

Law Enforcement Recruitment Bonus Payment Program Plan



**FLORIDA DEPARTMENT *of*
ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY**

Fiscal Year 2022-2023

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Program and Plan Overview

Under the leadership of Governor Ron DeSantis, the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO) is supporting the state of Florida's effort to recruit law enforcement officers. The Law Enforcement Recruitment Bonus Payment Program ("Program") aids the recruitment of law enforcement officers¹ newly employed in the state by providing a one-time recruitment bonus payment ("bonus payment") of up to \$5,000 to each newly employed officer within the state ("Newly Employed Officers"²). The bonus payment may be made to a Newly Employed Officer, contingent on legislative appropriations. The bonus payment will be based on DEO's estimate of Newly Employed Officers for each fiscal year (FY) and will be prorated, if necessary. When sufficient funds are available, each bonus payment will be adjusted to include the Newly Employed Officer's share of Federal Insurance Contribution Act (FICA) tax on the bonus payment.

This Program plan was developed for the administration of the Program and distribution of bonus payments. DEO will follow this annual plan for FY 2022-2023.

Rulemaking

DEO is required to establish rules to govern the Program. DEO is in the process of drafting the rules and expects to start the formal rulemaking process in July 2022.

Data Gathering/Validation and Program Portal

The Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) provided DEO with information on law enforcement officers for the past five years to be used by DEO to estimate the number of Newly Employed Officers for FY 2022-2023.

FDLE will provide information about Newly Employed Officers in a format that can be uploaded into a secure Program portal maintained by DEO. FDLE will provide quarterly information about Newly Employed Officers who leave their position and do not return to another Florida Criminal Justice Employing Agency ("Employing Agency" or "Employing Agencies")³ within 15 calendar days.

DEO will work directly with Employing Agencies to gather information and documents necessary to make payments to Newly Employed Officers. Employing Agencies are required to assist DEO in gathering the necessary information and documents and to make determinations on their Newly Employed Officers' eligibility based on the guidance provided by DEO.

DEO will issue a statewide communication to Employing Agencies across the state providing them with information about the Program and process, including required data elements and documents to be provided to DEO to confirm eligibility.

¹ "Law enforcement officer" has the same meaning as provided in section 943.10(1), Florida Statutes (F.S.)

² A person who gains or is appointed to full-time employment as a certified Law Enforcement Officer with a Florida Criminal Justice Agency on or after July 1, 2022, and who has never before been employed as a Law Enforcement Officer.

³ "Criminal Justice Agency" has the same meaning as provided in section 119.011(4), F.S. and "Employing Agency" has the same meaning as provided in section 943.10(4), F.S.

The secure Program portal will be developed by a third-party vendor to provide the following features/benefits:

- Capability to upload and input the information and documents necessary to issue a bonus payment.
- Capability to electronically attest to the accuracy of the data as well as identify the address location that will be used for receiving printed checks before any bonus payment is processed.
- Accessibility to Program information, instructions, and templates.
- Ability for multiple types of users to have access to the secure Program portal:
 - Employing Agencies will be provided with access to upload/input data files manually or upload flat files with recipient data for Newly Employed Officers.
 - DEO users will be provided access to support Employing Agencies with answers to questions regarding the Program and their eligible Newly Employed Officers' data uploads using the secure Program portal.
- Data validation to ensure that records are complete and accurate.
 - Data validation will include identifying potential duplicate records, validating Program expenditure amounts to adhere to Program guidelines, and responsibly serving eligible Newly Employed Officers who are employed with multiple Employing Agencies.
- Data encryption and user access controls to secure and protect Newly Employed Officers' personal identifying information uploaded through the secure Program portal.
- Secure data transmission between the secure Program portal and all other third-party solutions procured by DEO to administer the Program. DEO's check processing vendor will utilize encryption and digital signatures with no data stored outside of the secure Program portal, DEO servers, or DEO's check processing solution.
- Real-time reporting to be used by both Employing Agencies and DEO to monitor payment requests, issuance, and mailing.

DEO will conduct data validation to ensure that records are complete and correct and accurately meet the Program's goals and objectives.

Eligibility Criteria

Pursuant to section 445.008, Florida Statutes ("F.S."), the individual must be a Newly Employed Officer, which means the individual gains or is appointed to full-time employment as a certified law enforcement officer with a Florida criminal justice employing agency on or after July 1, 2022, and who has never before been employed as a law enforcement officer in this state.

To receive and retain a bonus payment, a Newly Employed Officer must:

- Obtain certification for employment or appointment as a law enforcement officer pursuant to section 943.1395, F.S. on or after July 1, 2022;

- Gain full-time employment⁴ as a law enforcement officer with an Employing Agency on or after July 1, 2022;
- Sign an acknowledgment form, as provided for in the Program's rule, that the Newly Employed Officer understands the reimbursement requirements for failure to maintain eligibility; and
- Maintain continuous full-time employment with an Employing Agency for at least two years from the date on which the law enforcement officer obtained certification. The required two-year employment period may be satisfied by maintaining employment at one or more Employing Agencies, but such period must not contain any break in service longer than 15 calendar days.

In addition to the eligibility requirements listed directly above, the Employing Agency must also certify in the Program portal that the Newly Employed Officer meets the eligibility criteria for receiving a bonus payment.

Bonus Payment Processing

Section 445.008, F.S., allows the issuance of a bonus payment of up to \$5,000 to a Newly Employed Officer, contingent on legislative appropriation and based on DEO's estimate of Newly Employed Officers for each fiscal year. When sufficient funds are available, each bonus payment will be adjusted to include the Newly Employed Officer's share of FICA tax on the bonus payment.

DEO estimates that 3,300 Newly Employed Officers will be appointed to full-time employment for FY 2022-2023, based on its analysis of records provided by FDLE for the five previous years.

- Each bonus payment made by DEO to Newly Employed Officers will be in the gross amount of \$6,694, which includes \$1,694 for the payment of taxes⁵.
- DEO will obtain lists of Newly Employed Officers and their Employing Agencies from FDLE. From that list, DEO will contact each Employing Agency directly to inform them of the eligibility of Newly Employed Officers.
- DEO will provide each Employing Agency a payment template that is designed to gather all required data and information. The Employing Agency's Payment Point of Contact (PPC) is responsible for providing all required information. Any submission that is missing information, provides information using a form other than the template provided, or submitted in a manner other than through the Program portal will result in delays in processing payments.
- Employing Agencies will submit and upload the completed payment template to the Program portal. This process will allow faster processing of Newly Employed Officers' information and help ensure timely payment. DEO will maintain this information securely, and personal identifying and contact information will not be distributed or shared. DEO

⁴ Employment with a Criminal Justice Agency for a minimum of 30 hours per week.

⁵ Includes 15.3% employee and employer FICA tax plus an additional 10% federal income tax: totaling 25.3%.

takes the protection of Florida's law enforcement personal information seriously. DEO will only request information that is necessary to determine Program eligibility, process payments, and contact Employing Agencies and eligible Newly Employed Officers as needed.

- Upon submission of a completed payment template, the Employing Agency will certify its commitment to distribute checks to their respective Newly Employed Officers, void and return checks to DEO for Newly Employed Officers who left the Employing Agency before receipt of the bonus payment, and notify DEO if a law enforcement officer who received a bonus payment under the Program failed to maintain continuous employment for the required two-year period.
- Employing Agencies will upload an acknowledgement of the eligibility criteria for receiving a bonus payment and the reimbursement requirements for failure to maintain eligibility signed by the Newly Employed Officer into the secure Program portal.
- DEO will verify information in the payment template to ensure the certification shows the employee as a Newly Employed Officer.
- DEO will contract with a third-party banking entity for check issuing/processing services. That vendor, in collaboration with the secure Program portal vendor, must provide check processing services that:
 - Utilizes encryption and digital signatures with no data stored outside of the secure Program portal or the check processing solution.
 - Provides a payment disbursement solution that integrates eligible recipient data with the banking institution to print, sort, and mail bonus payment checks on schedule with the correct financial amounts.
 - Assesses mailing address data with a postal cleansing process to ensure that the supplied recipient details correspond to a physical location.
 - Prints checks that include the following:
 - Recipient's name;
 - Return address (unique PO Box address to be used for undeliverable mail);
 - Logo with Florida State Seal;
 - Governor DeSantis' digital signature;
 - DEO Secretary Dane Eagle's digital signature;
 - A payment stub; and
 - Encoding for bank account/payment details.
 - Provides each Newly Employed Officer with a single envelope that contains:
 - One check addressed to the Newly Employed Officer;
 - One insert letter from Governor DeSantis, tailored to Newly Employed Officers;
 - One insert providing tax handling information; and
 - An insert with other information relevant to the Program or to any other state incentive program for which the Newly Employed Officer may be eligible.
 - Print checks within the time intervals established and approved by DEO.
 - Mail all checks through a carrier mail service with a tracking number and provide the tracking number to DEO.

- Newly Employed Officers employed with State of Florida Employing Agencies will be paid using the state's payroll system.

DEO will monitor the delivery of the checks via the carrier service tracking numbers provided by the banking entity. If payment is not received by the Employing Agency after 10 business days, the Employing Agency may contact DEO directly at RecruitmentBonus@DEO.MyFlorida.com or by calling the call center that will be established to support Program payment inquiries. DEO may assist with reissuing a bonus payment if the check is lost and has not been deposited. Employing Agencies should also report fraud or stolen checks to DEO immediately upon the Employing Agencies becoming aware of such issues. DEO will work with any Employing Agency to resolve payment issues.

Reimbursement of Recruitment Bonus Payment

DEO will conduct audits to verify the Newly Employed Officer's continued employment with the Employing Agencies.

FDLE will provide information about Newly Employed Officers initially certified as law enforcement officers on or after July 1, 2022, and who separate from full-time employment with an Employing Agency for more than 15 calendar days. DEO will obtain copies of Affidavits of Separation⁶ for such Newly Employed Officers from their Employing Agency.

A Newly Employed Officer who receives a bonus payment pursuant to this Program must reimburse DEO if they fail to maintain continuous employment for the required two-year period. Reimbursement will not be required if a Newly Employed Officer is discharged by their Employing Agency for a reason other than misconduct as designated on the Affidavit of Separation completed by the Employing Agency and maintained by the Criminal Justice Standards and Training Commission within FDLE.

The bonus payment must be reimbursed in either of the following circumstances:

- When the Newly Employed Officer voluntarily separates from employment with an Employing Agency as indicated in the Newly Employed Officer's Affidavit of Separation and has a break in service of more than 15 calendar days as indicated in the Newly Employed Officer's Global Profile Sheet maintained by FDLE.
- When the Newly Employed Officer's separation reason is indicated under 7D, 7E, or 7F in the Affidavit of Separation.

DEO will send a determination letter to any Newly Employed Officer who is required to reimburse a bonus payment to the law enforcement officer's last-known mailing address. Reimbursement of a bonus payment must be made to DEO within 12 months of the date on the determination letter unless the Newly Employed Officer receives approval in writing from DEO for an extension not to exceed six months. A Newly Employed Officer who received a bonus payment is responsible for ensuring DEO has their most current mailing address. The determination letter will describe the amount owed and the reason and the time frame for reimbursement.

DEO will follow the Florida Department of Financial Services' procedures that govern the

⁶ The affidavit completed by a Criminal Justice Agency when a Law Enforcement Officer separates from employment from the agency and is maintained by FDLE.

recoupment of funds.

A Newly Employed Officer who is required to repay a bonus payment under this Program should consult with their tax specialist to determine tax implications related to the reimbursement.

Call Center

DEO will contract with a third-party vendor to establish a call center to support bonus payment inquiries. The call center will be tasked with the following, as appropriate:

- Serving as a central contact point for two key groups:
 - Employing Agency PPCs for inquiries related to uploading/entering information and documents, and program requirements.
 - Newly Employed Officers for inquiries related to check updates and issues.
- Receiving inquiries from the general public.
- Maintaining operating hours approved by DEO.

Call center staff will have read-only access to the Program portal and will only be provided with enough personal data to uniquely identify a caller and address their issues. Any updates, issue resolution, or changes to data will be escalated to DEO for further action.

Compliance and Data Retention

DEO will manage funds received for this Program in compliance with any applicable U.S. Treasury guidance and requirements. The retention period is five fiscal years after the two-year period of employment is completed or the end of employment of the Newly Employed Officer without re-employment with an Employing Agency within 15 calendar days, whichever is earliest.

Estimated Cost to DEO

DEO estimates the following costs associated with developing and administering the Program and distributing bonus payments; however, DEO will absorb these administrative costs and will not charge any administrative costs to the Program, ensuring that all \$20 Million is utilized for bonus payments to eligible Newly Employed Officers.

Personnel - Salaries and Benefits / other allocated costs for time on project	\$35,000
Management Consulting Contract	\$350,000
System Enhancements to the Salesforce Employer Portal (Add on to Recognition Payment Portal)	\$100,000
TOTAL BUDGET	\$485,000*

*Note: Program funds will not be used to cover the above-identified costs.