Washington State Department of Commerce

Community-Law Enforcement Partnership

Report pursuant to RCW 43.330.545.

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Report to the Legislature

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Acknowledgments

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Executive summary

Overview

In 2021, the Washington Legislature created the Community-Law Enforcement Partnership (CLEP) to foster community engagement through neighborhood organizing, law enforcement and community partnerships, youth mobilization and business engagement as outlined in RCW 43.330.545. The Legislature appropriated $3.3 million for the 2023–25 biennium to the Washington Department of Commerce's Office of Firearm Safety and Violence Prevention/Community Safety Unit (Commerce) to distribute grants.

Commerce allocated $3,095,379 in Community-Law Enforcement Partnership (CLEP) grants for the 2023–25 biennium for programs that encouraged positive relationships between the community and law enforcement. These programs focused on one of four project areas:

- Lead and facilitate multiple neighborhoods organizing initiatives that include empowering community members with the tools, skills, confidence and connections to reduce illegal activity
- Build and maintain substantive law enforcement - community partnerships that build trust between the community and law enforcement
- Collaborate with youth groups to partner with neighborhood groups and law enforcement to prevent violence
- Engage businesses to help prevent crimes and provide technical assistance to promote community engagement

Legislative mandate

Under RCW 43.330.545, the Legislature found that community-police partnerships matter and set the expectation for programs that strengthen public safety:

> The legislature finds that community engagement is a foundational principle of successful community policing practices. When individuals and neighborhood groups are encouraged to partner with law enforcement, a powerful alliance can be built on mutual trust and respect and mitigate polarization between police departments and community groups. A successful community-police partnership leads to the achievement of shared goals of improving safety and quality of life and ensuring that public safety services are tailored to the needs of local communities.
>
> The legislature recognizes current efforts in Washington to mobilize communities to insist on equitable and accountable practices that will result in community participation in public safety efforts as well as establish cooperative lines of communication between civilians and law enforcement.
>
> The department of commerce intends to foster community engagement with law enforcement officers through the creation of a community engagement project in 15 communities across the state of Washington with a mix of urban rural and suburban areas to facilitate community-law enforcement partnerships and improve police-community relations. The department will implement a project evaluation to measure and examine the impact of local initiatives on community engagement, neighborhood safety and positive community-police relations.
>
> The funded projects will facilitate the empowerment of communities to engage in crime prevention efforts through neighborhood organizing law enforcement-community partnerships, youth mobilization, and business engagement.[1]

Conclusion

Since the Community-Law Enforcement Partnership (CLEP) inception in 2021, the goal has been to build connections between law enforcement and the community. The legislature found that community engagement is a fundamental principle of successful community policing practices and that a powerful alliance can exist between law enforcement and community groups. Commerce invested in 13 communities across Washington with a mix of

[1] The Washington Legislature, RCW 43.330.545, "Finding — 2021 c 327"

urban, rural and suburban areas to build community-law enforcement partnerships and improve police community relations. The CLEP program is due to sunset on January 30, 2029. The Legislature did not appropriate funding for CLEP for the 2025–27 biennium budget.

Implementation highlights

Proposals were accepted from any public agency or nonprofit community-based organization, with a primary service area within one or more communities. Grant proposals from law enforcement community-based organizations needed to demonstrate experience or a willingness to establish a coordinated effort and to be dedicated to diversity, equity and inclusion.

Lead and facilitate multiple neighborhoods organizing initiatives that include empowering community members with the tools, skills, confidence and connections to reduce illegal activity
Commerce awarded five contracts totaling $1.1 million to lead and facilitate neighborhood organizing initiatives to support community-based activities with law enforcement support. Outcomes included community outreach, crime reporting technology solutions, youth empowerment programs, education forums, business engagement and tools for connecting with community resources and events — including National Night Out, seasonal festivals and surveys and feedback sessions — that reached about 56,000 people in Prosser, the Yakima Valley and Greater Spokane.

Build and maintain substantive law enforcement — community partnerships that build trust between the community and law enforcement
Three contracts totaling $746,785 were awarded for law enforcement community partnerships in Chelan, Douglas and Pierce counties and the City of Seattle. These programs brought advocates and officers into the community to train adults on child sexual abuse prevention, conduct anti-bias training, hold listening sessions on ways to reduce gun violence and create a trusted space where participants felt empowered to share their voices.

Collaborate with youth groups to partner with neighborhood groups and law enforcement to prevent violence
Four contracts totaling $788,322 were awarded for youth mobilization programs in Snohomish County, City of Airway Heights, Yakima Valley and the Puyallup Tribe. Youth mobilization programs encouraged positive, friendly interactions with law enforcement officers. Programs reached 24,967 youth and parents through sporting events, outdoor adventure programs, mentoring programs, community-related festivals and safety and wellness task forces.

Engage businesses to help prevent crimes and provide technical assistance to promote community engagement
Two contracts, totaling $439,019, were awarded for business engagement programs in the Seattle area, surrounding cities and Eastern Washington. Technical assistance included collaborating with local law enforcement to reduce criminal activity in business districts. Seminars between law enforcement and business owners discussed crime prevention measures, de-escalation skills and ways to improve relationships with local law enforcement to report criminal activity.

Introduction

Historical context

The Community-Law Enforcement Partnership (CLEP) program was established in 2021 to foster community engagement through neighborhood organizing, law enforcement partnerships, youth mobilization and business involvement. This legislation was introduced in response to initiatives developed in various counties within Washington designed to promote collaboration and engagement between law enforcement and local agencies. While the established programs varied in their mission and scope, they shared a central theme of supporting community members by connecting them with local services such as education, social services, health care and law enforcement.

CLEP Grant allocations and community engagement initiatives

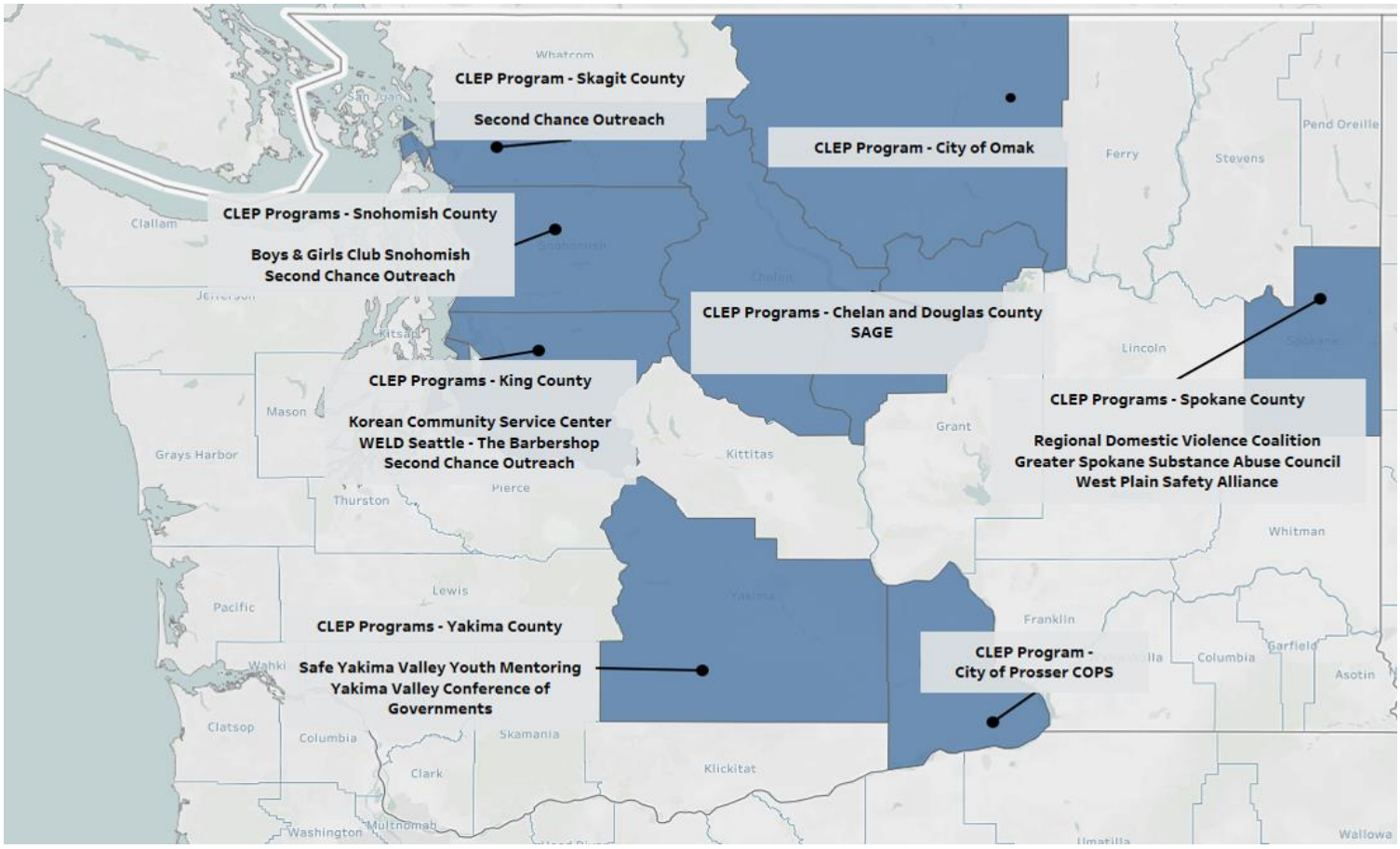
For the 2023–25 biennium, the CLEP program supported 13 grants across counties with strong community engagement in public safety:[2]

- Benton County
  - City of Prosser, COPS Program
- Chelan and Douglas counties
  - Domestic and Sexual Violence Crisis Center, dba SAGE
- King County
  - Korean Community Service Center (also serves North Puget Sound and Eastern Washington)
  - NAMI Seattle
- Okanogan County
  - City of Omak, Team ONE
- Pierce County
  - Safe Streets Campaign, Tacoma
  - Puyallup Tribe of Indians
- Snohomish County
  - Boys and Girls Clubs of Snohomish County
- Spokane County
  - City of Airway Heights, West Plains Safety Alliance
  - Greater Spokane Substance Abuse Council
  - Spokane Regional Domestic Violence Coalition
- Yakima County
  - Yakima Valley Conference of Governments

[2] Second Chance Outreach and Weld Seattle - The Barbershop were initially awarded grants but chose to leave the program early due to operational issues.

- Safe Yakima Valley Youth Mentoring sponsored by the Northwest Communities Education Center and Radio KDNA

Figure 1. Washington Community-Law Enforcement Partnership grantees (2023–25)



Project planning for implementation

To help design the CLEP grant program and its funding distribution, Commerce collaborated with an advisory group of subject-matter experts. The group included representatives from:

- Greater Spokane Substance Abuse Council
- Northwest High-Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas (HIDTA) Program
- Safe Streets, Tacoma
- Washington Council of Police and Sheriffs (WACOPS)
- Washington Association of Sheriff and Police Chiefs (WASPC)
- Washington State Institute for Public Policy (WSIPP)

The advisory group discussed the following questions based on statutory language:

1) Funding options: What is the best way to distribute the available funding?
2) Selection criteria: What factors should Commerce consider in evaluating the proposals?
3) Engagement: How can we ensure genuine grassroots involvement in this process?
4) Law enforcement grantees: If a law enforcement agency is eligible for a grant, how do we ensure that the funds do not subsidize their gang unit or ongoing programs?
5) Reporting: What should we require grantees to report?

This discussion helped shape the CLEP program's implementation plan, which included: grant criteria and application process; award disbursement; compliance tracking and fund use and outcome measurement.

Funding distribution

For SFY 2023–25, Commerce awarded 13 grants totaling $3,266,231 across four project areas:

1) Funding allocation of $1,121,253 for leading and facilitating multiple neighborhoods organizing initiatives that include empowering community members with the tools, skills, confidence and connections to reduce illegal activity.
2) Funding allocation of $746,785 to build and maintain substantive law enforcement–community partnerships that build trust between the community and law enforcement.
3) Funding allocation of $959,174 to collaborate with youth groups to partner with neighborhood groups and law enforcement to prevent violence.
4) Funding allocation of $439,019 to engage businesses to help prevent crimes and provide technical assistance to promote community engagement.

CLEP supported program outputs and outcomes

Support local community-based initiatives

City of Prosser

Visit the City of Prosser website

Funds disbursed: $244,080
This project aimed to improve the City of Prosser's safety through the Community Outreach Program and Support (COPS) program. It implemented technology solutions, provided tools to prevent and report crime, organized neighborhoods, empowered youth and improved community relations.

- Program staff and law enforcement interacted with 2,503 individuals for various events such as National Night Out, back-to-school events and Christmas festivals.

Yakima Valley Conference of Governments

Visit the Yakima Valley Conference of Governments website

Funds disbursed: $250,000
This project encouraged cooperation among community members, partners and law enforcement to jointly tackle crime prevention and enhance public safety. By forming partnerships centered on community-identified priorities, the initiative sought to educate, empower and reconnect communities with law enforcement and other partners.

- Program staff and law enforcement interacted with 1,631 individuals at various events such as National Night Out, summer festivals, resource fairs and summer block parties.

Greater Spokane Substance Abuse Council (GSSAC)

Visit the Greater Spokane Substance Abuse Council website

Funds disbursed: $250,000
This project included crime prevention workshops, education forums, youth mobilization, business engagement and resident education to boost community safety and strengthen law enforcement relationships.

- Program staff and law enforcement interacted with about 52,000 individuals at various community events.
- The Spokane Sheriff's Office created a Spokane County crime prevention awareness information book to distribute at community events. The book listed various resources for community members to access.
- GSSAC conducted a survey about law enforcement and perceived public safety. Responses to surveys indicated:
  - More police presence was needed to increase security and visibility in the community.
  - There was widespread fear of going to the downtown area due to perceived threats of violence, drug/alcohol use and apprehension by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officers.
  - There was a need for more services to address drug addiction and mental health issues.
  - Thefts and burglaries needed to be addressed.
  - Safety was needed in neighborhoods, parks and playgrounds.
- In response to the survey, the Spokane County Sheriff's Office and the Spokane Valley Police Department increased staffing to respond to 911 calls for service. Additionally:

- The Spokane City Council worked to reinstate the Alcohol Impact Area (AIA) ordinance in downtown Spokane, limiting high alcohol content beverages and purchase hours to reduce public intoxication and related crimes.
- Juvenile services advocated for increased resources to support vulnerable teens, suggesting that punitive measures do not address the root causes of youth crime.
- Youth crime had shifted to more violent assault offenses.

Spokane Regional Domestic Violence Coalition

Visit the Spokane Regional Domestic Violence Coalition website

Funds disbursed: $224,469

This project aimed to equip community members with the skills to interact with law enforcement. The Spokane Regional Domestic Violence Coalition (SRDVC) collaborated with local agencies to highlight the lasting effects of violence and foster trust through dialogue. The initiative improved public safety and educated the community via presentations, forums and training sessions.

- From April to June 2025, 242 people participated in events organized by or co-hosted with SRDVC. These events included coalition meetings, a session focused on perpetrators, the Firearm Violence Prevention Conference and the Safe States Injury Prevention Training. Throughout these events, the community shared their experiences and feedback on interacting with law enforcement in domestic violence situations, reflecting their complex emotions and lived experiences.

Key takeaways:

- Increased public awareness that law enforcement plays a critical role in violence prevention, particularly concerning firearm surrender and domestic violence. However, there are remaining important and valid concerns about trust, accountability and potential harm.
- Spokane had a high number of officer-involved shootings, which contributed to the public being fearful of the police.
- Law enforcement does not connect people to resources after an incident occurs.
- The community wants increased transparency, data and consistent engagement from officers. Additionally, the community wants officers to receive training and increase awareness and skills around trauma, cultural humility, domestic violence dynamics and de-escalation.
- Law enforcement agencies should provide more detailed information to the public about the procedures and implications of firearm removal, the nature and purpose of protection orders and the support services available to affected individuals.
- Victims of domestic violence often feel intimidated, judged and disregarded during calls.

Northwest Communities Education Center - Safe Yakima Valley Youth Mentoring

Visit the Northwest Communities Education Center (Radio KDNA) website

Funds disbursed: $152,704

The Northwest Communities Education Center (NCEC) and Radio KDNA operate a Gang Prevention Consortium in Yakima Valley. The Safe Yakima Valley Youth Mentoring sponsored by NCEC and Radio KDNA project aimed to improve communication between local law enforcement and the community to prevent crime and to educate parents about gang awareness.

- program held 11 listening sessions and community events, engaging about 3,500 people. These sessions connected parents with law enforcement to discuss gang and drug issues.
- Community events included back-to-school, harvest and Christmas festivals.

- Attendees from a session in Sunnyside expressed fear of ICE raids and frustration with law enforcement's lack of attention to reported crimes and fear of gang retaliation.

Build law enforcement and community partnerships

Domestic and Sexual Violence Crisis Center — DBA SAGE

Visit the Domestic and Sexual Violence Crisis Center, dba SAGE website

Funds disbursed: $249,610
The SAGE project partnered with law enforcement in Chelan and Douglas Counties to train, educate and equip adults on preventing child sexual abuse. They offered proven reporting approaches and comprehensive support services to victims.

- A total of 244 individuals participated in seminars focused on protecting children from child abuse. These seminars were held at the Wenatchee School District, the Chelan-Douglas County Health Department and the Wenatchee library.

Overall feedback from the participants indicated that they gained an understanding of the role of law enforcement and learned how to report incidents of child abuse and sexual assault. The Wenatchee School District stated that it will integrate this training into its staff development program.

Safe Streets Campaign

Visit the Safe Streets Campaign website

Funds disbursed: $249,768
The Safe Streets project aimed to build on the Strengthening Community Safety Initiative by focusing on neighborhood organizing and youth mobilization.

- The program held 10 community sessions with around 2,411 participants who discussed gun violence prevention through activities like anti-bias training, National Night Out, Coffee with a Cop and open dialogues with law enforcement to gather feedback on reducing neighborhood violence.

Weld Seattle

Visit the Weld Seattle website

Funds disbursed: $247,407
The Barbershop program aimed to empower community members to improve law enforcement engagement and shift mindsets. It created safe, culturally responsive events where participants felt empowered and amplified underrepresented voices. Weld Seattle requested termination of its contract with Commerce, but no outcomes were reported.

Empower youth-partnerships across neighborhood groups and law enforcement

Boys and Girls Clubs of Snohomish County

Visit the Boys and Girls Clubs of Snohomish County website

Funds disbursed: $53,642.39
The Boys and Girls Clubs of Snohomish County started a program to help prevent crime by organizing neighborhoods, creating partnerships between law enforcement and youth, mobilizing young people and engaging businesses.

Youth events featured friendly and positive interactions between police officers and community members. These events allowed youth and parents to build genuine trust with law enforcement while enjoying time together.

Events included:
- Badges for Baseball: a communitywide fitness and youth development day with about 200 youth, 13 law enforcement officers and 15 parents.
- Kids & Cops eGaming Tournament: held at the Tulalip Teen Center for over 125 youth from 12 different communities and 40 law enforcement officers.
- Summer Splash: an end-of-summer celebration with over 600 youth and 400 parents from the Everett and Marysville community.

Key takeaway:
- Everett Police Department reported a reduction in offenses in 10 crime categories in the North Everett area by 60% compared to previous months.

City of Airway Heights

Visit the City of Airway Heights website

Funds disbursed: $249,682
The City of Airway Heights led the West Plains Safety Alliance in boosting cooperation between law enforcement and community partners, focusing on reducing youth violence. They used a three-pronged approach: in-school mentoring, family outreach and community-based programs during school breaks. The Airway Heights Police Department also organized a Police Adventure League with Peak 7 Adventures to provide marginalized youth with outdoor activities.

- 11,944 community members participated in 81 events around the city where youth and adults interacted with officers at events such as the local petting zoo, back-to-school events, graduation ceremonies, elementary school events, Christmas Shop with a Cop and National Night Out.
- 98 youth attended the Police Adventure League Peak 7 Adventures outdoor program.

Citizens for Safe Yakima Valley

Visit the Citizens for Safe Yakima Valley website

Funds disbursed: $250,000
The Safe Yakima Valley Youth Mentoring Program mentored 120 youth aged 10 to 17, identified as “elevated risk” through Washington Assessment and Risk Needs (WARNS) or Adverse Childhood Experience (ACEs) evaluations.

- Mentor programs were provided in the Yakima Valley School District for elementary, middle and high school students located in Yakima, Sunnyside, Grandview, Selah, West Valley and Toppenish.
- Mentors focused on helping students with self-confidence, gain skills and advise students in the program. Student participants reported that their mentor helped them develop confidence and gain valuable skills and that they would recommend the program to others.
- Citizens for Safe Yakima Valley were present at 65 community-related events, interacting with about 12,400 individuals through different activities throughout the school district.

Puyallup Tribe of Indians

Visit the Puyallup Tribe of Indians website

Funds disbursed: $155,850

The Puyallup Tribal Community program included the Tribal Police, the At-Risk Youth program, the Chief Leschi Tribal School, the Youth Center and Tribal Housing. These organizations collaborated to prevent, intervene in and suppress crime around the Puyallup Tribal Reservation by involving at-risk youth through partnerships and problem-solving.

- Established the Safety and Wellness Task Force that included participants and strategies from:
    - Law enforcement: block watch strategy, school resource officer (SRO) activity, youth activities and gun violence reduction.
    - Local business: engagement events and activities, mural placement and business watch program.
    - Tribal youth: prevention activities, intervention, referrals to services, support the explorer program and SRO activities.
    - Community: engagement strategies, neighborhood block watch, safety and wellness events.
    - Chief Leschi School: explorer program, education and intervention strategies.
    - Tribal housing: block watch strategies and community engagement.

City of Omak/Team ONE

Visit the City of Omak Team ONE

Funds disbursed: $250,000

The City of Omak, Team ONE program empowered the community to actively collaborate with the Omak Police Department in enhancing public safety, preventing crime, fostering positive relationships between law enforcement and community members and improving security for local businesses.

- 522 volunteer hours were donated in administrative support, garbage and graffiti cleanup, Citizens on Patrol volunteers paired with law enforcement officers during scheduled shifts, program training and youth prevention engagements. Volunteer activities included:
    - 9,210 pounds of garbage clean up collected.
    - 11 graffiti incidents cleaned up or repaired.
    - 12 stolen shopping carts were returned to local businesses.
    - 21 crimes were reported to law enforcement during COPs patrols.

Engage businesses in crime-prevention programs

Korean Community Service Center (KCSC)

Visit the Korean Community Service Center website

Funds disbursed: $250,000

The KCSC Community-Law-Enforcement Partnership (K-CLEP) Program enhanced cooperation between the Korean American small businesses, community members and local law enforcement. They formed a community advisory group, organized safety events with law enforcement and conducted outreach to assess needs and share findings in South Puget Sound, North Puget Sound and Eastern Washington.

- The project held 22 listening sessions for local Korean American businesses, addressing initiatives such as safety locks, window replacement assistance and general safety seminars.
- The Federal Way Police Chief conducted seminars on crime prevention tips and actionable strategies.
- Staff from Korean Community Services participated in outreach events throughout King County to inform other small businesses about available services.

National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Seattle

Visit the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Seattle website

Funds disbursed: $189,019

The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Seattle trained staff and managers in the City of Seattle's commercial districts to raise awareness of mental illnesses. The training included de-escalation techniques self-care and basic mental health knowledge to enhance empathy. Businesses received resources for skill development and information on mental health services. The goals were to reduce 911 calls, decrease crime, improve relationships with unhoused individuals and enhance staff safety perceptions. The focus was on downtown Seattle's Pike Place.

- NAMI conducted 54 sessions on mental health, compassion fatigue and de-escalation skills.

Conclusion

Since the Community-Law Enforcement Partnership (CLEP) inception in 2021, the goal has been to build connections between law enforcement and the community. The legislature found that community engagement is a fundamental principle of successful community policing practices and that a powerful alliance can exist between law enforcement and community groups. Commerce invested in 15 communities across Washington with a mix of urban, rural and suburban areas to build community-law enforcement partnerships and improve police community relations. The CLEP program is due to sunset on January 30, 2029. The legislature did not appropriate funding for CLEP for the 2025–27 biennium budget.