



Promising Practices for Increasing Diversity Among First Responders

SUMMARY

In 2016, the Chief Evaluation Office (CEO) funded Coffey Consulting to publish the *First Responder Workforce Diversity Study*, including a final report, program brief, and five site profiles. This exploratory multi-site case study was designed to identify perceived promising practices by the interviewees promising for increasing diversity among first responder workforce for a better understanding of perceived promising recruitment-, hiring-, training-, retention-, and advancement-related practices for improving the diversity of first responders in terms of gender, race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation. Researchers conducted a literature review and exploratory site visits to first responder organizations in Atlanta, GA; San Francisco/Bay Area, CA; Concord, NH and Dallas, TX; and Concord, NH.

This Department of Labor-funded study was a result of the annual process to determine the Department's research priorities for the upcoming year. It contributes to the labor evidence-base to inform [employment and training](#) development programs and policies and addresses Departmental strategic goals and priorities.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- **Organizational and leadership support of diversity was notable across sites.** It included a diverse leadership (in terms of both race/ethnicity and gender), an emphasis on diversity as a priority, and open discussions among staff about the importance and meaning of diversity.
- **Recruiting was the primary tool used at the sites to increase diversity.** Promising recruitment practices include population-specific liaisons, financial incentives for language skills, and targeted messaging.
- **Community engagement activities served as both direct and indirect recruitment methods.** These activities include partnerships with local schools, colleges, training providers, community organizations, and foundations.
- **Sites adjusted hiring practices to ensure a level playing field.** These practices include relaxing hiring procedures and requirements that are unduly restrictive and adjusting testing standards to improve equity.
- **Sites used specific practices to retain a diverse workforce.** They included providing opportunities for promotion and movement between units, offering financial incentives for those who speak multiple languages, and providing a welcoming environment.
- The two police sites identified challenges including high turnover, arduous application processes, low pay, a need for more bilingual staff, maintaining community trust, and retaining younger (millennial) employees.
- One fire site discussed challenges that included high competition for limited openings, recruiting bilingual staff, limited recruitment budgets, and the high cost of training that candidates must often fund themselves.



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[SEE FULL STUDY](#)

TIMEFRAME: 2016

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PARTNER AGENCY: Employment and Training Administration (ETA)

SPONSOR: Chief Evaluation Office

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