

Council Agenda Item 26-0480R



MEETING DATE: June 15, 2026

SUBJECT/TITLE: Resolution to approve proper city officials to execute a grant contract agreement from the Minnesota Department of Public Safety, Office of Justice Programs, for participation in the 2026 Pathways to Policing Program.

SUBMITTED BY: Kerry Cronin-Jones

RECOMMENDATION: Approve.

PREVIOUS COUNCIL ACTION: 23-0310R, 24-0274R

BACKGROUND: The Minnesota Pathways to Policing Program was established in 2016 to support law enforcement agencies in recruiting and developing non-traditional candidates for careers in policing. Initially, the program focused on recruiting new candidates and reimbursed up to 50% of education and training costs associated with accelerated licensure programs. At that time, reimbursement was only available after a candidate successfully obtained POST licensure, requiring departments to first absorb the full cost of hiring and sponsoring candidates through training. Because these expenses were not built into DPD’s operating budget, the program structure was not financially compatible with the department’s recruitment model.

Beginning in 2023, the program expanded eligible grant activities to allow reimbursement for current candidates participating in a Community Service Officer program. This change enabled DPD to identify eligible participants through its existing Community Service Officer Intern (CSO-I) program. As a result, up to 50% of wages currently paid to eligible CSO-I participants became reimbursable through the grant program.

DPD applied for and received Pathways to Policing funding in 2023 and again in 2024. The program has proven successful in supporting recruitment, retention, and workforce development efforts within the department.

DPD’s authorized staffing level is 153 sworn officers, with 127 officers currently employed. Of those officers, 15.7% are women and 7.8% identify as a race other than white. The department also recognizes the value of recruiting individuals with prior professional experience outside of traditional law enforcement career paths.

For purposes of this program, DPD defines “non-traditional candidates” as individuals from populations currently underrepresented within the department, including women, racial and ethnic minorities, and individuals bringing prior career experience from other professional fields. Recruiting and retaining candidates from these backgrounds supports DPD’s goal of building a workforce that better reflects the community it serves while broadening the range of skills, experiences, and perspectives represented within the department.

DPD's Community Service Officer (CSO) Program has become a critical recruitment and development pipeline for future sworn officers. CSO-Interns participate in a paid internship program while enrolled full-time in a two- or four-year law enforcement program and working toward Minnesota Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) licensure requirements. Through this experience, participants gain practical field exposure, familiarity with departmental operations, and mentorship opportunities that prepare them for future sworn positions.

Since the internship program was established six years ago, more than 40% of newly hired officers have been current or former CSOs. The program has proven highly effective in preparing candidates for successful careers with DPD.

In today's competitive law enforcement hiring environment, DPD has expanded recruitment efforts to engage potential applicants earlier through outreach and mentorship opportunities with middle and high school students. The Pathways to Policing initiative builds on these efforts by specifically supporting individuals who may not otherwise have access to traditional law enforcement career pathways.

Participants selected through the Pathways to Policing Program will complete an approved Professional Peace Officer Education (PPOE) program meeting Minnesota POST licensing requirements. Upon successful completion and licensure, participants will be eligible for appointment as sworn officers with the Duluth Police Department.

BUDGET/FISCAL IMPACT: The CSO Program is not currently fully funded through the general fund budget. Approval of this grant agreement will reimburse up to 50% of eligible CSO-I wages currently paid through the DPD general fund, reducing existing budget pressures.

OPTIONS: Approve – Allows reimbursement of eligible CSO-I wages, reducing general fund expenditures while supporting recruitment and workforce development efforts.

Do Not Approve – The full cost of eligible CSO-I wages will remain the responsibility of the DPD general fund.

NECESSARY ACTION: Please approve.

ATTACHMENTS: 2026 Pathways to Policing Grant Contract Agreement