



Briefing Memo

Date: February 26, 2024

To: Seattle City Councilmembers

From: Director Leah Tivoli, Innovation & Performance

Subject: **Response to request to evaluate the Hiring Incentive Payment for Seattle Police Department per Ordinance 126654**

The City Council adopted Ordinance 126654, directing the Innovation & Performance team to coordinate with the Seattle Police Department (SPD) to evaluate the effectiveness of officer hiring incentives. This memo reviews salary comparisons, survey results, and race and social justice concerns as required in Ordinance 126654. (Questions and requests in Ordinance 126654 are in boldface italics below.)

As called for in the [Comprehensive Police Recruitment and Retention Plan](#), Ordinance 126654 authorizes using \$1.57 million of SPD salary savings for recruiting and retaining officers. Section 6A allows a hiring incentive program for lateral transfers and recruits to SPD, effective July 13, 2022. Lateral transfers may receive up to \$30,000, and recruits may receive up to \$7,500. Lateral transfers and recruits must pay back incentives if they leave SPD employment before five years of service.

How does the incentive compare with similar incentives other local and state law enforcement agencies offer?

SPD's Human Resources (SPD-HR) designed and conducted a mandatory Hiring, Recruitment, and Retention Survey¹ (survey). Recruits completed the survey during the *Before the Badge* program, which examined potential reasons for interest in police work and joining SPD. Sixty non-duplicated responses were collected from the survey's launch in November 2022 through October 2023.

- **Nearly half (44.3%) of respondents indicated that they also applied for work at other police and sheriff's departments, both locally and in other states.** The top three departments named in the survey were the King County Sheriff's Office, Kent Police Department, and Bellevue Police Department.
- **Of the respondents who indicated they applied to another police department or agency, 70% applied to local agencies within Washington State.** Table 1 lists all 18 local agencies mentioned by applicants by salary and incentives for 2022 (as data is available) and 2024. Not included in Table 1 are other agencies that respondents applied to, including Los Angeles, Houston, New Orleans, and Honolulu.
- **Of the competing jurisdictions mentioned by respondents, Seattle ranks fifteenth on entry-level salary, first for lateral incentives (tied with Everett), and third for entry-level incentives.**

¹ While the survey itself was mandatory, all questions were optional to answer.

Table 1: Local Agency Benchmarking Data (2022, 2024)²

Agency	Entry-Level Salary		Incentives Recruits	Incentives Lateral	Incentives Recruits	Incentives Lateral
	2022	2024	2022		2024	
1. Redmond		\$101,844			None	None
2. Kent	\$83,000	\$96,268	\$10,000	\$25,000	\$10,000	\$25,000
3. Bellevue	\$78,263	\$95,850	\$2,000	\$16,000	\$2,000	\$16,000
4. Everett	\$81,408	\$94,104	\$15,000	\$30,000	\$15,000	\$30,000
5. Edmonds		\$93,772			None	\$25,000
6. Bothell		\$90,888			None	None
7. Tukwila		\$90,552			None	\$25,000
8. Auburn	\$87,530	\$90,156	None	\$20,000	\$5,000	\$20,000
9. Lynnwood		\$88,961			\$5,000	\$25,000
10. Port of Seattle	\$81,078	\$88,719	None	None	None	\$10,000
11. Bellingham		\$88,068			\$2,000	None
12. Renton	\$74,699	\$86,442	\$1,000	\$20,000	\$1,000	\$20,000
13. King County	\$73,401	\$85,259	\$7,500	\$15,000	\$7,500	\$15,000
14. Pierce County		\$84,822			\$10,000	\$25,000
15. Seattle	\$83,000	\$83,000	\$7,500	\$30,000	\$7,500	\$30,000
16. Federal Way	\$73,044	\$82,980	\$3,000	\$20,000	\$5,000	\$30,000
17. Tacoma	\$78,998	\$82,950	None	\$25,000	None	\$25,000
18. Lakewood		\$82,032			None	None
19. WA State Patrol		\$75,792			\$10,000	\$20,000

Responses to survey questions that specifically identify: a) Whether the hiring incentive contributed to a recruit’s decision to work in policing versus another profession; b) Whether the incentive resulted in a recruit’s or lateral officer’s decision to work for the Seattle Police Department versus another local or state law enforcement agency; c) How the recruit or lateral officer learned about the hiring incentive; and d) Whether the incentive was effective than other recruitment tactics, such as being contacted by a member of the Seattle Police Department or meeting Department representatives at a career fair or other event.

Additional key findings from the SPD’s Human Resources (SPD-HR) Hiring, Recruitment and Retention Survey include:

- **All but two hires selected incentive pay as having some level of importance in their decision to become a police officer.** Of these respondents, 23% ranked incentive pay first or second in importance, 41% ranked it as third, and 36% ranked it as fourth or fifth. On average, incentive pay was ranked below salary and benefits.

Four recruitment ads were tested for three weeks between February 15, 2023, and March 8, 2023, to understand whether the hiring incentive message was compelling to potential applicants. Ads were placed with LinkedIn and Meta (Facebook and Instagram) that were nearly identical, except for message testing. The tested messages included: 1) professional growth (Growth), 2) salary (Salary), 3) hiring

² See Appendix A for more comprehensive list of 2024 Entry-Level Salaries

incentive (Incentive), and 4) benefits (Benefits). The click-through rate (CTR) is a metric used to measure the effectiveness of online advertisements.

Table 2. LinkedIn Ads by Ad Type				Table 3. Meta Ads by Ad Type			
Ad Type	Impressions	Clicks	CTR (%)	Ad Type	Impressions	Clicks	CTR (%)
Growth	9,093	115	1.27%	Benefits	104,811	1,328	1.27%
Salary	11,263	132	1.17%	Salary	118,547	1,279	1.08%
Incentive	11,925	117	0.98%	Growth	117,290	1,247	1.06%
Benefits	10,792	105	0.97%	Incentive	116,890	1,147	0.98%

Statistical testing³ was performed across the click-through rates on all four ads. The key findings are:

- Using the A/B test, the Meta sample was large enough to gauge whether differences in ad performance were statistically significant. **Ads with messaging related to benefits and salary generated statistically significant higher click-through rates than the hiring incentive message (p<5%).**
- Privacy policies prevent tracking of applicants, which would reveal if those who click on advertisements continue to complete an application, limiting our ability to gauge success.

A demographic analysis of the information collected under subsection E, the number and amount of new, lateral, and reinstated incentives paid, and the number and amount of new and lateral incentives pending completion of the requirements.

A demographic analysis was completed of the recruits who responded to the survey compared to Seattle Census data and SPD Hiring data. Key findings include:

- Survey respondent demographics were similar to hiring data from previous reporting periods (Table 4: Demographics).
- Most survey respondents were:
 - Between 25 and 34 years old (55.0%)
 - Between 35 and 44 (18.3%)
 - Between 18 and 24 (16.7%)
 - Members of the LGBTQIA+ community (16%)

³ When comparing incentive to benefits, incentive to salary, and incentive to growth, we used a two-tailed A/B statistical test with false discovery correction to gauge the performance of click-through rates between different ad types.

Table 4: Demographics

Employee Race/Ethnicity	Seattle 2022 Census ⁴ (%)	SPD All Staff As of 7/23 (%)	SPD New Hires 8/21-7/22 (%)	SPD New Hires 8/22-7/23 (%)	Survey Respondents 11/22-10/23 (%)
White	63.6	63.5	54.6	40.4	47.5
2+ Races	9.4	6.9	12.1	14.9	11.9
Hispanic/Latino	7.5	7.1	12.1	19.2	27.1
Black/African American	6.7	8.0	7.6	8.5	6.8
Asian	16.8	7.1	10.6	8.5	6.8
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	0.2	1.2	3.0	4.3	-
American Indian/Alaska Native	0.6	1.1	-	-	-
Unknown	-	0.1	-	-	-
Not Specified	-	4.9	-	4.3	-

An analysis of the costs and benefits of the City’s hiring incentives and a recommendation about whether the City should continue using incentives as an ongoing recruitment strategy.

- From July 13, 2022, to May 31, 2023, sixty-one employees received their first payment, including 55 new hires, four lateral hires, and two rehires, for a total payout of \$296,250. Central Staff previously presented the complete financial report to the Public Safety and Human Services Committee. The 2023 Q4 report is set to be presented to the City Council in March.

Conclusions and Recommendation

- 1. Salary was the most important factor in the applicants’ decision to become a police officer, based on the Hiring, Recruitment, and Retention Survey.** Seattle ranks fifteenth on entry-level salary in the Puget Sound region. The last time Seattle officers received a raise was four years ago, on January 1, 2020.
- 2. It is impossible to pinpoint the hiring incentive’s specific effect with the available data. It is clear from the survey and A/B testing that the hiring incentive is compelling to some applicants yet does not have as strong an effect as salary and benefits. Benchmarking data shows that 15 out of 18 local agencies, or 83%, offer lateral or new hire incentives. Given SPD’s staffing challenges, the relatively low cost, and the fact that other competing jurisdictions continue to provide the incentive, we recommend the continued use of hiring incentives.**
- 3. We recommend shortening the five-year clawback period to three years to align with other jurisdictions, such as the King County Sheriff’s Office and police agencies in Bellevue, Kent, and Federal Way.** King County and Bellevue have a 3-year clawback period, while Kent and Federal Way have a 1-year clawback period.

⁴ The Census data is from the 5-Year American Community Survey for 2022, the most recent 5-year data set.

4. **A/B testing results are limited; however, recruitment advertisements should continue to focus on ongoing quality of life (Salary and Benefits) and, to some extent, professional development (Growth).**

Appendix A: Current Entry-Level Police Officer Base Pay (as of 2/23/2024)

Yellow highlights indicate other departments or agencies where new SPD recruits applied per the Hiring, Recruitment, and Retention Survey.

1	Redmond Police	\$ 101,844.00
2	Richland police	\$ 101,700.00
3	Kennewick Police	\$ 99,411.00
4	Kent Police	\$ 96,268.00
5	Bellevue Police	\$ 95,850.00
6	Everett Police	\$ 94,104.00
7	Edmonds	\$ 93,772.00
8	Bainbridge Island	\$ 92,112.00
9	Issaquah Police	\$ 90,894.00
10	Bothell Police	\$ 90,888.00
11	Tukwila Police	\$ 90,552.00
12	Auburn Police	\$ 90,156.00
13	Mount Vernon	\$ 89,632.00
14	Puyallup Police	\$ 89,280.00
15	Medina Police	\$ 89,184.00
16	Lynnwood Police	\$ 88,961.00
17	Kirkland Police	\$ 88,872.00
18	UW Police	\$ 88,800.00
19	Port of Seattle	\$ 88,719.00
20	Sumner Police	\$ 88,566.00
21	Mercer Island	\$ 88,474.00
22	Bellingham Police	\$ 88,068.00
23	Renton Police	\$ 86,442.00
24	Lacey Police	\$ 85,944.00
25	Centralia Police	\$ 85,416.00
26	King County	\$ 85,259.00
27	Pierce County	\$ 84,822.00
28	Longview Police	\$ 83,520.00
29	Seattle Police	\$ 83,000.00
30	Federal Way Police	\$ 82,980.00
31	Tacoma Police	\$ 82,950.00

32	Enumclaw Police	\$ 82,884.00
33	Edmonds Police	\$ 82,692.00
34	Bonney Lake	\$ 82,649.00
35	Marysville Police	\$ 82,596.00
36	Black Diamond Police	\$ 82,188.00
37	Lakewood	\$ 82,032.00
38	Fife Police	\$ 81,762.00
39	Ferndale Police	\$ 81,240.00
40	Burlington Police	\$ 80,868.00
41	Milton Police	\$ 80,748.00
42	Vancouver Police	\$ 80,148.00
43	Kitsap County	\$ 79,497.00
44	Mason County	\$ 79,440.00
45	Lake Forrest Police	\$ 79,212.00
46	Lake Stevens Police	\$ 79,080.00
47	Portland Police Bureau	\$ 79,000.00
48	Bremerton Police	\$ 78,811.00
49	DuPont Police	\$ 78,580.00
50	Normandy Park Police	\$ 77,100.00
51	Oak Harbor Police	\$ 76,872.00
52	WA State Patrol	\$ 75,792.00
53	Des Moines Police	\$ 75,608.00
54	Duvall Police	\$ 75,372.00
55	Olympia Police	\$ 74,868.00
56	Ocean Shores	\$ 74,520.00
57	Snoqualmie Police	\$ 73,200.00
58	Yakima Police	\$ 72,920.00
59	Kelso Police	\$ 72,708.00
60	Blain Police	\$ 72,000.00
61	Denver Police	\$ 68,878.00
62	Spokane Police	\$ 65,980.00
63	Elma Police	\$ 62,208.00
64	Cheney Police	\$ 55,980.00

CC: Chief Adrian Diaz, Seattle Police Department
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