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CPKN 2024 Leadership Training Report

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Executive Summary

This report presents the findings from a survey of sixteen police services across Canada, aimed at assessing the availability and uptake of leadership training. Over two-thirds of respondents indicated their service offered in-house training programs, while many also use external training resources. This indicates that both in-house and external programs are important in meeting training needs.

The survey collected detailed information on the various leadership courses taken by members, both in-house and external. The primary factors influencing the selection of leadership training were identified as relevance to organizational needs and cost-effectiveness. Additionally, there is a notable perceived discrepancy between who receives training and who would benefit from it, particularly among Sergeants and civilian staff.

Respondents highlighted the need for standardized, evidence-based leadership training aligned with organizational priorities and performance management programs. Addressing these gaps with cost-effective, relevant, and flexible training solutions will enhance leadership competencies across all levels of police services.

Introduction

Leadership training is especially important in policing. This has been highlighted globally through the substantial amount of research that has been done on the topic. For instance, a meta-analysis on police leadership identified over 9000 related articles (Pearson-Goff & Harrington, 2013). On a more localized level, police services themselves see the value in leadership training. In a recent engagement survey conducted by CPKN, leadership training was frequently mentioned as a desired addition to the course catalogue (CPKN, 2024). Though leadership courses are currently available to services across the network via CPKN and many other organizations across Canada, this feedback suggests that either learners are not aware of what is available, or that current courses offered do not fully meet their needs. Broadly, this suggests there is a strong consensus on the necessity of leadership training for police service members at all levels and positions in Canada.

Background

In 2019 CPKN conducted a comprehensive review of police training availability across Canada (Patterson, 2019). The report concluded that police leadership training is a “patchwork design” of courses. Despite the wide selection available, there is no standardized approach, and a significant portion of the policing community does not utilize the existing training. The survey also identified 10 key gaps in current training programs, specifically in the areas of:

1. Emotional Intelligence
2. Critical/Analytical Thinking
3. Impact and Influence
4. Motivation
5. Innovation
6. Team Building
7. Political Acuity
8. Problem Solving
9. Holding Employees Accountable
10. Organizational Excellence

Importantly, there is some overlap between these themes and the seven characteristics identified as most important for police leaders (i.e., ethical, trustworthy, legitimate, role model, communication, decision making, and thinking ability; Pearson-Goff & Harrington, 2013). If these characteristics are deemed most important and not all are being taught, there is a significant discrepancy that needs to be addressed.

The 2019 survey also highlighted the need for leadership training to start “from day one” and emphasized the value of providing “evidence-based” training. Overall, it provided a comprehensive look at police training in Canada, comparing what was currently available to what was still missing. Replicating the survey verbatim would not be of value at this time, as the broad implications would likely remain the same given how recently it was conducted. However, some of the data is likely outdated, particularly regarding the availability and uptake of leadership training by service members. Therefore, the current project aims not to repeat the previous work but to update the information on training to guide future efforts to provide adequate leadership training to service members.

Method

To develop the scan, questions were updated and refined from the previous survey. Given the comprehensiveness of the 2019 survey, unnecessary duplication was avoided. Consequently, the current project focused on the training programs currently accessible to members, identifying who is taking them versus who would benefit from them, the considerations made when selecting a course, and preferences for delivery methods. Finally, participants were asked if there was anything else about leadership training they wished to share.

Potential services were identified by CPKN through the National Advisory Committee and Board of Directors. An email was sent to individuals in leadership positions within selected organizations, requesting them to forward the survey to the appropriate person capable of completing it. The decision to target leadership positions was based on their vested interest in the development of leadership training in Canada. The survey was provided in both English and French.

Participants

Responses came from 16 services in six provinces (Table 1), representing over a quarter of all policing professionals in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2024).

Table 1. Locations of Respondents

Alberta	3
British Columbia	1
Manitoba	0
New Brunswick	0
Newfoundland and Labrador	0
Nova Scotia	1
Ontario	8
Prince Edward Island	0
Quebec	2
Saskatchewan	1

Results

In-House Leadership Training

Initially, participants were asked if their services deliver in-house leadership courses or programs for their sworn and civilian members. 69% of responding services reported offering in-house training, while 31% rely solely on outside training (Figure 1.)

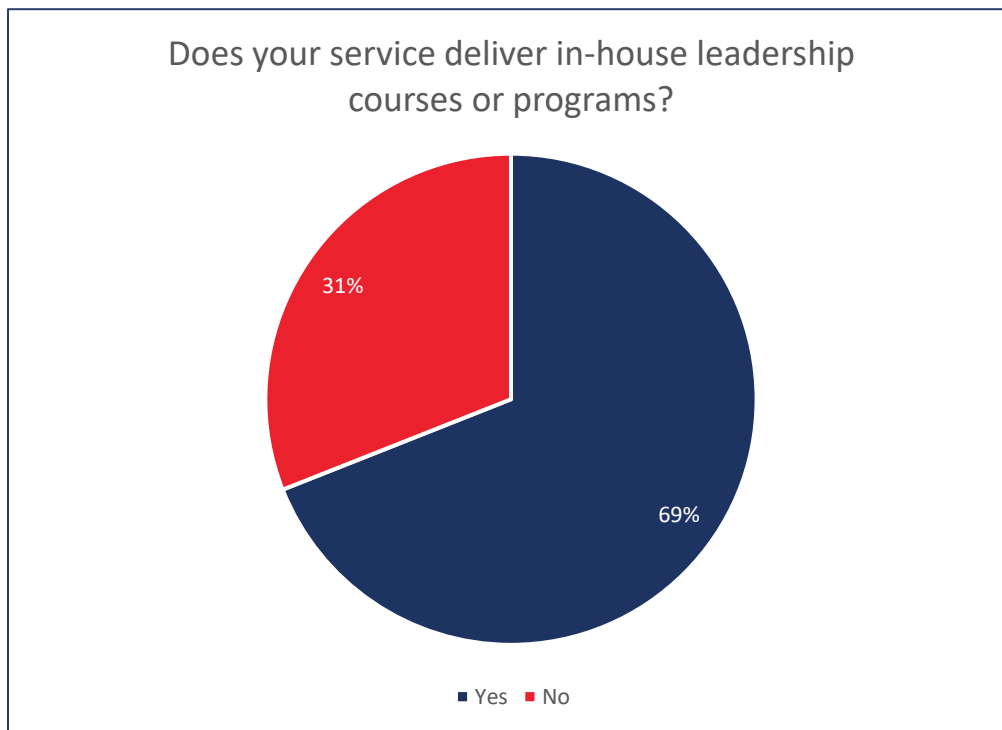


Figure 1. Percent of services that provide in-house leadership training

For those who indicated they had in-house training, additional details were requested about the courses offered (i.e., the name, cost, delivery mode, number of participants in the last year, provider, and length). Details on these courses are listed in [Appendix A](#) from services who were willing to share.

Courses Offered

From here, services were given a list of courses offered by Canadian police colleges (e.g., the Ontario Police College), post-secondary institutions (e.g., Dalhousie University’s Certificate in Police Leadership), and other external programs (e.g., CPKN’s Canadian Credible Leadership (CCL) course). They were asked to indicate which courses their members had completed in the past or were currently enrolled in. For each selected course or program, they were then asked to specify how many people completed the course in the previous year. For a complete list of courses provided, learners enrolled, and cost see [Appendix B](#).

The most common course from a police college was the Strategic Policing through Action & Character Course at the Canadian Police College, with 50% of services surveyed having enrolled someone in the course at some point. 26 people from various services were enrolled in the course in the last year.

In the second category (i.e., post-secondary institutions), the most common course was the Rotman Police Leadership Program at the University of Toronto, with 38% of responding services having members attend and 26 people attending in the last year.

Finally, external providers were not very common. The highest-ranking course, the Executive Leadership Institute Program from the FBI LEEDA, was offered by just 31% of responding services, with five members participating in the last year.

The discrepancy between leadership training taken from external providers and post-secondary institutions suggests the value services place on the recognition and credibility associated with post-secondary courses, which are esteemed for providing evidence-based leadership training, as highlighted in the 2019 survey.

Considerations for Leadership Courses

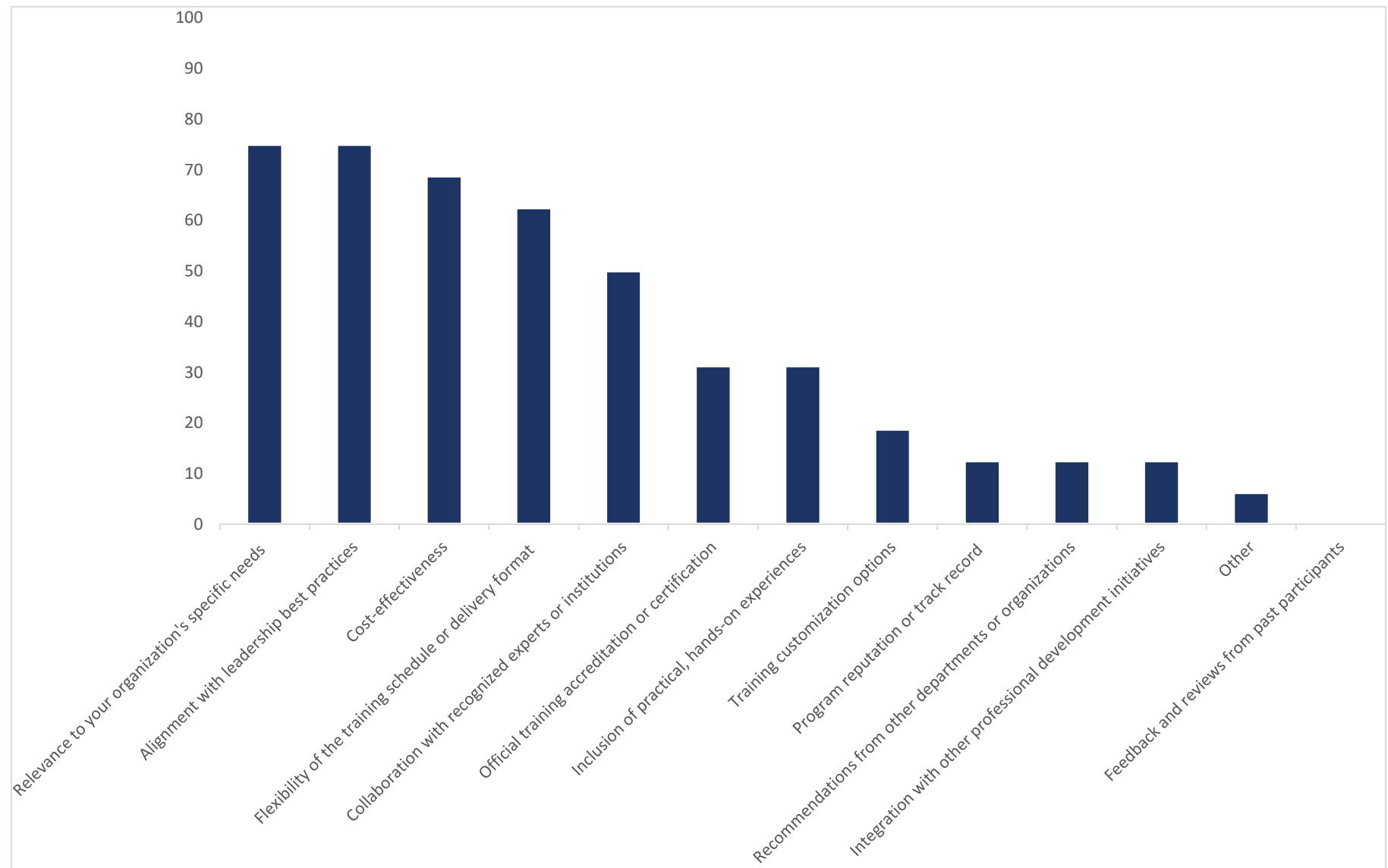
To better understand the factors services consider when evaluating outside training, respondents were given a list of criteria and asked to select those most important when recommending leadership training (Figure 2).

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the most supported criterion, selected by 75% of respondents, was relevance to their organization's specific needs. This was followed by cost-effectiveness (69%) and the flexibility of the training schedule or delivery format (63%). Integration with other professional development initiatives, recommendations from other departments or organizations, and the program's reputation or track record, were each selected by 13% of respondents. One criterion that no one reported considering was feedback and reviews from past participants (0%). One person also gave a response of "Other" and, when asked to explain, reported that the course being available in French was important to them.

Collaboration with recognized experts and institutions was supported by only 50% of participants, which is in contrast with the earlier results suggesting that an expert's seal of approval was very important. There are a few possible reasons for this discrepancy. First, when considering outside training, people may not automatically think of post-secondary institutions or collaboration with experts, keeping the two separate in their minds. Secondly, when evaluating courses from external, non-academic organizations, the criteria considered might differ. For instance, cost may be a higher concern than the development of material. A third possibility is that respondents may have underestimated how much their organization actually values evidence-based training.

Overall, these results indicate that practical considerations (i.e., relevance, cost, and ease of delivery) are very important to services when selecting leadership training, while course evaluation considerations (i.e., feedback, recommendations, and reputation) are least important.

Figure 2. Considerations for Leadership Courses



Who Gets Training vs Who Needs Training

Next, participants were asked who in their services currently have access to leadership training, followed by who they think would benefit from such training. This allows for the identification of underserved groups not receiving the training they need (Figure 3).

Responses indicate that Sergeants and Inspectors receive the most training, followed closely by Staff Sergeants. In comparison, respondents believed that Sergeants, Staff Sergeants, and Civilians would benefit the most from leadership training. The largest discrepancy observed is between Superintendents and Chiefs, both of whom are perceived to receive more training than necessary.

In terms of underserved groups, respondents tend to think that Sergeants and Civilians need more training than they are currently receiving. This finding is particularly interesting for Sergeants, given that they already receive some of the most training, yet respondents still believe they need more. This could indicate a problem with the type of training being provided, resulting in a lack of relevant skills.

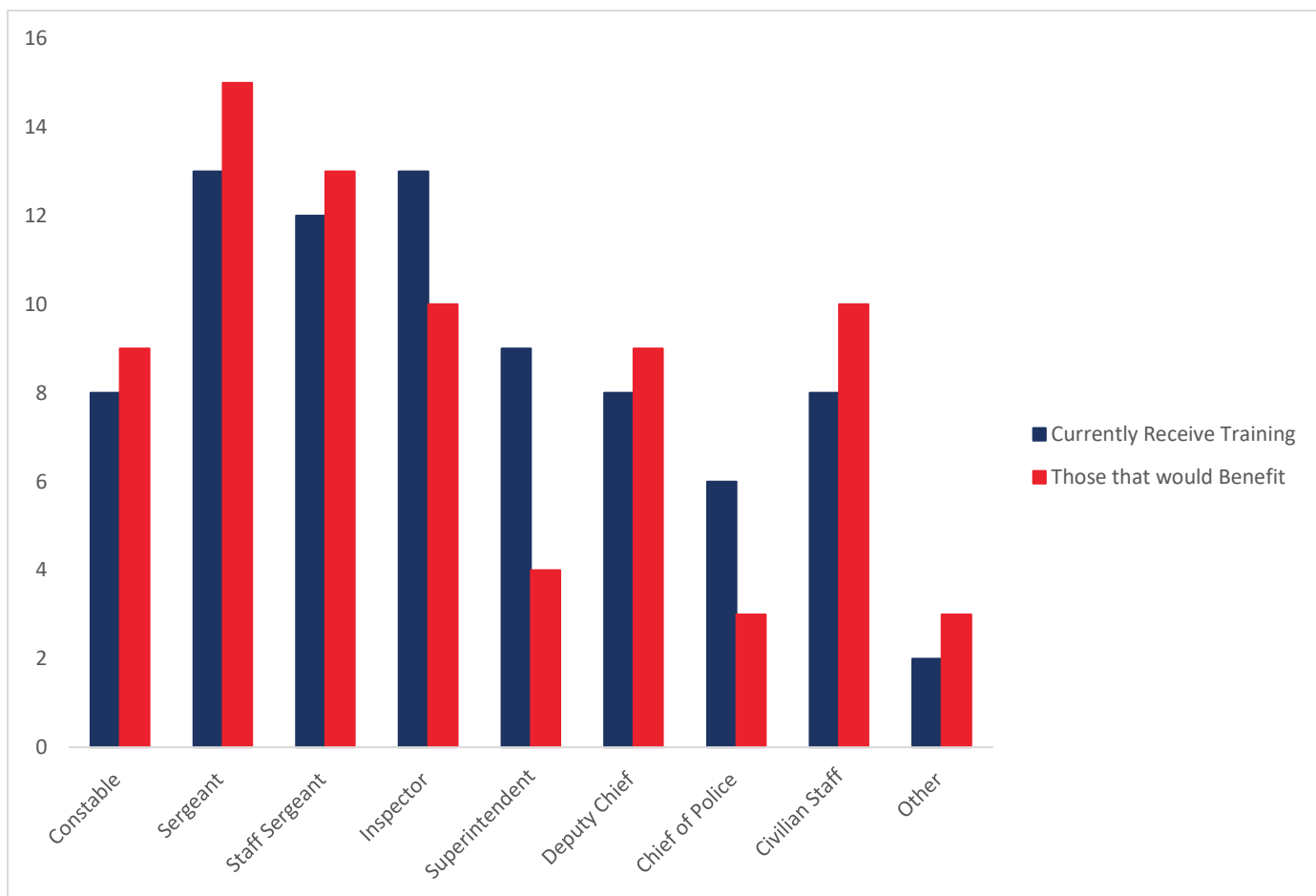


Figure 3. Which employees at police services get training vs. which would benefit from more

Additional Comments

Finally, participants were asked if there was anything else about leadership training they wished to share. Only a few respondents provided additional feedback, mostly expanding on previous points (e.g., the importance of service-specific training, the need for training at specific levels, etc.). For example, one respondent said:

From our perspective, leadership training and development has to be in alignment with the organizational priorities and performance management program. The reason we developed the [organization-specific course] was to ensure that the training being provided to constables and civilian professionals was connected with that being provided to supervisors and team leads, with s/sgts and managers, and so on... We found our previous approach relied too heavily on outside training which too often didn't take into account the priorities or managerial nuances of our organization. It is important to us that we are training our sworn officers and civilian professionals together – which helps build relationships and gives both groups a better perspective of the roles and responsibilities of the other. We want the language and principles taught to be aligned and connected from top to bottom – in essence, we have the ability to scaffold our training up and down as required. We also value the flexibility our program provides. We believe in being a learning organization – which practically means that we conduct operational reviews on critical incidents, track data and trends related to everything from complaints and discipline to use of force to large reviews that occur around the country (i.e., Missing & Missed). Any learnings can be quickly and seamlessly integrated into our training programs at all levels to build capacity in our people in a timely, deliberate, and strategic manner.

Additional points raised included the importance of leadership training in creating inclusive work environments and the value of having a comprehensive list identifying the different competencies that courses teach (e.g., “Identifying core/foundational leadership skills and correlating programs would be of great benefit to the profession”).

Discussion

Overall, the results from the current scan provide valuable insights into the state of leadership training for police in Canada. Just over two-thirds of services surveyed have their own in-house leadership training available for their members. However, the results also show that members from services with in-house training are also taking offered by police colleges, post-secondary institutions, and other external organizations. Furthermore, there is, in some cases, a discrepancy between who is receiving leadership training and who should be receiving such training.

These findings suggest a significant gap in leadership training that needs to be addressed. Providing additional training to members who are currently underserved or not receiving adequate training would greatly benefit the policing community. Given that pricing is a high priority for services, as previously mentioned, cost-effective training solutions are well-positioned to fill this gap.

The results also highlight the importance of mapping courses onto competencies identified as crucial for police leaders and the need for leadership training to start early in a member’s career and continue throughout. This approach ensures that all members receive consistent, high-quality training that aligns with organizational priorities and performance management programs.

The scan also identifies some challenges that need to be addressed to avoid oversaturating an already well-populated market with unnecessary courses. The primary concern, noted by 75% of respondents, is that course recommendations should align with the organization's specific needs. This suggests that a one-size-fits-all program is unlikely to be widely adopted. Services could benefit from engaging with CPKN to communicate their specific needs, which could then be used to tailor course selections and recommendations for services in Canada.

Additionally, almost all respondents reported that they did not take course evaluation into account when suggesting courses for their members, with little consideration for the demonstrated quality of the course itself. This does not imply that services do not care about course effectiveness; rather, it may mean that it is a secondary decision-making criterion used to support a decision they were already leaning towards. More research is needed to better understand this relationship.

Conclusion

The survey of sixteen police services across Canada highlights several key findings regarding leadership training. While 69% of services offer in-house training, there is a significant reliance on external programs, indicating gaps in current offerings. The primary factors influencing the selection of leadership training are relevance to organizational needs and cost-effectiveness. Notably, there is a discrepancy between who receives training and who would benefit from it, particularly among Sergeants and civilian staff. Addressing these gaps with cost-effective, relevant, and flexible training solutions, aligned with organizational priorities and performance management programs, will enhance leadership competencies across all levels and ensure cohesive and effective leadership development.

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Appendix A

[\(Back to In-House Leadership Training Section\)](#)

List of in-house training courses and number of people who enrolled in the past year. Please note there were additional in-house training programs/courses offered by police services or departments who did not provide permission to share their organization’s survey responses.

Service/Department	Program/Course	Delivery Method	Additional Information	Approx. enrollment numbers 2023
York Regional Police	Future of Leadership in Policing Program	Synchronous online	Scaffolding hire to retire program that was built in partnership with Schulich Executive Education. There are 5 streams, each geared to a particular rank/level. Stream duration ranges from 6 to 12 weeks.	138
Calgary Police Service	'Called to Lead' Program	Blended	Developed within the newly created Leadership Development Unit. The program is organized in various levels based on role and provides continuous and consistent development as opposed to a one-and-done approach. Open to external participants.	Unknown
Windsor Police Service	Executive Leadership Program	In person	Created in partnership with the University of Windsor.	25
SPVM	<i>Parcours en gestion</i> (Management Pathway)	In person mostly but moving towards blended (in person and asynchronous online)	Built and delivered in house, the program includes an operational pathway as well as a human resources management pathway.	50

Appendix B

[\(Back to Courses Offered Section\)](#)

List of all courses, number of services that have used the program and people who enrolled in the past year.

Program/Course	Number of services that have used the course/program in the past	Number of people services enrolled in 2023	Cost per participant (CAD)
Academies			
Advanced Executive Leadership in Law Enforcement Microprogram – Canadian Police College (CPC)	5	5	\$11,700
SPAC - Strategic Policing through Action & Character Course – Canadian Police College (CPC)	8	26	\$6,500
Conflict-Competent Leadership for Community Policing Program – Canadian Police College (CPC)	1	1	\$6,500
EDP - Executive Development in Policing Program – Canadian Police College (CPC)	7	10	\$11,700
Leading Police Organisations - Ontario Police College (OPC)	4	1	\$1,300
Front line Supervisor - Ontario Police College (OPC)	4	38	\$1,300
Coaching Police Professionals - Ontario Police College (OPC)	4	52	\$1,300
Communication Centre Supervisor - Ontario Police College (OPC)	6	38	\$2,080
Police Leadership Development – Justice Institute British Columbia (JIBC)	0	0	\$1,025
			<i>Note. this course is not currently being offered</i>
Leadership & Conflict Resolution – Justice Institute British Columbia (JIBC)	0	0	\$2,900
Applied Leadership – Justice Institute British Columbia (JIBC)	1	0	\$5,200
Sélection du personnel policier 2, Principes et méthodes, Entrevue structurée - École nationale de police du Québec (ENPQ)	1	2	\$1,465

Sélection du personnel policier, Concepts et applications, Appréciation par simulation - École nationale de police du Québec (ENPQ)	1	2	\$1,218
Stratégies proactives - École nationale de police du Québec (ENPQ)	2	12	\$1,338
Gestion des stratégies proactives – École nationale de police du Québec (ENPQ)	1	1	\$499
Fundamental Leadership – Atlantic Police Academy (APA)	0	0	\$1,200
Modern Leadership – Atlantic Police Academy (APA)	0	0	\$2,200
Executive Leadership Institute Program – FBI LEEDA	5	5	\$1,070
Services			
Future of Leadership in Policing Program - York Regional Police (with Schulich)	Unavailable	138	\$2,133
Called to Lead - Calgary Police Service	Unavailable	Unavailable	Unavailable
Windsor Police Leadership Development Program – University of Windsor	1	21	\$12,000
Management Path - Service de police de la Ville de Montréal	Unavailable	40	Unavailable
Academic Institutions			
Certificat en gestion appliquée à la police et à la sécurité – Université de Montréal (Faculté de l'éducation)	1	60	\$4,032
Certificat en gestion de la sécurité publique (profil gestion policière) - Université du Québec à Trois Rivières (UQTR)	2	20	\$4,000
Certificate in Police Leadership - Dalhousie University (Faculty of Open Learning & Career Development)	1	2	\$6,270
Certificate in Police Supervisory Skills – Dalhousie University (Faculty of Open Learning & Career Development)	3	2	\$6,270
Justice Leadership Micro-credential – Humber College (Faculty of Social & Community Services)	0	0	\$1,196
Microprogramme de premier cycle en gestion policière – Université du Québec à Trois Rivières (UQTR)	1	5	\$2,120
Police Leadership – OntarioTech University	0	0	\$6,305
Police Leadership Program – McMaster University (DeGroote School of Business)	1	1	Unavailable

Rotman Police Leadership Program – University of Toronto (Rotman School of Management)	6	26	\$14,000
Senior Police Leadership Micro-credential Certificate – Trent University	0	0	\$4,500
Alternate Providers			
Canadian Credible Leadership Series (cohort) – Canadian Police Knowledge Network (CPKN)	3	8	\$1,200
Canadian Credible Leadership Series (non cohort) – Canadian Police Knowledge Network (CPKN)	1	5	\$500
Creating Brave Spaces – Sinogap Solutions	1	0	\$200
Leading with Resiliency and Agility – Sinogap Solutions	0	0	\$200
The Authentic Leader – Sinogap Solutions	0	0	\$60
The Emotionally Intelligent Leader – Sinogap Solutions	1	1	\$200
Woman Up! Ignite the Leader in You – Sinogap Solutions	0	0	\$2,100
Executive Global Studies Program – Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police (CACP)	7	15	Unavailable
Police Executive Mentorship Program – Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police (CACP)	10	17	\$4,500
Strategic Foresight Program – Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police (CACP)	3	4	\$3,600
Canadian Police Association Executive Leadership Program – University of Ottawa (Telfer School of Management).	0	0	\$2,750
Other*	14	340+	Varied
<p><i>*Note.</i> Other courses listed included: Charles Sturt University - Bachelor of Policing; Dare to Be Great: The Leadership Challenge; DESS en gestion des ressources humaines en organismes de sécurité publique (UQTR) Certificat en supervision HEC; École nationale d'administration publique 2e cycle; IACP – Women’s Leadership Institute; PERF (Boston University); University of Alberta - Certificate in Police Management; University of Alberta - Management Development Certificate for Police Services; University of Alberta – MBA</p>			