiety in Law Enforcement Officers](#)

[Law Enforcement Agency and Officer Resilience Training Program](#)

[Officer Health and Wellness Agency Assessment Tool and Action Planning Roadmap](#)

[Resilience Strategies for Your Role](#)



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