

Contract Law Enforcement Services

Resource Center on Intergovernmental Contract Law Enforcement Services

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The National Sheriffs' Association has created (and seeks your assistance in expanding) this Web-based Resource Center. Anywhere in the United States, law enforcement executives and small town government officials can access this database, which is an [information repository](#) of tools and how-to materials on intergovernmental contract law enforcement services, as well as academic and practitioner analyses on the advantages and challenges for Sheriff's Offices and municipalities in these contracts. In addition, the Center has a [directory of consultants](#) who can offer policy guidance, conduct needs assessments, review contracts, etc.

"Law enforcement is one of the few truly essential services provided by government." It is also one of the most costly, especially for small municipal governments. "[M]any local governments attempt to provide a comprehensive level of police services, regardless of their capacity to do so adequately." These attempts can result in: (1) inadequate services, (2) duplication and inefficiency among neighboring municipal law enforcement agencies, and (3) depletion of the scarce financial resources of small local governments, especially in rural areas.

Moreover, small town governments often face numerous unfunded federal and state mandates and a variety of demographic trends that are making it increasingly difficult to provide law enforcement services via the traditional, in-house municipal police department. For example, demographic shifts in small towns – such as rapid business and population growth due to urban overcrowding and exodus – can suddenly bring the traditional urban problems of youth gangs, gun-related violence, and rampant drug use to small town communities.

Thus, all across America, government officials in small incorporated towns are being forced to reassess the ability of their traditional, in-house police departments to adequately protect the local citizenry within the framework of their department's financial limitations and structural constraints. Due to the increasing complexity of law enforcement and the continuously rising costs of personnel, equipment, vehicles, training, buildings, insurance, etc., these local government officials are looking to intergovernmental contract law enforcement services for the police protection they otherwise would be unable to provide in their small towns.

Contract law enforcement offers small municipalities a wide range of services at a reduced cost; and it allows contractor towns to choose the specific levels and types of services that best meet the needs of their citizenry. Small towns that contract with

a county Sheriff's Office, for example, can draw upon the full resources of the larger Sheriff's Office while paying only their proportionate user costs. As a result of this cost-sharing, towns obtain optimum law enforcement services at a lesser cost than would be required to set up or maintain their own police department.

A 1995 survey in the state of Illinois revealed that 39.3 percent of respondent Sheriff's Offices contracted with small communities to provide protective services; but, for 71.1 percent of these Sheriff's Offices, their charges to the participating communities did not fully cover the cost of providing the services. Five years later, there was still the need – as there still is across the country today – for a more systematic approach to contract law enforcement service agreements, as noted in a 2000 report by the Illinois Law Enforcement Training and Standards Board:

More research is needed on the extent of alternate policing strategies in small communities....More information is also needed on management practices adopted by small communities to ensure the success of alternate arrangements. For example, it would be useful to examine in-depth the methodologies used by local officials to determine the true cost of police services. Effective contract monitoring and oversight practices could be explored as well as performance measurement. Such information could be used to assist local officials and law enforcement personnel on best practices and successful case studies. Adapting innovative management tools for use by small town officials would help ensure the success of alternate policing strategies in the future.

Accordingly, in an effort to meet this need for a more systematic approach to contract service agreements, NSA created this Resource Center on Intergovernmental Contract Law Enforcement Services as an easily accessible, user-friendly, national resource for both small town municipal officials and law enforcement executives. It provides municipal officials and law enforcement executives with: (1) information they need to dialogue and negotiate in an informed manner; (2) model forms and checklists to minimize their having to "re-invent the wheel" in drafting contracts, memoranda of understanding; etc., and (3) a directory of consultants and experienced peers, whom they can call for expert guidance. The Center is a starting point where municipal officials in small localities and law enforcement executives can go to find the comprehensive information and contacts they need to research, assess, and successfully implement contract law enforcement services.

To contribute information resources to the Center or to apply for listing in the Center's directory of consultants, contact Tim Woods at twoods@sheriffs.org.