

Lack of Oversight With Your Agency's Extra-Duty Employment Program Can Cost You Public Support and Officer Morale

Every day, thousands of citizens, companies, and other entities seek additional safety and security by hiring off duty police officers to provide immediate on-site visibility, presence, and security. These types of activities specifically require that official law enforcement powers will or may be used. In the policing profession, this activity is generally known as extra-duty employment.

Because a vast majority of law enforcement agencies authorize their sworn personnel to work extra-duty assignments there is a critical need to regulate, manage, and administer such activities by their personnel. Most agencies which authorize their sworn personnel to work extra-duty assignments have policies that regulate and direct how extra-duty employment will be handled.

Even when detailed policies exist there are many cases where oversight processes fail. A failure in oversight, control and regulation of an agency's extra-duty program can result in officers working too many hours, double-dipping or working for multiple vendors at the same time, not working and still being paid and a failure to properly document time worked. In the end, such failures compromise the perception, trust and public support of the agency involved.

Law enforcement executives have options when developing comprehensive oversight to their extra-duty program but must be cognizant to retain overall management of the program. To that end, the agency should set the operational rules for the program, such as, who can work extra-duty jobs and in what capacity, how many hours can be worked, what type of jobs can and cannot be worked and set officer pay rates and equipment use costs. The agency must set out all aspects of its extra-duty policy in a comprehensive written policy format. Administration of the program can be delegated.

Fundamentally, there are three types of administrative options: internally administered programs, externally administered programs, and a hybrid model. Internally administered models are those that are handled completely within the agency. Hybrid models are programs that maintain close affiliation with the agency but are administered by collective bargaining units, employee associations or the agency's parent, (city, county, or state). External programs are administered by private companies that are contracted to handle all the daily operational details of administering the program on behalf of the agency.

The external administration model offers agencies, officers, and citizens many benefits that cannot be gained with internally or hybrid models. Due to the issues associated with extra-duty programs, agencies should work with experienced full-service providers that will protect the agency and uphold its directives and overall management of the program. Excellent higher tier providers can administer a program seamlessly and without problems for everyone involved.

An external third-party service provider handles all the administrative processes and details of the extra-duty program for and under the management of the agency. The agency retains all managerial controls of the program. They just do not have to deal with the details and issues of operating or administering the program. Specific benefits of utilizing a quality external third-party service provider include:

- No agency/city borne administrative costs.
- No direct agency-client interactions unless needed.
- No agency issues regarding billing, payment, etc.
- Officers are paid in a timely manner.
- Officer payments are legal, compliant, and documented.
- Financial and legal risks are mitigated.
- Active agency monitoring is available.
- Full compliance with agency directives.

An externally administered program that is compliant with agency directives, professional standards, and proper accounting methods is a big benefit to officers. Third-party providers generally have enhanced notification, access, and information capabilities since they have additional technology that many internal and hybrid models do not. Thus, officers can search opportunities and sign up for them regardless of time of day which is a great equalizer to those working various shifts. This also create a perception and reality of fairness that boosts officer morale.

Officers are generally less fatigued since they cannot easily work hours that exceed the parameters of the agency directives since the third-party provider incorporates these guidelines into their scheduling software and processes. Less fatigued officers make fewer mistakes. They are generally safer and more alert while working extra-duty jobs and even more importantly when they work regular agency shifts.

As long as citizens and entities desire to have officers present to provide additional safety and security extra-duty work will continue to exist. It is imperative that an agency's extra-duty program is managed and administered in a competent and professional manner. Agency executives should strongly consider using a third-party service provider to administer its program. The benefits are numerous with the most important being reduced financial and legal risk to the agency, eliminating costs to the agency, enhanced agency monitoring and information, and better wellness and health for the officers.

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