

# Recruiting and Hiring Handout

## *Police Transparency and Accountability Task Force*

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### **Application processes**

Many of CT's law enforcement agency's websites are similar in their instruction and description of the application process. Most departments link to the website "Police App" where you must create a log in, and sometimes submit a CPCA score and CHIP certification in order to even access the application, meaning there is no indication about what is asked or how long the process will take prior to committing to taking those assessments. This is not the case for similar departments in surrounding states like Massachusetts and New Jersey. Most major metro departments list the steps of the process—application, written/physical assessments, oral board interviews, background investigation, conditional offer, hire; but don't necessarily include a timeframe with the exception of Bristol PD which offers that the selection process could take anywhere from 3 months to 2.5 years. In some cases, like New Haven PD, the exact physical fitness requirements are outlined for both men and women recruits (number of sit ups, pushups, etc.).

Additionally, most departments include detailed compensation/benefits information. On average, most of the websites are fairly easy to navigate but it is not often clear where to find job postings or where to go to submit an application when Police App is not linked. Police App is fairly intuitive but again, without registering and submitting written and physical assessments, CT recruits cannot apply. Registration fees ranging from \$20 to \$60+ are also required to apply. Nationally, LADP's recruiting site was the most informative and easiest to navigate among those reviewed and could be looked to as an example.

In terms of language, there is some degree of variation depending on where you are looking. For example, a job posting by USA Government Jobs for the New Haven PD uses language that focuses on the challenges, rewards and impact of a career in law enforcement. However, that language is missing from the actual New Haven PD's website. On most sites, appeals are made to a sense of public service, calling for people who want to "devote themselves to the safety of (insert city name) or a desire to "get behind the badge" in order to "be the change." This language is supplemented with images of police badges, diverse men and women in uniform, police cars/sirens, and other imagery associated with law

enforcement. Bridgeport PD's site includes a recruitment video that touches on everything from the realities of the physical fitness assessments to emphasizing the academic aspect of training from a diverse set of perspectives including female officers and officers of color. This diversity in imagery is mostly seen across the board on CT's law enforcement sites, and nationally. However, messengers are always seen in training clothes or in uniform, adhering to the current public image of the police.

### **Supportive messaging**

Elizabeth Linos conducted a field experiment in collaboration with the Chattanooga Police Department in Tennessee looking to diversify as they launched a new round of recruitment. Postcards containing varying themes detailing different aspects of the job were sent to a randomized sample of eligible voters in the county. These themes included: being up for the challenge, public service motivations (PSM), personal impact, and career benefits. Specifically, postcards asked "Are you up for the challenge?", "What would it mean to you?", or "Looking for a long-term career?"

Despite the ubiquitous nature of public service messaging, the findings indicate that language focused on PSM exclusively is ineffective at attracting new candidates. Instead, phrasing that outlines personal benefits such as the challenge of the job or career benefits are 3X as effective at producing applicants than control groups, particularly amongst women and people of color.

Another study done by Jennifer Gibbs found that the primary reason for attrition among women and minority applicants was finding other employment due, in part, to the length of the hiring process. These findings led to recommendations in favor of improved communication with potential hires, shortening the process and accepting applications on a continuous basis.

### **Nudging**

Additional work by Elizabeth Linos analyzed the idea of nudging applicants to the Los Angeles Police Department. Behaviorally informed nudging is a process of sending messages that increases compliance with a goal. The technique is used in other contexts by referencing group success which

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individuals then internally reference to guide their behavior. In the case of the police application process evaluation, nudges were sent that suggested that most applicants could complete the next stage within two weeks. This message alone increased completion of the next step in the recruiting process by 60%.

#### **Successful campaigns**

“Police Now” is an award-winning UK based program that recruits and trains “outstanding graduates with leadership potential to be detectives and police officers who transform communities.”

The organization aims to recruit people who have not previously considered a policing career through marketing materials that focus on community transformation and the leadership skills a policing career can provide. Importantly, their website (<https://www.policenow.org.uk>) features diverse individuals not in uniform. Their recruitment campaigns focus on:

- Our attraction and recruitment campaigns emphasize the community and transformational potential of police work

- We present policing as a career full of intellectual challenge, excitement, leadership, development and problem-solving
- We incorporate messages to nudge applicants into and through the process.
- Police Now’s campaigns ensure a good representation of diversity to provide positive role models for potential applicants from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds.

This organization is a strong source for ideas about how to change the culture around policing in order to recruit more diverse candidates, and how to best support them throughout the process. The organization provides digital face-to-face mentoring, access to high-performing police officers to help candidates learn about the nature of the job, feedback regardless of outcome, among other things.

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#### **Applying these insights to recruiting**

Based on these scientific findings and on the landscape of CT's hiring processes currently, improvements can be made to individual department's website design, recruitment language and imagery, and perhaps even where departments are marketing to recruit new officers.

#### **Marketing materials**

All of these techniques can be used together in better advertisements to solicit applicants. Consider the following sample recruiting materials and the messages they send:



This image incorporates the messaging as suggested by the research. It emphasizes key elements of policing careers (intellectual challenge, excitement, leadership development, and problem solving) that are not part of the traditional view of policing.

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#### **Nudging and unintended messages**

Another example includes many of the same elements. However, some messaging in the image might send the wrong message, and nudging is not present in either this or the previous image.



The statement “We will help you through every step of the process” may project the idea that the process itself is challenging (a position that many applicants hold), and that many individuals might not be capable of completing it. Moreover, “Apply Now” does not create a performance reference necessary to serve as a nudge. Consider the following revisions:

