



Vermont Criminal Justice Council Alternate Pathways Workgroup

REPORT – Fall 2025

To: Vermont Criminal Justice Council
From: Alternate Pathways Working Group
Date: October 22, 2025
RE: Report of the Alternate Pathways Working Group

INTRODUCTION

This report summarizes the work to date of the Alternate Pathways Working Group (APWG), which was established by the Vermont Criminal Justice Council (VCJC) in response to two statutory provisions related to further exploration of alternate pathways to attain law enforcement certification in Vermont. Beyond the need to respond to two specific areas of legislative interest, the VCJC tasked the APWG to discuss the creation of a framework concerning expanding workforce development in the law enforcement profession.

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE WORKING GROUP

APWG was established in 2025 by Christopher Brickell, Executive Director of the VCJC and with the authorization of the Chair of VCJC, Bill Clements. The mission of APWG was defined as follows:

- (1) respond to relevant legislative questions; and
- (2) create a framework for the VCJC and VPA to consider flexible and accessible training options for Vermont law enforcement certification, while upholding Vermont's high standards for public safety.

APWG membership was comprised of the following members:

- Tim Lueders-Dumont, APWG Chair – Executive Director, Department of State's Attorney and Sheriffs
 - Kim McManus – proxy
- Trevor Whipple, APWG Vice-Chair – Vermont League of Cities and Towns
- Bill Clements – VCJC Chair
- Leslie Johnson, Ph.D. – Associate Academic Dean of Community College of Vermont
 - Brian O'Connor – proxy
- John Poleway – Capitol Police Chief for the Vermont Association of Chiefs of Police
 - Sara Macera & Chris Truhan – proxies
- Mark Anderson – Windham County Sheriff for the Vermont Sheriff's Association
 - Roger Marcoux – proxy
- Domenica Padula – Chief of the Criminal Division, Office of the Attorney General
 - Betsy Anderson – proxy
- Karen Tronsgard Scott – Executive Director, Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence
- Anthony Facos, Interested Partner – Office of the United State's Attorney, District of Vermont
- David Petersen – Major, Vermont State Police

- Todd Wilkins – proxy
- Justin Stedman – Colonel, Vermont Fish and Wildlife

THE OBJECTIVE

APWG was convened at the request of the Executive Director of the VCJC to discuss and respond to certain provisions contained with Title 20, in relevant part below:

“The approval, or revocation thereof, of law enforcement officer training schools and off-site training programs, which shall include rules to identify and implement alternate routes to certification aside from the training provided at the Vermont Police Academy.”

T20 VSA 2355(a)(1).

“The Council shall structure its programs so that on and after July 1, 2021, a Level II certified officer may use portfolio experiential learning or College Level Examination Program (CLEP) testing in order to transition to Level III certification, without such an officer needing to restart the certification process.”

T20 VSA 2358(3)(2).

In response to these directives in Title 20, APWG reviewed these as posed questions:

“Are there alternate pathways the Council can create to obtain law enforcement certification?”

“How can the Council structure its programs so that a Level II certified officer can obtain Level III certification through portfolio experiential learning or College Level Examination Program (CLEP) – style testing?”

APWG was asked by the VCJC to convene in July 2025 and deliver a report to the full VCJC by October 2025.

APWG WORK TO DATE

APWG met on ten (10) occasions, starting on July 10, 2025, and completing their foundational work and investigation on September 24, 2025. Minutes, recordings, and supporting documents for those meetings [are hosted on the VCJC webpage](#). The APWG met every week, with two exceptions, between July and October, to advance discussions on this topic. The final meeting was held on October 22, 2025, when this report was finalized and the original objective of APWG was achieved.

In pursuit of the aims of the VCJC and in response to the two statutory inquiries, APWG met with and heard expert testimony from the following individuals¹:

- Karen Tronsguard-Scott: member of the faculty at the Vermont Law and Graduate School
- Leslie Johnson: Associate Academic Dean of Community College of Vermont

¹ This list does not include valuable information and experiences shared by members of APWG.

- Bradley Naples: Training Response Network, Inc. (TRN), a leading developer and provider of professional law enforcement training in a web-based, cloud environment to professional law enforcement and corrections agencies.
- Ken Hawkins: as Deputy Director of the Vermont Police Academy
- Dr. Brandon Stroup: Associate Professor at Vermont State University Lyndon and Co-Chair of VTSU's Criminal Justice Degree Program
- Melissa DeBlois: Director of Prior Learning Assessment, Vermont State Colleges System

Presentations and recordings of testimony are hosted and available on the VCJC webpage. Along with these experts, the members of APWG engaged in thoughtful discussion, facilitated by members of the VPA staff who provided both technical and expert support to the APWG: Christopher Brickell, Executive Director; Lindsay Thivierge, Director of Administration; Ken Hawkins, Deputy Director; Lisa Ryan, Community Inclusion Director; Christopher Perkett, Associate General Counsel.

DISCUSSION

INTRODUCTION

All APWG members were invited to submit recommendations or ideas in writing to be included in this report. Submissions that were received are attached at the bottom of this report.

APWG discussed various alternative learning delivery methods, including synchronous, asynchronous, hybrid, in-person, and combinations of these methods. It was noted that Vermont institutions of higher learning, including Vermont State University, Community College of Vermont, Norwich University, Vermont Law and Graduate School, and the University of Vermont, have all adopted aspects of alternative learning delivery, across the spectrum of learning modalities. Further, it was noted that the VPA has already adopted virtual training with respect to certain areas of training and policy (e.g., Fair & Impartial Policing training was delivered through an online training module hosted by the VPA). The working group noted that additional staffing and operating resources would be required for any expansion of current training capacity. Specifically, curriculum design expertise is necessary to support the network of subject matter experts and instructors, primarily volunteers from law enforcement agencies, as new modalities for delivering training are considered.

Beyond alternative learning delivery methods, members of the working group considered whether the VCJC and VPA could also adopt more flexible scheduling training models with the aim of accommodating for a broader recruiting spectrum (see attached submissions from APWG Chair Lueders-Dumont and VCJC Chair Clements for draft visuals).

ANALYSIS OF THE MISSION

From the outset, APWG acknowledged that the statutory questions could not be answered as desired by the original legislative drafters. Therefore, APWG focused on responding to the essence of what Title 20 sought to achieve. This report presents a framework of alternate pathways for the VCJC and the Vermont Legislature to consider.

The working group started by identifying the contrasting goals of Council stakeholders in alternative pathways to certification. The primary goals identified was creating opportunity for greater recruitment and retention of police officers by making certification training more accessible. At the same time, all members agreed that any expansion should not come with a reduction in standards or quality in trained officers.

APWG began by developing a formal definition of what is meant by “alternative pathways” as it pertains to law enforcement certification and creating a set of principles that should be adhered to when developing any alternative path towards law enforcement certification. APWG achieved consensus in adopting both a formal definition of “alternate pathways” and an agreed-upon list of guiding principles concerning any adoption of “alternate pathways.” APWG recommends to the Council that both the definition and the guiding principles listed below should guide how both the Vermont Legislature and the VCJC should review, consider, and vet any future alternate pathways.

APWG recommends that the Council adopt a formal definition for "alternate pathways" as follows:

“Alternate Pathways are pathways to increase access and recruitment, and build the law enforcement workforce, by accommodating diverse life circumstances without compromising the quality, consistency, and rigor of training standards.”

APWG recommends that the definition of “alternate pathways” should include the following:

- Programs of learning and training that may use different modalities
- Grounded in clearly articulated learning objectives and competency standards
- Standards that do not vary when delivered across different modalities
- Equivalent admissions requirements
- Clear progression based on learning progression and competency attainment
- Equivalent learning outcomes and assessments that are documented and verifiable
- Understood and articulated program objectives
- Student support across modalities
- Delivery by approved and qualified instructors across modalities
- Verifiable identity across modalities

APWG recommends that the Council adopt the following guiding principles for alternate pathways:

- Maintain Standards: Alternate Pathways must uphold the standards for competency, quality, and consistency of the law enforcement profession in Vermont.
- Focus on Practical Skills: A requirement for certain hands-on law enforcement skills to be delivered in-person.²
- Use Technology Strategically: Online and hybrid models should be utilized for suitable subjects where consistent communication, rapid deployment, and applicable learning frameworks can ascertain a required level of competency in a given subject.
- Support Workforce Development: The primary purpose of alternate pathways is to address the need for more law enforcement officers by expanding the pool of potential candidates and making the profession more attainable and accessible for a wider range of people.

These guiding principles and the definition recommended by APWG emphasize maintaining stringent training standards to maintain the highest level of competency while leveraging known, and yet unknown, pathways that may expand and increase attainability and accessibility in the pursuit of law enforcement certification in Vermont. The goal was to explore alternative models, and to solicit input from outside, and internal, experts in

² A requirement for certain hands-on or psycho-motor skills/training for law enforcement skills, including firearms, defensive tactic techniques, and the application of physical skills in a scenario-based environment are a requirement for and best delivered for in-person training.

both the law enforcement and across academic environments that combine alternate learning pathways and modalities for certain subjects. APWG noted, as a point of consensus and as reflected in the recommended guiding principles, that certain aspects of law environment training must occur in-person, as hands-on training is essential for certain critical skills law enforcement officers must possess.

THE CURRENT TRAINING PROGRAM

Currently, Level III law enforcement certification requires completion of a 17-week residential program at the Academy in Pittsford. This has grown from 16 weeks in 2022 and 12 weeks in 2002. The program consists of approximately 832³ hours of training, incorporating classroom, scenario-based exercises, hands-on motor skills, firearms, and Emergency Vehicle Operations Course (EVOC).

A significant change over time has been the increased emphasis on scenario-based and in-person training. For example, components like courtroom demeanor, interpersonal communications, and criminal law are practiced in a courtroom setting. Likewise, report writing instructors select examples of domestic violence affidavits, both strong and weak, for students to present in a simulated court environment.

After leaving the academy, recruits work with a field training officer (FTO) for a typical duration of 12 weeks to continue their training. The VPA curriculum is currently structured in academic blocks. Presently, the VPA is working with the International Association of Directors of Law Enforcement Standards and Training (hereafter IADLEST) to review and revise their full curriculum to create greater consistency and defensibility of VPA training methods. Curriculum development is anticipated to be completed by the start of 2027, with instructor training and inaugural program class in fall of 2027 or spring of 2028.

In contrast, Level II law enforcement certification requires successful completion of 80 hours of training, offered over two weeks at the Academy⁴. While recruits can reside at the Academy during this period of instruction, they are not required to do so. Following this program, Level II officers must complete a minimum of 72 hours of additional coursework and 120 hours of FTO prior to full certification.

Discussion of Program & Alternatives

Through surveys and discussion, APWG observed that for a number of people, including older potential candidates looking to change careers and presently working Level II certified officers, this 17-week commitment is a significant obstacle, preventing otherwise qualified individuals from achieving Level III certification. APWG made notable effort to survey a broad spectrum of individuals through online polling; the results of those polls are attached to this report and incorporated by reference.

To accommodate this population, APWG considered several options that might provide alternative pathways. Special emphasis was placed on currently serving Level II officers. One model that was discussed proposed a drop-in model could assist with bringing more Level II officers through to the equivalent of the required 17 weeks for Level II certification, building upon the initial but limited academy experience for that level. Likewise, the working group noted that utilization of the VCJC Waiver Committee could be deployed to assist in expanding alternate routes to certification.

³ This number climbs to 860 hours when Conducted Electric Weapon (Taser) training and Active Shooter training are included.

⁴ Both the number of hours and time commitment are expected to increase in 2026.

There was a strong consensus amongst APWG members that the residential model of the VPA is a key strength and should not be eclipsed by current or proposed alternative pathways. APWG agreed that an academic degree alone was not sufficient to replace law enforcement training, although some elements of a degree could meet learning objectives of the current Level III training regime. Further, the group agreed that while the VPA and the VCJC should explore alternate pathways to certification, these initiatives should be viewed as supplemental to the existing residential pathway, not a replacement. APWG also noted strong support for Vermont's singular VPA as opposed to multiple academies. Members described from their own experiences issues in other states where multiple academies impacted quality and consistency of training as well as camaraderie across agencies and officers.

There are a number of strengths of the current model of a singular residential certification program that APWG acknowledges. The current model provides consistent training across the state, a more immersive environment that allows for a focus on applied-academic topics, physical training, and practical scenarios that a non-residential, commuter-based, or virtual, model might not fully support. The camaraderie created between recruits, especially from agencies and departments that might not otherwise contact each other frequently, APWG believes is an important value that should not be treated lightly.

Contrasting With Academic Programs

Expert testimony received by the APWG underscored a fundamental distinction between the academic knowledge gained from higher education and the practical, scenario-based skills taught at the police academy. While a college degree can provide a strong foundation in criminal justice theory, sociology, and ethics, it cannot replicate the hands-on, high-pressure training that is crucial for a law enforcement career.

The VPA focuses on teaching tangible skills like firearms proficiency, defensive tactics, emergency vehicle operations, and crisis intervention in a controlled, residential environment. This includes realistic scenario-based training that simulates real-world situations, such as domestic disputes or active threats. This type of immersive training is designed to build muscle memory and instill the split-second decision-making abilities that are essential for officer safety and public protection.

In contrast, higher education courses, even in criminal justice, primarily operate in a classroom setting, focusing on theoretical concepts and legal frameworks. While valuable, this academic approach lacks the physical and psychological components of hands-on police work. APWG noted that the two models are complementary, but the Academy's practical training is irreplaceable by an academic degree alone. The VPA's residential model in particular is seen as a strength for fostering the discipline and teamwork needed to effectively translate these skills to the profession.

THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE / OBSTACLE

As APWG explored various concepts of alternative pathways, the same obstacle appeared – the lack of dedicated funding and resources that would permit further exploration and development of these paths toward law enforcement certification. Lack of sufficient resources has been, and will continue to be, a significant obstacle to realizing alternate pathways, which may, in turn, limit recruitment of new law enforcement candidates and hinder the retention of current officers, particularly current Level II certified officers. It is the conclusion of APWG that resource deficits contribute to the non-representative demographics seen in the law enforcement profession and will continue to hinder recruitment, retention and growth of the profession.

The overarching goal of APWG was to deliver a framework to the Council, VPA, and Vermont General Assembly to advance building out the law enforcement workforce and provide for more viable and accessible options for officers and recruits while ensuring the integrity of certification. The working group acknowledged that the ability to pursue and deliver these alternative models is directly tied to the availability of staffing, investment in physical and technological platforms, and operating resources.

APWG recommends the Council and Vermont Legislature should set aside dedicated resources to satisfy current mandates and any additional resources to provide for the VCJC and VPA to focus on expanding opportunities and access that would allow for development of alternative pathways to law enforcement certification.

WAIVER COMMITTEE

VCJC has a standing Waiver Committee, presently chaired by Detective Sergeant Erin Hodges of the Vermont State Police. This Committee supports the full VCJC by reviewing, with the assistance of VPA staff, applications for Level III waivers of training requirements with a focus on out-of-state waiver requests. In addition, the Committee is charged with reviewing continuing training waivers and appeals of decisions by the Executive Director or the Director of Administration on for routine training waiver decisions

The Committee's work is therefore two-fold: analyze completed training by out-of-state officers looking to relocate to work in Vermont as police, and review waivers of continuing training requirements⁵. In reviewing out-of-state officers' training, VPA staff perform a side-by-side comparison to required Vermont Level III training to ensure the foreign training meets all training objectives. Where there are deficits, or where that training does not meet Vermont-specific topics, out-of-state applicants are given feedback of what still remains to be completed before full certification can be achieved. The Committee aims to ensure that all waivers maintain the integrity and high standards of the VPA and VCJC rules.

APWG members strongly considered that the Waiver Committee could play a larger role (if resourced beyond current staffing levels) in evaluating requests for waivers from standard training and certification requirements. This is an area deserving of further exploration and potential rulemaking by the VCJC and VPA.

For example, waivers could be granted for individuals who can demonstrate equivalent training and experience, through taking an academic class or obtaining specific training through alternative sources. This would be similar to the waiver analysis performed for those officers who are already certified law enforcement officers in another jurisdiction.

While potentially viable, this approach to create greater opportunity to receive credit for alternative training modalities suffers from the same obstacle that strikes at every other potential alternative pathway: a lack of sufficient funding and resources. Side-by-side comparisons of classes and programs are extremely labor-intensive and time-consuming. To expand the waiver approach would be to increase the responsibilities of the Waiver Committee and those VPA staff members who support its mission. It would require at least one full-time staff person to perform this task as their primary function. VPA does not have the resources or adequate funding for this expansion at this time.

⁵ An example of this would be a deputy sheriff who exclusively works courthouse security requesting a waiver on mandatory DUI training

A PRIOR ALTERNATIVE PATH

In 2019, a prior VCJC working group created an alternate path from Level II to Level III certification. This new process was designed for Level II certified police officers to achieve Level III certification in Vermont without having to attend the Level III Basic Training. The process was based on College Level Experience Programs (CLEP), which grant college credit for life experience.

The 2019 “Basic Requirements for Applicants” provided that an officer must meet the following criteria:

- Experience: Have five consecutive years of experience.
- Patrol Hours: Accumulate a minimum of 1,500 hours of “traditional” patrol work annually, which includes responding to calls and conducting criminal and crash investigations. Hours from tasks like prisoner transport or court security would not count.
- Polygraph: Pass a polygraph test administered by a Vermont-licensed polygraph operator if they haven't taken one for employment as a Vermont law enforcement officer before.
- Exit Exam: Pass the same comprehensive exit exam that all Level III recruits take.
- Misconduct: Be free of any Category A professional misconduct. Category B and C offenses will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

The proposal also created “Portfolio Requirements,” that required applicants to create a portfolio that demonstrates an equivalency of learning for 12 specific training blocks, totaling 446 hours. Each of the 12 portfolio sections must contain the following four items: (1) a brief narrative from the applicant explaining how their experience and training substitutes for academy training; (2) narratives from at least two subject matter experts (SMEs) and applicant’s agency head. These statements must be sworn and notarized, detailing the expert's qualifications and their assessment of the applicant's work; (3) actual work samples for specific topics, such as reports and affidavits for Criminal Law, Crash Investigation, and Domestic Violence Response; and (4) certificates of completion for any relevant in-service training.

The specific training blocks were:

- Criminal Law (66 hours)
- Motor Vehicle Law (44 hours)
- Juvenile Law (8 hours)
- Crash Investigation (36 hours)
- Crime Scene Investigation (24 hours)
- Domestic Violence Response (22 hours)
- Interview and Interrogation (16 hours)
- Defensive Driving (33 hours)
- Patrol Procedures (35 hours)
- Firearms (44 hours)
- Use of Force (52 hours)
- Practical Scenarios (76 hours)

The portfolio must also include separate documentation verifying the officer's years and hours of service.

The 2019 working group recommended the VCJC establish a permanent five-member subcommittee to review officer portfolios. Before being submitted to the subcommittee, VPA staff will verify all the information in the portfolio. To cover the cost of the process, the applicant or their agency would be charged a \$1,500 application fee. [A copy of the 2019 recommendation is attached to this report and linked here.](#)

June 2025 Level II Curriculum Review Working Group: It should also be noted that in June 2025, a Level II Curriculum Review Working Group, chaired by Windham County Sheriff Mark Anderson, produced a report that should be viewed in concert to the work of the APWG. The Level II Working Group examined the status and issues concerning the current Level II Law Enforcement Certification. The purpose was to evaluate the training requirements and identify opportunities to improve resources for entry-level officers. Additionally, the report addressed concerns related to liability within the certification process. The working group highlighted areas for improvement concerning the Level II Law Enforcement Certification program while addressing key challenges. [A copy of the June 2025 Level II Curriculum Review Working Group Report is linked here.](#)

CONCLUSION

FORMAL RESPONSE TO LEGISLATIVE DIRECTIVES

As mentioned above, APWG took the legislative directives found in Title 20 and reframed them as questions.

Directive 1 –

“The approval, or revocation thereof, of law enforcement officer training schools and off-site training programs, which shall include rules to identify and implement alternate routes to certification aside from the training provided at the Vermont Police Academy.”

T20 VSA 2355(a)(1).

Reframed as a question – “Are there alternate pathways the Council can create to obtain law enforcement certification?”

In response to the Legislature’s mandate and the reframed question, APWG has developed guiding principles and a definition for “alternate pathways” for the VCJC to use in developing alternative training programs leading to law enforcement certification. These guiding principles and definition emphasize maintaining training standards while potentially leveraging technology, and other alternative pathway approaches, to increase attainability and accessibility.

The VCJC should continue to actively explore, as resources allow, alternative models that combine online or alternate learning pathways for certain topics, with in-person, hands-on training for certain skills. Resources will inform the ability to pursue and deliver alternative models.

APWG recommends that exploration and development of alternative pathways should start with creating acceptable methods to facilitate transition of officers who hold Level II certification to Level III certification, which directly aligns with the VCJC’s objectives to make the profession more attainable for those already serving and those interested in serving.

Directive 2 –

“The Council shall structure its programs so that on and after July 1, 2021, a Level II certified officer may use portfolio experiential learning or College Level Examination Program (CLEP)

testing in order to transition to Level III certification, without such an officer needing to restart the certification process.”

T20 VSA 2358(3)(2).

Reframed as a question – “How can the Council structure its programs so that a Level II certified officer can obtain Level III certification through portfolio experiential learning or College Level Examination Program (CLEP) testing?”

In response to the Legislature’s mandate and the reframed question, while APWG recognizes the importance of creating a clear pathway for Level II to Level III certification, the lack of resources has been prohibitive to realizing this. For a period of time, the Council approved a path for experienced Level II officers to provide a portfolio to obtain “credit” towards Level III certification; however, that program has since been dissolved. To recreate and expand such a program to review and analyze portfolios of experiential learning would require dedicated personnel to ensure that there is a consistent review of such experience, and a comprehensive individual program of training to complete Level III certification.

Moving forward on this issue specifically, APWG believes that resources will inform the ability to pursue and deliver alternative models. As noted by expert academic testimony, it is unclear how a CLEP exam, as currently utilized, would align with VPA training. Current CLEP programming is geared toward college level learning. VPA training is geared towards how to apply skills in the field environment. While it may be possible to correlate the two divergent training modalities, it would likely require significant investment. While APWG notes that T20 VSA§ 2358 (2)(B)(ii) would permit the Council to create areas of training through special certification, this Working Group would not recommend this piecemeal method as a viable alternative path to Level III certification, in that it would place undue strain on VCJC and VPA personnel.

FINAL SUMMARY

APWG made significant progress in defining the scope and principles of the work to pursue and achieve “alternate pathways,” with a specific and collaborative focus on the Level II to Level III transition. APWG created a framework for alternative pathways by adopting both a codified definition and guiding principles that prioritize maintaining high standards while leveraging new modalities to increase accessibility with the overarching aim of supporting workforce development. Sufficient resources will remain essential in expanding capacity and allowing the VPA and VCJC to aim to deliver on all current legislative mandates, as well as any new mandates. APWG stands ready to reconvene to review any specific issues that may arise at the direction of the VCJC.

APPENDIX

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY FOR TRAINING

- 20 V.S.A. § 2355 – Council powers and duties
- 20 V.S.A. § 2358 – Minimum training standards; definitions

APPLICABLE RULES

Council Rules | Criminal Justice Council.

- [Rule 12 Minimum Training, Equipment, and Facility Standards for Law Enforcement Certification Courses](#)
- [Rule 13 Standards for Instructors for Approved Law Enforcement Certification Courses](#)
- [Rule 14 Entry Standards for Basic Training](#)
- [Rule 15 Basic Training Standards for Level I Law Enforcement Officers](#)
- [Rule 16 Scope of Practice for Level I Law Enforcement Officers](#)
- [Rule 17 Basic Training Standards for Level II Law Enforcement Officers](#)
- [Rule 18 Scope of Practice for Level II Law Enforcement Officers](#)
- [Rule 19 Basic Training Standards for Level III Law Enforcement Officers](#)
- [Rule 20 Mandatory Annual In-Service Training for Law Enforcement Officers](#)

RESOURCES, SUBMISSIONS, VISUALS

- [Alternate Pathways Working Group | Criminal Justice Council](#) (APWG Minutes, Presentations, Materials)
- [2019, ALTERNATE PATH FROM LEVEL II TO LEVEL III SUBCOMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION TO THE VCJT](#)
- [2025, LEVEL II WORKING GROUP REPORT](#)
- Discussion of Criteria for *Evaluating Alternative Pathways Models* (submitted by APWG member Bill Clements for discussion purposes)
- Discussion visual A (submitted by APWG member Bill Clements for discussion purposes)
- Discussion visual B (Submitted by APWG Chair Tim Lueders-Dumont for discussion purposes)
- Comments received from APWG member and Chief of the Capitol Police, John Poleway
- Comments received from APWG member Bill Clements on August 6, 2025
- Comments received from VCJC Executive Director Chris Brickell
- Comments received from VPA Deputy Director Ken Hawkins

Discussion of Criteria for Evaluating Alternative Pathways Models
(submitted by APWG member Bill Clements for discussion purposes)

The need to thoroughly assess proposed alternative pathways for certification requires review on several dimensions to assure that the pathway maintains standards for certification approved by the Council, will achieve its stated goals, and does so in a cost-effective manner. Therefore, the following are dimensions by which a proposed pathway may be evaluated for internal integrity as well as in comparison with the foundational delivery model of the 17-week academy presently in place. The Committee agreed that any alternative pathway models developed need to achieve the same standards and learning outcomes as the residential academy, and to the extent possible not result in perceptions of inferior quality.

Alternative pathway models should be thoroughly described in structure and the process by which they operate in order to accurately assess the potential as a certification approach. The following criteria outline a standard approach for reviewing new ways to achieve certification. All assessments should use evidence and relevant data where possible to assure effective use of Council resources.

Candidate Pool

- Potential recruitment pools and yields.
- Will the model attract new recruits to Vermont law enforcement, or will it divert them from the existing academy or other successful certification approaches that may exist? Include evidence and data.

Proposed Pathway Design

- Learning modalities used.
- Structure, duration, and sequencing of instructional units.
- Timeline for completion and relationship to existing VPA timeline.

Technology Requirements

- Platforms, accessibility, security, assessment tools.
- Extent to which existing platforms may be used.
- New technology requirements.

Learning Outcomes and Curriculum Alignment

- Curriculum mapping for proposed model relative to the VPA model and learning objectives.
- Identification of training elements that must be delivered through fact-to-face instruction and experiential scenario. (e.g., firearms, EVOC, use of force)
- Recruit and course/module assessment methods; program outcomes assessment.
- Potential for scenario-based training.
- Quality control approaches.

Recruit Support

- Advising, mentoring, technical support, peer interaction.
- Recruit feedback and evaluation of training.

Instructor Availability and Support

- Instructor pool needed for the model and availability.
- Impact on current academy instruction.
- Technological and instructional design support.

Resource Requirements

- Impact on VPA facilities and staff.
- Potential new staffing needs.
- Program budget and impact on existing VPA budget.
- Start-up development costs
- Identification of budget efficiencies.
- Revenue assessment: appropriation, tuition and fee structure, grant potential.
- Sustainability assessment.

Statutory

- Assessment of changes in statute or administrative rule required to implement the model.

Risk Analysis

- Identification of potential risks.
- Mitigation strategies.

Evaluation and Continuous Improvement

- Metrics for success: recruitment performance, employer satisfaction, community outcomes, officer performance

- Feedback loops.
- Kill points and metrics.

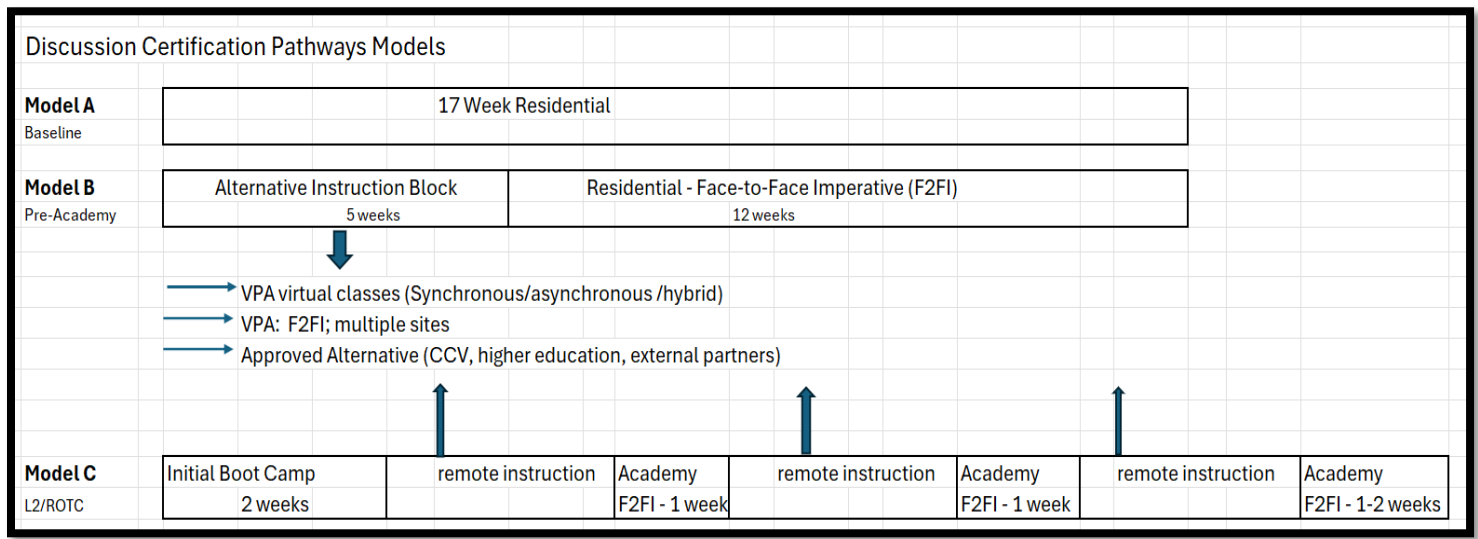
Conclusion and Recommendation.

Alternative Training Review

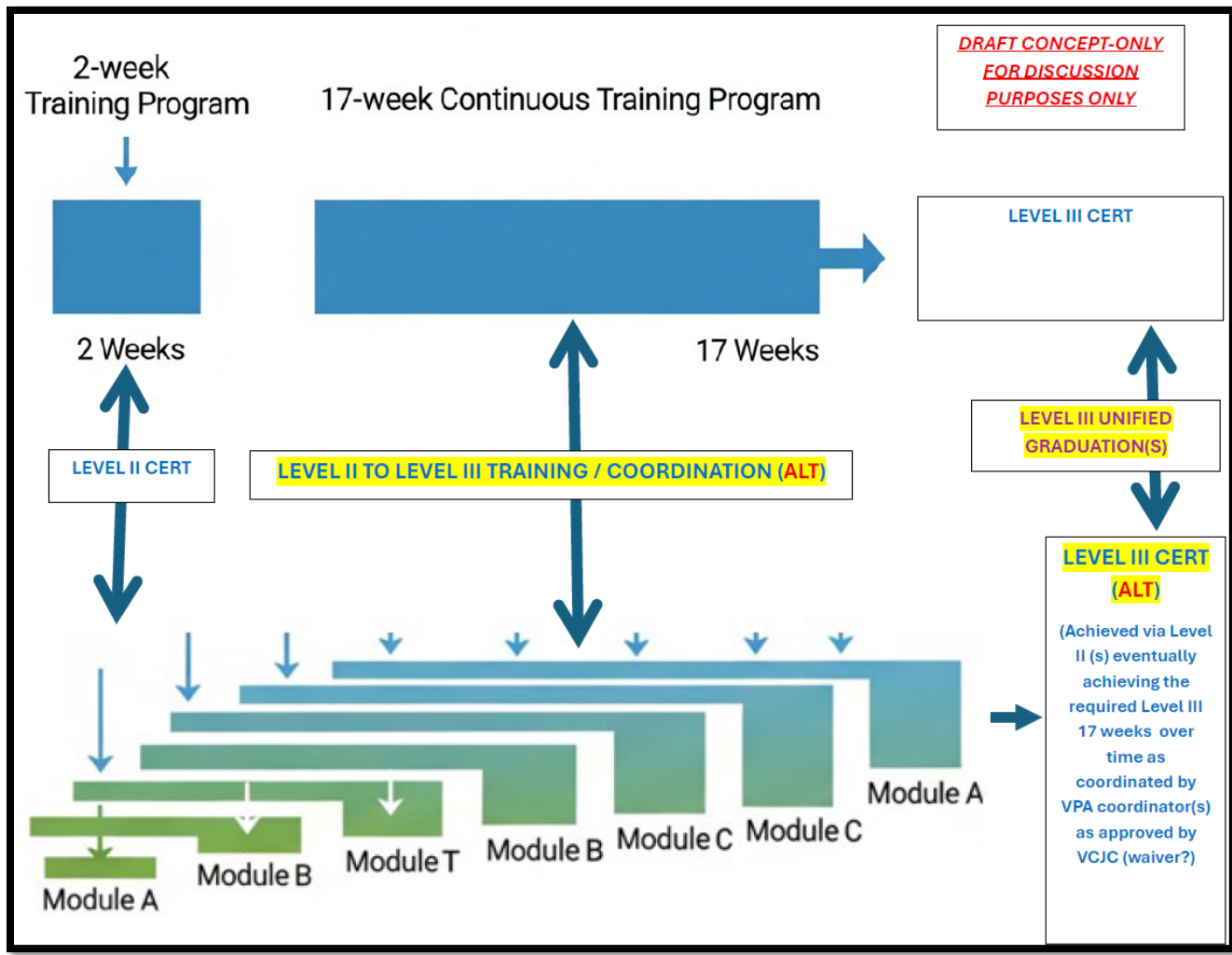
The review of training for compliance with VPA learning outcomes and standards will be required with adoption of new training models. Current reviews are conducted regularly through the Waiver Committee on an individual basis. An important step in the process of assessing new training provided externally through discrete modules or courses or in a larger program (e.g., resulting in external certifications or credentials) is articulation of the criteria used to evaluate such training for equivalency to VPA requirements.

While beyond the scope of the Pathways Committee, it is important for the Waiver Committee to conduct an inventory of previously approved training, where possible, and to prepare criteria used to assess external training for congruence with VPA requirements. It may be necessary to create a separate committee to review and approve external training since that may be needed outside the request of an individual officer or potential recruit as the VPA considers its applicability in advance. The Waiver Committee is ideally situated to provide a review and comment on the potential need for a separate training review committee, especially since the workload in this endeavor will be greatest in the early phases of alternative pathway development.

Discussion visual A (submitted by APWG member Bill Clements for discussion purposes)



Discussion visual B (Submitted by APWG Chair Tim Lueders-Dumont for discussion purposes)



Comments received from APWG member and Chief of the Capitol Police, John Poleway.

Good morning. I just wanted to take a moment to clarify the comment I made at the end of our meeting on Wednesday as I am unsure of how articulate I was in getting my point across. As a committee, we have been focusing on seeking alternate ways to complete a Level III residential academy program without sacrificing the integrity and rigor of the academic and physical components of the academy which is vital. There are certainly very accomplished individuals in our group and listening to their experience and interpretation of things has been enlightening and I have gained some insightful perspectives as it relates to education and the various ways to offer responsible and effective instruction. Potentially envisioning an alternate approach to our current structure is certainly one of our charges as set forth in the legislation but it appears the consensus is that without the proper financial and personnel resources, what we determine as a path forward may never be implemented. This is unfortunate as the deficiency in law enforcement staffing throughout the state necessitates a change in our approach as we need to recruit and retain capable and competent individuals.

The other charge we had was to identify and engage in a procedure that would streamline the process to elevate Level II officers to a Level III status based on the totality of their personal and professional education, training, and experiences. As I stated, I attempted to engage this concept in a very rudimentary way with one of my Level II officers so they could at least begin to take classes and receive training that would bring them close to Level III requirements in the event a process becomes formalized. Being on the waiver sub-committee, I believe the use of this group can assist in facilitating the transition process from Level II to Level III as a means to “train up” many Level II officers who currently do not have a path forward without attending the residential academy. While this process does not address the staffing deficiencies we are experiencing, it seems it may be low lying fruit and can potentially be implemented without the requirement of securing substantial additional resources. If we were successful in applying an agreed upon path forward, it may give us a partial “victory” when we submit our report to the Criminal Justice Council. As Sheriff Marcoux observed, there is more work to be done in reimagining our current residential academy system for Level III certification.

These are just some thoughts I had and felt they would be worth sharing with you as we move forward in our process.



John G. Poleway
Chief of Police
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COMMENTS RECEIVED FROM APWG MEMBER AND CHAIR OF THE VCJC, BILL CLEMENTS.
AUGUST 6, 2025.

The definition of “alternative pathways” (my thoughts)
Programs of learning and training that different modalities
Grounded in clearly articulated learning objectives and competency attainment standards
May be singular modalities or employ multiple modalities in a clearly structured approach grounded in optimization of learning objectives.
Modalities: (NECHE: “all students, all modalities, all locations”
Equivalent admission requirements, not modality dependent
Clear progression based on progressive learning

Equivalent learning outcomes and assessment, documented and verifiable

Program learning outcomes (PLO)

Course learning outcomes (CLO)

Testing options for competencies (e.g. CLEP, DANTES)

Students support – equivalent and beyond the instructor, including technical and administrative support

Delivery by approved and equally qualified instructors across modalities

Verifiable identify and performance for non-traditional learning (e.g. online)

Expert resources

Importance of strategic directional decisions

IADLEST (www.iadlest.org)

Leverage current partnership

NLEARN network (need to be a member)

ACADIS learning and records platform; LMS functions.

Response Network (www.trnpc.com)

Catalog of courses – largely but not exclusively in-service

Potential for in-service and preparatory programs

Willingness to design – API potential

PERF Police Executive Research Forum www.policeforum.org

IACP

www.iacp.org

IACPLearn – need to login, behind a firewall

Various partners could be recruited for specific needs. E.g. ZSchool at USF regarding opioid training. Would need some management of these services and regular oversight, not a “set it and forget it” solution. Needs to be synched with training needs, probably in-service for the most part.

As part of a larger discussion I would also like to discuss at the next meeting, and have included in the report, the mention of T20 VSA§ 2358 (2)(B)(ii) *In addition to the scope of practice permitted under subdivision (i) of this subdivision (B), a Level II law enforcement officer may also practice in additional areas approved in writing by the Council based on a special certification or training approved by the Council.*

I would appreciate a mention if appropriate that this section be added only to an alternate pathway designed for level II to III. If not, this caveat if approved will create indefinite asks by agencies to create specific niches that suit their agency that we will not have the time to invest in or support. It is useful but should be included in a pathway to final level III outcomes.

Although changes to the modality of the current Level III Academy might provide increased access, there are two unanswered questions that remain. Is it the State’s and Academy’s responsibility to change training modalities to promote the hiring of new officers or does that at least in part lay with Agencies within the State, and if those changes are made, which Agencies will participate (there are many who do not wish to migrate from the current model, and at least one who has stated that they will not send students and will provide training themselves), the second, is the training the obstacle to recruitment, or is it that the job is exceptionally demanding, rigorous, liability filled and a commitment to a different way of life? And how will success be measured