

# FOLLOW-UP REPORT

## Denver Police Department *Police Operations and Staffing*

JANUARY 2025



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# City and County of Denver



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## AUDITOR'S LETTER

*January 2, 2025*

In keeping with generally accepted government auditing standards and Auditor's Office policy, as authorized by city ordinance, we have a responsibility to monitor and follow up on audit recommendations to ensure city agencies address audit findings through appropriate corrective action and to aid us in planning future audits.

In June 2023, we audited police operations and staffing and found risks involving strategic planning, community policing planning, the department's recruiting strategies and performance management, and staffing models. The Denver Police Department agreed to implement all 16 recommendations. It should be noted that the department originally proposed several implementation dates before the original audit report was published. We subsequently gave the department clarifying information on the remaining work we identified that had not been completed under separate cover.

We recently followed up and found the department fully implemented five recommendations, partially implemented four, and did not implement seven recommendations.

Although the police department has made notable progress, it did not fully address all the risks associated with our original findings. Consequently, we may revisit these risk areas in future audits to ensure the city takes appropriate corrective action.

We appreciate the leaders and team members in Denver Police Department and the Department of Public Safety who shared their time and knowledge with us throughout the audit and the follow-up process. Please contact me at 720-913-5000 with any questions.

Denver Auditor's Office

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Timothy M. O'Brien".

Timothy M. O'Brien, CPA  
Auditor

## Police Operations and Staffing

**Original Report Issued:**  
JUNE 2023

**Follow-up Report Issued:**  
JANUARY 2025

### Objective

To evaluate the effectiveness of the Denver Police Department's recruitment and retention practices and determine whether it adequately uses data to assess its resources and ensure effective operations.

### Background

The Denver Police Department and its more than 1,400 uniformed officers strive to keep the public safe through crime prevention and crime reduction strategies.

Law enforcement agencies nationwide are struggling to hire and retain officers. This is in part because of greater scrutiny of law enforcement — and negative perceptions by the public — following events like the murder of George Floyd by Minneapolis police in 2020.

Understaffing puts a strain on police agencies, reducing officers' availability to respond to 911 calls and impairing their well-being. It also limits the time officers can spend in the community rebuilding trust and relationships with the people they serve.

### The Denver Police Department lacked comprehensive, strategic policies, and documented guidance to ensure effective operations

The department did not have:

- A formal strategic plan for how it plans to accomplish long-term goals.
- A community policing plan to guide citywide strategies for interacting with the public and building relationships with Denver's residents.
- A recruiting program and performance management plan that would provide structure and insight into long-term recruiting initiatives.
- An up-to-date staffing model based on officers' workloads.

### The Denver Police Department did not have effective strategies to understand and address low retention

While many issues contribute to staff turnover in police agencies, the department lacked adequate strategies to address aspects of low retention that are within its control — such as a lack of diversity among officers, increased stress from staffing shortages, and low morale.

### The Denver Police Department should improve officers' access to in-house physical therapy and mental health services

The department should expand its physical therapy services, and it would benefit from having on-site mental health services. Officials should also do more to promote the wellness programs available to officers.

### The Denver Police Department had inconsistent processes to monitor officers' time worked

The department inconsistently applied time codes when reviewing whether officers work more than 64 hours a week.

#### WHY THIS MATTERS

**Without overall strategic guidance and better recruitment and retention efforts, the Denver Police Department will remain understaffed — which could put officers' safety, health, and wellness at risk as well as risk community members' safety.**

**Additionally, without a comprehensive strategy for community policing, the department's efforts will remain siloed across the city and Denver Police officers will have a harder time healing their relationships with the people they serve.**



5

FULLY IMPLEMENTED



4

PARTIALLY IMPLEMENTED



7

NOT IMPLEMENTED

Jan. 2, 2025



# Action Since Audit Report

## Police Operations and Staffing

**16** recommendations proposed in June 2023

The Denver Police Department fully implemented five recommendations made in the original audit report. However, the department partially implemented only four others and it has not taken steps to address the risks seven other recommendations had sought to resolve.

By developing and documenting a method to measure the success of community policing efforts, the police department is better able to gauge public perception. The police department is also able to better address staffing needs through regular updates of its internal staffing model. Furthermore, implementing its racial equity plan helps the department ensure the demographics of its officers more closely match the communities they serve while expanding physical and mental health services ensures officers have access to the support they need.



**FULLY  
IMPLEMENTED**

**5**



**PARTIALLY  
IMPLEMENTED**

**4**



**NOT  
IMPLEMENTED**

**7**

## REMAINING RISKS

The recommendations the department did not fully implement present several lingering risks. Among them:

- The department's strategic plan lacks critical elements to help effectively predict future needs, determine progress toward defined long-term goals, and ensure the department provides meaningful and efficient police services to the community.
- The lack of comprehensive strategies to understand and address staff retention could prevent the police department from identifying issues within their control that lead to officers leaving the department.

# FINDING 1 | The Denver Police Department lacks comprehensive, strategic policies, and documented guidance to ensure effective operations

RECOMMENDATION	IMPLEMENTATION STATUS
1.1 Prepare, implement, and communicate a comprehensive strategic plan	● PARTIALLY IMPLEMENTED
1.2 Develop, document, and implement a comprehensive, strategic community policing plan	● NOT IMPLEMENTED
1.3 Communicate the comprehensive, strategic community policing plan	● NOT IMPLEMENTED
1.4 Measure the success of community policing efforts	● FULLY IMPLEMENTED
1.5 Review and update the recruitment program	● NOT IMPLEMENTED
1.6 Develop communication procedures	● NOT IMPLEMENTED
1.7 Finalize and implement new staffing analysis	● FULLY IMPLEMENTED

## Recommendation 1.1

### PREPARE, IMPLEMENT, AND COMMUNICATE A COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGIC PLAN

– The Denver Police Department should review and update its one-page strategic framework to align with leading practices for creating a complete and documented strategic plan. This process should follow and document each step of strategic planning, in consecutive order, as discussed in the finding. Once completed, department leadership should communicate the new plan to relevant program leaders to ensure staff understand the department’s goals, planned strategies, and expectations for accomplishing them.



**PARTIALLY  
IMPLEMENTED**

**Agency’s original target date for completion: July 1, 2023**

### SUMMARY OF AGENCY ACTION

The Denver Police Department expanded its one-page strategic plan when it created its “2023-2027 Strategic Plan.” The plan can be found on the department’s website. The original audit report specified that a strategic plan should:

- Prepare a mission statement.
- Assess environmental factors and other critical issues.
- Agree on a small number of broad goals.

- Develop strategies to achieve the broad goals.
- Create an action plan.
- Develop measurable objectives.
- Incorporate performance measures.
- Implement the plan and monitor progress.
- Reassess the strategic plan.

The department's mission statement in the updated strategic plan is, "Preventing crime and increasing public trust while honoring the responsibilities granted to us by those we serve, with continued focus on partnerships, learning, and innovation."

The department assessed environmental factors by reviewing its own demographic data and that of the City and County of Denver. It also reviewed events in Denver like the number of calls for service, total crimes reported, and total arrests made. Finally, the department highlighted results from 2022. For example, 100% of active sworn personnel were trained in active bystandership and de-escalation tactics.

The strategic plan sets five goals for the department:

- Prevent crime and increase public trust.
- Build safe and healthy communities.
- Focus on precision policing.
- Develop and sustain innovative training.
- Build a more efficient and resilient organization.

The department has set targets for each goal. For example, the target outcome for "Focus on precision policing" is to implement consistent, evidence-based violence reduction efforts in each police district. While these target outcomes provide a general definition of success for each goal, they lack specific measurable details, which will prevent the department from determining whether meaningful change is occurring.

When we reviewed the "2023-2027 Strategic Plan," we found that important elements of an action plan were missing — the estimated costs of the targeted outcomes, who is responsible for each goal, and the time frame for accomplishing these goals.

Furthermore, the key performance measures in the plan lack defined targets. For example, a key performance measure of the goal "Build a more efficient and resilient organization" is listed as "wellness risk scores." There is no further information included, such as average scores for the whole department or a target wellness score for most officers, for how the department will assess this performance measure. Department staff could not provide any specific documentation for the missing information related to the targeted outcomes, objectives, and key performance measures as they are still developing this information.

The introduction to the strategic plan says the plan’s objectives and activities are regularly reviewed and updated, and an annual accountability report is posted on the department’s “Performance and Transparency” webpage. But when we reviewed the webpage, we found that as of Oct. 10, 2024, an annual accountability report has not been added.

The department said the “2023-2027 Strategic Plan” was reviewed by department and other city leaders. The plan was shared with the police chief’s Community Advisory Board and presented to the City Council Safety, Housing, Education & Homeless Committee.

Department staff provided a screenshot of the department’s internal website showing that 631 staff viewed the strategic plan. According to the plan there are 1,517 sworn officers and 323 nonsworn staff. This means that about one-third of the department, or 34%, viewed the plan through the website. Since most of the communication for the strategic plan occurred during roll calls and in commander meetings, we could not verify how many department staff have heard about and understand the strategic plan.

Because the department has drafted a strategic plan, but that plan lacks critical elements identified in our original audit, we consider this recommendation partially implemented.

**Recommendation 1.2**

**DEVELOP, DOCUMENT, AND IMPLEMENT A COMPREHENSIVE, STRATEGIC COMMUNITY POLICING PLAN** – The Denver Police Department should develop, document, and implement a comprehensive, strategic community policing plan that details priorities, roles, and responsibilities for officers and staff, key activities and milestones, and performance metrics to measure success. This plan should align with policing best practices, such as those from the U.S. Department of Justice’s Office of Community Oriented Policing Services. The plan should also include ways to gain feedback from community members, such as through citywide surveys.



**NOT  
IMPLEMENTED**

**Agency’s original target date for completion: July 1, 2023**

**SUMMARY OF AGENCY ACTION**

The original audit report specified the department should include the following steps for developing the strategic plan for its community policing activities:

- Consider environmental factors that affect officers and the community.
- Describe the department’s vision and goals.
- Describe the roles and responsibilities for everyone in the department.

- List key activities and milestones and define standards and performance metrics for success.
- Include ways to gain feedback from community members, such as through citywide surveys.

The department created a “Community Policing Engagement Plan,” but we found it did not include information about environmental factors affecting officers and the community.

One of the department’s goals for effective community policing is to ensure the demographics of its employees reflect the community they serve. Department staff said they used demographic information from a Department of Public Safety personnel strength report. But we were not able to access this report to review the demographic information they used.

We did review documentation that showed the department’s safety, equity, diversity, and inclusiveness administrator reviewed the information and confirmed the demographic categories in the report, such as race, education level, and languages spoken were appropriate for understanding how Denver’s population is represented by its police force.

The department’s vision statement notes the department will establish a relationship with the community based on trust, respect, and collaboration to enhance public safety and prevent crime. The department will meet its mission by:

- Focusing on the prevention of crime and reduction of social harms.
- Adopting a department culture that is consistent with community values.
- Combining both efficiency and effectiveness, while using technologies that enhance policing operations.

The “Community Engagement Strategic Plan” has three goals:

- Enhance trust and collaboration.
- Empower and educate the community.
- Promote internal diversity and improve retention.

The plan includes pictures, names, and titles of the community engagement team and provides contact information for each district’s resource officers but does not list their responsibilities.

The department did not include information in the plan on key activities and milestones and did not define standards and performance metrics for success. Department staff provided internal documentation showing a goal to increase the number of the department’s invitations to community-led events by 30%, to 966.

When we reviewed the documentation, we found that as of Sept. 27, 2024, the department had exceeded its goal of attending community-driven

events in the first quarter by 74 events, or 41%, and in the second quarter by 203 events, or 87%. In the third quarter, the department had been invited to 273 events – 93% of its goal. By Sept. 30, 2024, the department had met its total annual goal.

The department did not have any additional milestones or performance measures.

The “Community Engagement Strategic Plan” does not include information about how to gather feedback from community members. Feedback is also not gathered at the community-driven events the department attended.

Department staff said they have discussed gathering feedback at these events but do not have a formalized or standardized system. But as discussed in Recommendation 1.4, the department used the “Denver Public Safety Survey” in 2023 to gather feedback from Denver residents about their top public safety concerns and their perceptions of the Denver Police Department.

Because most of the elements of the original audit recommendation are missing from the “Community Engagement Strategic Plan,” we consider this recommendation not implemented.

### Recommendation 1.3

#### **COMMUNICATE THE COMPREHENSIVE, STRATEGIC COMMUNITY POLICING PLAN –**

Once Recommendation 1.2 is implemented, the Denver Police Department should effectively communicate its comprehensive, strategic community policing plan with all officers and staff, as well as external stakeholders, to promote clear understanding and support of the department’s vision, in line with policing best practices.



**NOT  
IMPLEMENTED**

**Agency’s original target date for completion: Nov. 3, 2022**

#### **SUMMARY OF AGENCY ACTION**

The Denver Police Department could not provide us with any documentation showing that the “Community Engagement Strategic Plan” has been communicated to officers, staff, or external stakeholders. Department staff said leaders discuss the plan with officers and staff in staff meetings. The plan is also discussed in biweekly community resource officer meetings and in all community engagement bureau staff meetings.

But because these meetings are not documented, we could not verify that the “Community Engagement Strategic Plan” has been shared.

Therefore, we consider this recommendation not implemented.

**Recommendation 1.4**



**FULLY  
IMPLEMENTED**

**MEASURE THE SUCCESS OF COMMUNITY POLICING EFFORTS** – The Denver Police Department should develop and document a method to measure the success of its community policing efforts and conduct community surveys to gather information from the public and gauge the public’s perception of the Denver Police Department. The department should then publish all community survey results.

**Agency’s original target date for completion: April 24, 2023**

**SUMMARY OF AGENCY ACTION**

The Denver Police Department conducted its “Denver Public Safety Survey” from Oct. 15, 2023, through Dec. 8, 2023, to collect information on Denver residents’ views of public safety. The survey gathered responses from 6,341 people who live or work in Denver. Of the responses, 3,157 included written comments.

The survey questions covered seven topics — “police legitimacy,” “collective efficacy — informal social control,” “collective efficacy — social cohesion,” “social disorganization,” and “fear of crime.”

Under the “police legitimacy” category, people were asked questions about their perceived obligation to obey officers, whether Denver Police officers are honest and protect the rights of residents, and their personal interactions with Denver Police officers from the past year.

The department grouped the top 71 public safety concerns into nine categories. The four categories related to perceptions of the department were — “police capacity,” “community capacity,” “police legitimacy,” and “police reform/training.”

Department staff said the 2023 survey cost almost \$100,000 and was funded by a grant. The funding has not been secured to conduct the survey in 2024. The department will continue monitoring community satisfaction and perceptions of safety through surveys that are administered after someone calls 911 or the nonemergency line.

The department used the results of the “Denver Public Safety Survey” to focus its efforts on the geographic areas where trust in police was rated low. It created a program to enhance positive police-community contacts. This program includes trust patrols where local businesses can request an officer visit to hear owner and employee concerns about crime and safety and to share crime prevention strategies.

The program also included a department goal for 2024 to organize three community events in 13 low-trust neighborhoods to strengthen trust and foster community relations. As of Oct. 4, 2024, the department held 105 events and met its goal in all but three neighborhoods.

Therefore, we consider this recommendation fully implemented.

**Recommendation 1.5**

**REVIEW AND UPDATE THE RECRUITMENT PROGRAM** – The Denver Police Department should review and update the design of its existing recruitment program to align with leading practices. This review should follow and document each step of program design and performance management, in consecutive order, as discussed in the finding.



**NOT  
IMPLEMENTED**

**Agency’s original target date for completion: Aug. 1, 2023**

**SUMMARY OF AGENCY ACTION**

The original audit report recommended that the Denver Police Department’s strategic recruiting plan should be developed through the following steps:

- Develop a problem statement.
- Develop program goals and objectives.
- Develop a logic model and theory of change.
- Develop a program summary.
- Manage performance.
- Analyze, learn, act.

Department leaders said some of the initial steps needed to create a strategic plan were not done when the plan was created.

The department developed three broad goals for recruiting:

- Find candidates with different backgrounds and identities who are representative of the diverse neighborhoods within Denver.
- Provide regular opportunities for community feedback in recruiting strategies to grow partnerships and support the department’s work toward a diverse and skilled workforce.
- Meet the Denver Police Department’s authorized officer strength and retain officers through support and access to opportunities from the application process, academy, and to retirement.

The department developed specific objectives on how the department will meet each goal. But in our review of the objectives, we found the goals lacked specific information like how the objectives would be measured and the timeline for meeting each goal.

For example, to meet the department’s objective to fully-staff and retain police officers it will “identify areas of opportunity to better prepare candidates for the academy.” The information in the plan to measure

this objective is written as “#Participating” and “#Events, meetings, presentations.” There is no further information provided for how this objective will support the department in meeting its goal.

Also, the plan did not include information on how the plan manages performance; how the department is analyzing, learning from, and acting on the plan; and a program summary. Department leaders said they intend to rewrite the recruitment program plan to include specific measurements, further examine what goals are not fully within the department’s control and will make sure the measurements for each goal are in the department’s control.

Therefore, we consider this recommendation not implemented.

**Recommendation 1.6**

**DEVELOP COMMUNICATION PROCEDURES** – The Denver Police Department should develop formal procedures to communicate with relevant stakeholders about how well the recruitment program is working and about any plans to improve the program’s performance in the future.



**NOT  
IMPLEMENTED**

**Agency’s original target date for completion: Oct. 26, 2022**

**SUMMARY OF AGENCY ACTION**

Department staff said updates on the recruitment program are provided in several ways, including:

- Through meetings with the chief’s Community Advisory Board.
- Through communication with external stakeholders, like the City Council, and presentations.

However, department staff said there is no formal plan or procedure in place for communicating the success of recruiting efforts. Updates on the recruitment program are provided on an as-needed basis to relevant stakeholders.

Therefore, we consider this recommendation not implemented.

**Recommendation 1.7**

**FINALIZE AND IMPLEMENT NEW STAFFING ANALYSIS** – The Denver Police Department should finalize, implement, and communicate its new staffing analysis in line with leading practices. This should include:



**FULLY  
IMPLEMENTED**

- Completing a formal, documented staffing analysis that is based on data about officers' workloads.
- Reviewing and updating the staffing analysis as necessary on a consistent basis.
- Assessing how best to use civilian staff and alternative response programs to respond to calls for service that could supplement resource needs.

**Agency's original target date for completion: Dec. 1, 2022**

#### **SUMMARY OF AGENCY ACTION**

The police department developed an internal staffing model to determine the demand for call-taking officers in each of the city's six districts at various times of the day. Department staff said they used a template from Northwestern University's School of Police Staff & Command to develop their model.

The department's model gathers information on the number of serious and routine calls each precinct in a district receives. The model also notes the average amount of time an officer needs to respond to those calls to calculate a target staffing level. Comparing the model's target staffing level to current availability for each district determines the "patrol strength," or percentage of current staff to goal staff. For example, in August 2024, District 3 had 118 staff with a goal of 166 staff and were therefore at 71% patrol strength.

The staffing model is updated twice a year after recruit class graduations. We reviewed documentation that showed the staffing model is regularly updated and reviewed by department leadership.

The department does not use the model to assess how civilian staff can be used to perform work usually done by uniformed officers as the staffing shortages are more severe for civilian staff.

The department is taking measures to ease the effects of the civilian staffing shortage by creating online reporting options with Denver 911 and implementing an updated triage system for phone calls. The updated triage system also helps identify which calls can be handled over the phone, reducing officer workload.

Therefore, we consider this recommendation has been fully implemented.

## FINDING 2 | The Denver Police Department does not have effective strategies to understand and address low retention

RECOMMENDATION	IMPLEMENTATION STATUS
2.1 Address causes for low retention	● NOT IMPLEMENTED
2.2 Improve survey response rates and take meaningful action	● PARTIALLY IMPLEMENTED
2.3 Develop employee retention strategies	● NOT IMPLEMENTED
2.4 Review exit survey results	● NOT IMPLEMENTED
2.5 Develop, document, and implement strategies to improve diversity	● FULLY IMPLEMENTED

### Recommendation 2.1



**NOT  
IMPLEMENTED**

**ADDRESS CAUSES FOR LOW RETENTION** – The Denver Police Department should develop and document processes to identify the primary causes for low retention. It should then develop and implement effective retention strategies based on policing best practices.

**Agency’s original target date for completion: May 1, 2023**

#### SUMMARY OF AGENCY ACTION

The Denver Police Department has not developed processes to identify the primary causes for low retention because it is in the process of securing external funding to create and conduct more targeted surveys for current and departing staff. The department applied for grant funding through the Community Policing Development: Law Enforcement Products and Resources Program solicitation in May 2024 and was not approved but is seeking another funding source.

While the department awaits funding, leaders continue to conduct exit interviews with departing officers and staff. Additionally, exit surveys from the Office of Human Resources are provided to all city employees who leave city employment. The department reviews the information obtained from the exit interviews and surveys and sometimes uses this information to identify any retention trends noted in the information provided. But there are no policies and procedures guiding these reviews.

For these reasons, we consider this recommendation not implemented.

## Recommendation 2.2



**PARTIALLY  
IMPLEMENTED**

**IMPROVE SURVEY RESPONSE RATES AND TAKE MEANINGFUL ACTION** – The Denver Police Department should work with the Department of Public Safety to choose and implement an effective way to gather feedback from officers and staff, such as contracting with People Element. Once implemented, department officials should use the information to take meaningful action to enhance retention.

**Agency’s original target date for completion: July 1, 2023**

### **SUMMARY OF AGENCY ACTION**

As mentioned in Recommendation 2.1, the Denver Police Department is in the process of securing external funding to develop and implement targeted surveys for current and departing staff; therefore, whether the department will use People Element, a human resources firm that has provided the department with exit survey services in the past, or another vendor is unknown.

As of the end of our follow-up work in December 2024, the department does not administer regular surveys to gather retention-focused feedback from officers and staff.

However, we found the Denver Police Department obtains staff feedback through several other methods:

- Monthly leadership meetings.
- Monthly morale committee meetings.
- Monthly email feedback to the chief of police.

The department staff say the monthly email feedback will change to in-person townhall meetings beginning mid-December 2024.

Furthermore, the last citywide staff engagement survey was conducted in 2022 and the next one will be conducted in December 2024. Department leaders said the department intends to increase executive command staff involvement during this next citywide engagement survey to improve departmentwide participation.

For these reasons, we consider this recommendation partially implemented.

## Recommendation 2.3

**DEVELOP EMPLOYEE RETENTION STRATEGIES** – Once the Denver Police Department identifies the primary causes of low retention, as specified in recommendations 2.1 and 2.2, the department should develop and implement employee retention strategies using best practices.



**NOT  
IMPLEMENTED**

**Agency's original target date for completion: March 3, 2023**

**SUMMARY OF AGENCY ACTION**

As noted in Recommendation 2.1, the Denver Police Department has not yet developed and implemented processes to identify the primary causes for low retention.

When we asked department staff whether they are implementing any employee retention strategies while they await funding, they said they started a mentoring program for new officers and for officers promoted to the rank of sergeant or lieutenant. However, the program is new and lacks:

- Enough meaningful data or feedback on the program.
- Documented program details.

In addition to the mentoring program, the Denver Police Department has created the Early Retention Program. The Early Retention Program operates with the purpose of reducing turnover of applicants and recruits by having a dedicated recruitment officer focused on retention during the earliest stages of an officer's career.

While these programs are intended to increase retention, the department has not identified the primary causes for low retention, and as a result, cannot identify whether these changes align with best practices.

Therefore, we consider this recommendation not implemented.

**Recommendation 2.4**

**REVIEW EXIT SURVEY RESULTS** – The Denver Police Department should develop, document, and implement a process to regularly review and analyze trends in feedback from departing officers and staff using their responses to the department's exit survey.



**NOT  
IMPLEMENTED**

**Agency's original target date for completion: July 1, 2023**

**SUMMARY OF AGENCY ACTION**

As noted in Recommendation 2.1, the department has not made progress on improving the exit interview process as it continues to seek external funding sources. Instead, the department continues to get feedback from departing officers and staff through exit interviews and a citywide exit survey that is provided to all staff leaving city employment.

Department staff said they plan to develop a new exit interview and use the results to identify and address pain points, increase retention, and improve the department’s culture, but no documentation exists outlining the plan to update this process as the new survey has not yet been created.

When we asked department staff about whether they regularly review and analyze the exit interviews and surveys, they said that, upon request from department leadership, an internal unit focused on performance and development compiles information from exit interviews to help identify trends reflecting why staff and officers are leaving.

We reviewed the department’s operations manual and did not find information clarifying the process for reviewing exit interview results, nor did we find any information related to the exit interview process.

We reached out to Department of Public Safety human resources staff regarding the exit survey provided to all staff leaving city employment and found that as of June 2023 the city now uses a vendor, People Element, to administer citywide exit surveys.

The city contracted with this vendor after experiencing a decreased response rate due to limitations in Workday. After implementing the new exit survey in 2023, the response rate for the police department significantly increased from 6.25% to 61% for the remainder of the year.

When we asked the department staff whether they have documented processes outlining how they review exit survey results, they said that while results are typically reviewed by managers of the employees who are leaving, they have no policies around regularly reviewing and analyzing surveys for trends.

For these reasons, we consider this recommendation not implemented.

**Recommendation 2.5**

**DEVELOP, DOCUMENT, AND IMPLEMENT STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE DIVERSITY**

– As the Denver Police Department develops its comprehensive strategic plan as part of Recommendation 1.2 and its recruiting plan as part of Recommendation 1.4, it should continue to develop, document, and implement diversity goals — including strategies and measures to achieve those goals. These efforts should help ensure the demographics of police officers and staff reflect the Denver communities they serve.



**FULLY  
IMPLEMENTED**

**Agency’s original target date for completion: March 30, 2023**

**SUMMARY OF AGENCY ACTION**

In addition to the outcomes and objectives driven by diversity in the police department's strategic and recruiting plans, the Denver Police Department created a standalone "Racial Equity Action Plan."

The department's "Racial Equity Action Plan" outlines specific strategies, which began in 2023. The plan includes information on strategy status, action steps, measuring success, and progress. The Denver Police Department's Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee meets every two weeks to discuss relevant matters and work on the specific strategies outlined in the "Racial Equity Action Plan."

Other strategies the department is using to achieve diversity goals include:

- Maintaining a webpage of the department's youth outreach programs.
- Holding a women's academy.
- Administering targeted social media campaigns.
- Collaborating with school resource officers to promote cadet and explorer programs at local high schools.

Based on the U.S. Census Bureau's 2023 census data, there were no significant changes to Denver's population demographics since the original audit. Even so, the Denver Police Department has experienced an increase in some applicants of color:

- 16.11% of applicants identified as Black or African American year-to-date in 2024, exceeding Denver's Black or African American 2023 population of 8.9%.
- 38.2% of applicants identified as White year-to-date in 2024, which is less than Denver's 2023 White population of 53.9%.

While the police department is not consistently meeting its target goal of having a "30% female police recruit class makeup" and intends to reach this goal by 2030, the percentage of women that make up the department's sworn strength has continued to increase from 2022 through year-to-date 2024 and over 20% of academy recruits were women in 2023 and year-to-date 2024.

For these reasons, we consider this recommendation fully implemented.

## FINDING 3 | The Denver Police Department should improve officers' access to in-house physical therapy and mental health services

RECOMMENDATION	IMPLEMENTATION STATUS
3.1 Expand physical therapy and mental health services	● FULLY IMPLEMENTED
3.2 Document and communicate wellness programs departmentwide	● FULLY IMPLEMENTED
3.3 Monitor participation in wellness programs	● PARTIALLY IMPLEMENTED

### Recommendation 3.1

**EXPAND PHYSICAL THERAPY AND MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES** – The Denver Police Department should partner with the Department of Public Safety to expand the physical therapy program and develop in-house mental health services for police officers such as through budget requests, grant funding, or other means.



**FULLY  
IMPLEMENTED**

**Agency's original target date for completion: Oct. 1, 2023**

#### SUMMARY OF AGENCY ACTION

The Denver Police Department has partnered with the Department of Public Safety to expand the physical therapy and mental health services programs for police officers.

At the time of the original audit, Denver's police and sheriff departments shared two physical therapists and a third temporary physical therapist to serve their combined 2,300 employees. For mental health services, the Denver Police Department relied on a local outside provider contracted through the Department of Public Safety that did not provide on-site support.

During our review, we found the Department of Public Safety expanded the physical therapy program and now has six in-house physical therapists, including two therapists dedicated exclusively to the police department.

To address increased demand for mental health services, the Denver Police Department contracted with an additional vendor for mental health services. The two mental health service providers offer a wide range of offerings, including mental health counseling, substance abuse treatment, family therapy, and trauma-informed care. These services are offered with minimal wait times at multiple locations, including in-person and on-site

options and services provided via telehealth, ensuring convenient and on time access to mental health support. The police department also offers various supplementary internal health resources focused on mental health, including faith-based counseling and peer support groups.

The Department of Safety funds these programs through budget requests and grant funding, specifically the Denver Peace Officer Behavioral Health Support and Community Partnership Program grant and the Law Enforcement Mental Health and Wellness Act grant.

As a result, we consider this recommendation fully implemented.

### Recommendation 3.2



**FULLY  
IMPLEMENTED**

**DOCUMENT AND COMMUNICATE WELLNESS PROGRAMS DEPARTMENTWIDE** – The Denver Police Department should formally document the department’s employee wellness programs and ensure they are effectively communicated across the department, including to potential recruits.

**Agency’s original target date for completion: April 17, 2017**

#### **SUMMARY OF AGENCY ACTION**

The Denver Police Department has effectively documented and communicated its employee wellness programs throughout the department and to new recruits.

During our follow-up review, we learned the department now maintains a dedicated wellness and resiliency website where all relevant resources, including information on physical therapy and mental health services, are listed and accessible to all law enforcement employees. In addition to the website, the department regularly shares wellness information through various other methods, including emails, flyers, and newsletters. Wellness program resources are also highlighted in the department’s online bulletin, which staff are required to read daily.

To effectively communicate the wellness programs to recruits, the Denver Police Department includes a dedicated wellness and resiliency training block within the first two weeks of the police academy. During this time, recruits meet with members of the department’s wellness unit to learn about wellness and resiliency programs.

Therefore, we consider this recommendation fully implemented.

**Recommendation 3.3**

**MONITOR PARTICIPATION IN WELLNESS PROGRAMS** – The Denver Police Department should develop and document processes to monitor participation in its employee wellness programs. Information collected should include but not be limited to the number of officers participating in the program and the number of referrals by a supervisor or colleague. Information collected should be used to evaluate the success of the program and make improvements. Information collected could also be used to support funding requests.



**PARTIALLY  
IMPLEMENTED**

**Agency's original target date for completion: April 1, 2017**

**SUMMARY OF AGENCY ACTION**

The Denver Police Department has not developed or documented processes to monitor participation in its employee wellness programs. However, the Department of Public Safety collects some wellness data from vendors, which tracks employee participation and service use. This data is added to a wellness dashboard that is also managed by Public Safety. The information is used to monitor participation in mental health and physical therapy services, support budget and funding requests, and secure funding for the department's wellness-related programs.

Although the Department of Public Safety has some wellness-related data in its dashboard, department staff could not demonstrate whether the dashboard is being used to evaluate program effectiveness. The dashboard is less than a year old, still in development, and only has limited amounts of information available on certain wellness programs.

According to Denver Police Department leaders, they do not further monitor participation in wellness programs because they find tracking participation through referrals and other methods can discourage staff and officers from using these services.

For these reasons, we consider this recommendation partially implemented.

## FINDING 4 | The Denver Police Department has inconsistent processes to monitor officers' time worked

### RECOMMENDATION

### IMPLEMENTATION STATUS

4.1 Document and communicate monitoring processes for hours worked

● PARTIALLY IMPLEMENTED

#### Recommendation 4.1

**DOCUMENT AND COMMUNICATE MONITORING PROCESSES FOR HOURS WORKED**  
– The Denver Police Department should document and communicate its processes in the department's operations manual, including a formal methodology for reviewing timecards to ensure compliance with work-time requirements. Processes should detail all potential work codes that impact an officer's compliance with daily and weekly work limits.



**PARTIALLY  
IMPLEMENTED**

**Agency's original target date for completion: Jan. 23, 2023**

#### SUMMARY OF AGENCY ACTION

The Denver Police Department still lacks comprehensive documentation of its process for reviewing hours worked.

The Denver Police Department places a limit on the amount of time an officer may work — 16 hours per day and 72 hours per week.

If an officer needs to appear in court, or if overtime is an unplanned continuation of their regular shift, the hours do not count toward the limits noted. Denver Police Department supervisors are responsible for reviewing and approving officers' time in the department's timekeeping system, Telestaff, to ensure officers do not go over work hour caps. Department administrators send out various reports on a weekly basis to assist supervisors with their reviews, including reports reflecting all hours pending approval and all secondary employment hours. To perform their reviews effectively, supervisors need to know which hours count toward daily and weekly maximums and which are allowable exceptions.

Based on our follow-up work, we found the time codes that could take an officer over the hour caps are those relating to secondary employment.

Secondary employment refers to off-duty jobs with an employer other

than the police department, such as traffic management at sporting events. Hours worked at a second employer count toward daily and weekly maximums. Individual time codes – including those related to secondary employment – are not listed comprehensively in training materials because there are over 200 codes. However, supervisors do not need to know each code to perform their review.

Within Telestaff, all work codes are assigned to one of four categories, one of which reflects secondary employment. This category of relevant work codes is easily identifiable because it is color-coded in the supervisors' Telestaff calendar view. The supervisor handbook includes instructions that when reviewers note the presence of secondary employment hours, they should ensure the officer is not exceeding hour limits.

The department appears to have a system in place that allows supervisors to detect hour limit violations. To understand this system, we performed a comparison of various sources, including department policies and procedures, officer and supervisor handbooks, and weekly time reports, as well as interview personnel familiar with the process.

Staff said that supervisors learn how to conduct their reviews during training and by following the supervisor handbook, but the department was unable to provide documentation explaining the review process from beginning to end.

Because there is a process to detect hour violations but insufficient documentation to guide supervisors through the entire review process from beginning to end, we consider this recommendation partially implemented.

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## Office of the Auditor

The **Auditor** of the City and County of Denver is independently elected by the residents of Denver. He is responsible for examining and evaluating the operations of city agencies and contractors for the purpose of ensuring the proper and efficient use of city resources. He also provides other audit services and information to City Council, the mayor, and the public to improve all aspects of Denver's government.

The **Audit Committee** is chaired by the Auditor and consists of seven members. The Audit Committee assists the Auditor in his oversight responsibilities regarding the integrity of the city's finances and operations, including the reliability of the city's financial statements. The Audit Committee is structured in a manner that ensures the independent oversight of city operations, thereby enhancing residents' confidence and avoiding any appearance of a conflict of interest.



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