

Law Enforcement Workgroup Consensus Points

A more unified system of providing law enforcement services to the villages is desirable, and could be achieved by following the recommendations outlined in these consensus points.

- Funding should be secured to ensure that all officers engaged in law enforcement activity in rural villages in the State of Alaska have a basic minimal level of training and certification.
- Law enforcement in rural Alaska should be accomplished in a manner that does not threaten or diminish the sovereignty of either the State or Tribes.
- Cross-deputization of tribal and state police officers has the potential for assisting the state troopers that serve rural Alaska, assuming an agreement on shared training and certification standards would need to be reached, as would arrangements regarding liability.
- For State, tribal, and other officers engaged in village law enforcement to work effectively together, there must be a way of obtaining reliable and up-to-date information identifying the officers of each department in rural Alaska, and determining the current training level of individual officers.
- Creating three tiers of villages or new rural government institutions is not necessary to improve rural law enforcement.
- Effective rural law enforcement, including maximizing recruitment and retention, requires a commitment to adequate infrastructure appropriate to each community's size and need, such as housing, communications, technology, transportation, holding facilities, offices, and equipment.
- Law enforcement services should be adequate and appropriate to a community's size and need.
- It is critical that the federal government take a much more active role in ensuring adequate law enforcement in Alaska's Native villages, including far more extensive funding of village law enforcement needs.
- There should be an increased emphasis on juvenile crime prevention programs and positive interaction between public safety officers and youth.

Alaska Rural Justice and Law Enforcement Commission Options Worksheet for Work Groups

Working Group: Law Enforcement

Option: 1

Statement of Need: Village-based police and public safety officers need an opportunity to advance their training and certification within the state-recognized system. There is also a need for a uniform and state-wide system of police and public safety officer training and certification.

Option: Develop a state-wide, uniform, and tiered system of certification and training for police and public safety officers with a reasonable opportunity for and expectation of advancement that culminates in full APSC police officer certification. The first tier of certification would require a reasonable minimum level of certification and training, including non-police function training, to ensure professional competency and service delivery. Tribally-employed officers should be encouraged and permitted to participate.

This option would require a change to the employer specific language in AS 18.65.220 & 18.65.290(7) that currently allows only state, municipal, and certain federally employed officers to be certified. Greater rural representation in the APSC process and governance would improve its responsiveness to rural concerns.

Rationale for Option: This option was developed after consideration of the health aide and Australian models in the context of the existing types of law enforcement officers in rural Alaska. There were concerns about uniformity, turn-over rates, and lack of opportunity for advancement.

Impact Statement: A uniform tiered system of training and certification would help to unify the overall system of law enforcement in rural Alaska. It would also provide an opportunity for village-based officers to advance to full APSC police officer certification.

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Option: 2

Statement of Need: There is a shortage of funding for rural police and public safety officers that need further training and certification.

Option: Provide further funding for training and certification of rural police and public safety officers. The additional funding should be sought from all available sources including the state and federal governments, local sources (including in kind support), and alternative funding sources such as grants. Local support expected should be adequate and appropriate to community size, need, and capacity.

Rationale for Option: The workgroup considered the inability of small, rural communities to provide adequate funding for the training and certification of their police and public safety officers.

Impact Statement: Increased training and certification of rural police and public safety officers would increase the capacity of those officers to provide services in their home communities.

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Option: 3

Statement of Need: Both the State and the Tribes as well as the people in the communities they serve have a vested interest in their respective governments.

Option: Improvement of rural police and public safety service delivery in rural Alaska does not require any diminution of sovereignty of either the State or the Tribes. Collaboration and cooperation between the federal government, the State and the tribes furthers the shared interest in better law enforcement in rural Alaska, and should be permitted and encouraged.

Rationale for Option: The workgroup considered the interests of the State and the Tribes, as well as the interests of the people in the communities they serve.

Impact Statement: No change in governmental authority is required. Systemic improvements can be made without such changes.

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Option: 4

Statement of Need: Cross-deputization can provide efficiencies and improvements in rural law enforcement by fostering a cooperative and collaborative system between the State, municipalities and the Tribes.

Option: Develop a template cross-deputization agreement between the State and Tribes that can be used as a basis for individually negotiated agreements. Cross-deputization agreements have potential for combining scarce funds to provide direct and local service in rural Alaska. Such agreements could also create efficiencies and other improvements in law enforcement service delivery, and could be entered into between Tribes and the State boroughs or cities. Alaska Statute 18.65.010 currently allows such agreements.

Rationale for Option: The workgroup considered cross-deputization agreements from other States. The workgroup also considered the current Quinhagak tribal-city agreement. The workgroup considered the cross-deputization agreements for the concept of cooperation and collaboration, and does not endorse any particular agreement as a model for the template agreement contemplated above.

Impact Statement: A template cross-deputization agreement would set the parameters of a generally acceptable agreement subject to individual negotiations between the State and interested Tribes. It would also help to fix expectations on generally acceptable contractual language for core issues addressed in such collaborative agreements.

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Option: 5

Statement of Need: Cooperation and collaboration would be furthered by the increased communication between the State, Tribes, municipalities, cities, and other stakeholders in rural Alaska.

Option: Develop a formal communications mechanism that would increase the communications between the State, the tribes, and other stakeholders in rural Alaska. Create an Alaska rural law enforcement committee with representatives from stakeholder groups and law enforcement agencies that serve rural Alaska to meet regularly to analyze problems and propose solutions, to foster interagency communications, and to reduce barriers to cooperation and collaboration.

Rationale for Option: The workgroup considered the miscommunications and other frustrations experienced by the State and the tribes. The workgroup considered the realities of past efforts, that committees and commissions that end with a single set of recommendations often fails because of a lack of sustained follow through. The workgroup therefore realized the need for a sustained communications effort to continue the efforts of this workgroup.

Impact Statement: The back-and-forth communications between the stakeholders would increase cooperation and help identify problems and prospective solutions to improve the service delivery of police protection and public safety in rural Alaska. It might also decrease litigation and other expensive forms of adversarial conflict.

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Option: 6

Statement of Need: There is a need to have a state-wide tracking system that includes information on the current training and certification levels of village-based police and public safety officers.

Option: Develop a state-wide tracking system that contains information on the training and certification levels of all police and public safety officers, including village based officers and departments. The tracking system should contain current and accurate information about training, certification, and eligibility for certification for all police and public safety officers, including tribally-employed officers. This option would expand the current Alaska Police Standards Council role to include tracking information about certain rural police and public safety officers for which APSC does not currently compile such information. It might also be useful if DCCED or some other agency would track general information about police and public safety officers and infrastructure for Alaska communities.

Rationale for Option: The workgroup considered the need of the State Troopers and other State agencies to have current and reliable information on whether a particular community has police or public safety officers. The workgroup also considered the need of VPSOs and other rural police and public safety officers to have their training accounted for in a public and recognized system for advancement.

Impact Statement: A state-wide tracking system for training and certification would provide valuable information to all law enforcement officers providing service in rural Alaska. Such a system would also serve to unify the now disjointed systems of police and public safety officers in use throughout rural Alaska.

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Option: 7

Statement of Need: A significant lack of infrastructure supporting police and public safety functions in rural Alaska undermines the safety of rural Alaskans. It also negatively affects recruitment and retention of police and public safety officers.

Option: Develop improve and maintain the infrastructure that supports the delivery of police and public safety services in rural Alaska in the following categories:

- Housing
 - **Need:** A lack of available housing in many villages impacts recruitment and retention of police and public safety officers.
 - **Option:** Encourage streamlining of the approval process and prioritization of HUD homes for use by police and public safety officers in rural villages. Explore other available and currently vacant federal, state, and public housing that may be available for use by police and public safety officers. Change the eligibility rules for federal rural housing programs for teachers and health providers to include funding for police and public safety officers.
- Communications and technology
 - **Need:** Rural police and public safety officers need better access to communications technology to communicate with Troopers and other law enforcement. Current Internet and other communications technology would improve and speed communications. Rural communities lack basic, and commonly assumed, communications infrastructure and services such as an available 911 system.
 - **Option:** Increase access to reasonably priced Internet and other telecommunications technology. Change the current regulations that support and subsidize the telemedicine program to allow rural Alaska police and public safety officers to utilize excess bandwidth to support Internet access and email at the village level. Improve officer-to-officer communications by standardizing equipment and providing more equipment to village-based officers. Create a system of regional 911 dispatch centers that have access to a comprehensive database of police and public safety services. Open eligibility for Tribes and rural Alaska police and public safety officers to Homeland Security programs and funding.

- Transportation
 - **Need:** Adequate and appropriate transportation infrastructure is needed in rural communities and between rural communities to improve law enforcement service delivery.
 - **Option:** Increase the availability of appropriate vehicles for intra-community use by local police and public safety officers in rural Alaska. Additional upgrades to inter-community transportation infrastructure would also assist law enforcement officers. VPSOs , Tribal police and other village-based law enforcement officers should be able to access public transportation systems on the same terms as other law enforcement officers.
- Offices and Holding facilities
 - **Need:** Many rural communities lack adequate office and holding facility infrastructure and the resources to adequately maintain such infrastructure in order to properly support the provision of police and public safety services.
 - **Option:** Provide adequate office and holding facilities including maintenance and operational funding in rural communities commensurate with the type of police or public safety officer and community need, in a manner that will ensure continuity in public safety services.
- Equipment
 - **Need:** VPSOs and other rural police and public safety officers lack appropriate equipment.
 - **Option:** Provide adequate and appropriate equipment to rural police and public safety officers.

Rationale for Option: The workgroup considered the realities of infrastructure that supports the provision of police and public safety services in rural communities. The workgroup considered creative options to attempt to reduce these infrastructure deficiencies.

Impact Statement: Improvement in the infrastructure that supports rural police and public safety officers would increase their effectiveness.

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Option: 8

Statement of Need: The authorizing legislation and directives of the Commission to the workgroup mandated an examination of three classes of villages and a consideration of new forms of government or governmental institutions.

Option: There is no need to create new government institutions to improve police and public safety services in rural Alaska.

Rationale for Option: The workgroup considered the existing governments and governmental institutions and their respective roles in providing police and public safety services in rural Alaska, and concluded that there is no need for such new institutions.

Impact Statement: No change from status quo.

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Option: 9

Statement of Need: The system of rural police and public safety services needs additional public funding to support and augment existing services.

Option: Seek additional federal and state funding to support the provision of police and public safety services in rural Alaska.

Rationale for Option: The workgroup considered the shortfall in services needed and the funding currently available to meet those unmet needs. The trust relationship between the federal government and the federally recognized Tribes throughout rural Alaska justifies an increased role of federal funding to support police and public safety services. The unique geographical and infrastructural realities of rural Alaska also justify an additional federal role in funding these services. Additional funding could increase the number of village-based officers, the number of support officers in hub or regional centers, the creation of new village State Trooper posts, the construction of holding facilities and other infrastructure, the training of rural police and public safety officers, and more competitive salaries and benefits.

Impact Statement: Increased funding would help realize numerous improvements in the rural police and public safety system.

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Option: 10

Statement of Need: Greater federal involvement in the direct provision of police and public safety services in rural Alaska would improve the system.

Option: Increase the direct provision of police and public safety services in rural Alaska by federal agencies currently providing such services in Alaska. One of the important areas for greater federal involvement is in the interdiction and prosecution of alcohol violations and bootlegging.

Rationale for Option: The workgroup considered the current police and public safety services provided by federal agencies and recommends a greater level of direct service provision.

Impact Statement: More involvement by federal agencies will provide additional resources and expertise to help address difficult issues of law enforcement in rural Alaska.

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Option: 11

Statement of Need: Police and public safety services must be adequate and appropriate to each community's size and need, accounting for local capacity.

Option: Provide police and public safety services in Alaska that are appropriate and adequate to each community's size and need, accounting for local capacity. Improvement is needed to provide adequate and appropriate coverage in many rural communities, particularly in many larger off-road villages.

Local contributions, including in-kind contributions, may be required for buy-in and support. Such local contributions should be based upon the community's ability to generate such contribution locally and should be accounted for and attributed to the community. Local contribution should not be used as a factor in determining a community's need for police and public safety services.

Rationale for Option: The workgroup considered the need for communities to have adequate and appropriate direct police and public safety services. The workgroup also considered the ability of rural communities to provide their own police and public safety services.

Impact Statement: An improved match between rural communities' individual needs with adequate and appropriate police and public safety services would provide a more equitable distribution of these critical services to rural Alaska.

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Option: 12

Statement of Need: Police and public safety training is currently available primarily from the Sitka academy which is geographically isolated and is otherwise expensive and inaccessible to rural candidates.

Option: Options for alternative methods of police and public safety training should be examined to enhance the currently available training at the Sitka academy. Partnerships with the College of Rural Alaska and other existing training and educational institutions could help remove impediments to recruitment and training for police and public safety careers. The development of regional training programs or centers might also help.

Rationale for Option: The workgroup considered the desirability of developing training opportunities that provide easier and less burdensome access to training for rural law enforcement officers and candidates.

Impact Statement: Alternative training options that lower barriers to rural officers and candidates would assist in initial recruitment and facilitate advancement for current and future rural law enforcement officers.

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Option: 13

Statement of Need: There is a need to improve recruitment of rural residents into law enforcement and public safety careers. Augmentation—and even maintenance—of current levels of rural police and public safety services will require identification and recruitment of a pool of rural candidates to fill officer positions.

Option: Create a regional rural recruitment effort for rural police and public safety officers.

Rationale for Option: The workgroup considered the benefits of increased recruitment of rural and Alaska Native candidates into police and public safety careers.

Impact Statement: Increased recruitment of rural residents would access a previously underutilized pool of candidates for police and public safety careers. Rural candidates also offer individual benefits of indigenous language, cultural knowledge, and local knowledge of rural communities.