



A Step-by-Step Guide to Completing the Law Enforcement Challenge Application

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What is the Law Enforcement Challenge?

What is the Law Enforcement Challenge Program?

The Law Enforcement Challenge is a competition between similar sizes and types of law enforcement agencies. It recognizes and rewards the best overall traffic safety programs in the United States. The areas of concentration include efforts to enforce laws and educate the public about occupant protection, impaired driving, and speeding. Departments submit an application (usually in a three ring or presentation binder) which documents their agency's efforts and effectiveness in these areas. The winning safety programs are those that combine officer training, public information and enforcement to reduce crashes and injuries within its jurisdiction.

The National Law Enforcement Challenge program is financed through a grant awarded to the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) by NHTSA. IACP & NHTSA believe an increase in traffic enforcement in a community results in a decrease in motor vehicle crashes, injuries, and fatalities and they have the studies to prove it! In fact, no single other program or strategy works as well as law enforcement in making the roads safer. This program complements all the other training and public information programs that NHTSA does to promote traffic safety. IACP has contracted through NHTSA to manage the nationwide Law Enforcement Challenge program.

The IACP believes one of the best ways to promote, build, and increase participation in the national program is to establish state Challenge programs, which allows agencies to compete against similar agencies from their state for recognition in addition to competing nationally. Agencies that enter their state Challenge are automatically entered in the National Challenge, with no need to enter a separate application. There are currently eighteen (18) states that have compatible state programs. In Virginia, the state Challenge program is conducted by the Virginia Association of Chiefs of Police with funds granted by the Department of Motor Vehicles' Virginia Highway Safety Office.



What's in it for a department?

This competition is a unique way for departments to increase their attention to traffic safety. It provides opportunities for public recognition of exemplary programs, incentive for continuing traffic safety activities, and documentation of agency effectiveness that can be used in future grant proposals. Every agency participates to some degree in traffic safety programs, so participation does not require a great deal of extra commitment on an agency's part. Merely documenting current activity has produced many winners. This documentation can help provide accountability and prove the value of a strong traffic program. Being recognized as a winner brings a great deal of positive attention to a department, possible benefits at budget time and enhances an agency's reputation as a department that is "tough on crime" yet prioritizes safety. Forwarding a completed application to the VACP is all it takes for a department to be entered in both the state and national programs.

Completing Your Challenge Application

This guide is designed to assist you in assembling an application for the National Law Enforcement Challenge as well as the applicable state Challenge program. By following these simple recommendations, you can make it much easier for the judges to locate the necessary information to evaluate your program and thus give your application an edge that could make the difference.

Agencies choosing to participate will typically submit a bound or binder application, which is not to exceed one inch thick. The application should document the agency's overall traffic safety efforts in the categories of policies and guidelines, training of officers, public information and education, enforcement activities, and effectiveness of efforts.

If your state coordinates a Challenge program, your single Challenge application is entered into two separate programs: your state Challenge and the IACP National Law Enforcement Challenge. The National Law Enforcement Challenge and several state partners have much in common — the judging criteria and applications mirror each other but may differ in category sizes and other criteria. These differences are not something that will need your attention. Upon receipt of your application at the national level, it will be placed in the appropriate category by size and type of agency.

CATEGORY NOTE: Agencies that work together in their efforts throughout the year may combine their data into one application and submit a **“Multi-Jurisdictional”** entry. Examples of this would be a town police department and their county sheriff's office, or neighboring jurisdictions that are part of a regional task force. This is an often overlooked option for individual agencies that feel like they might not do enough in traffic safety on their own to do well in the Challenge.

How are the Applications judged?

A panel of judges will review each application and assign points based on certain established criteria. After judging is completed, the judge's scores are averaged and a final score is assigned for each submission. After all of the applications are scored, the agencies are ranked in their appropriate categories based on agency size and type. A minimum of 85 points MUST be earned to receive a national award. (Your state Challenge program may have a different point threshold.) As a result, there may be categories where no awards will be presented due to either a lack of entries or not enough agencies achieving a minimum score. All of the national judges are independent members of the law enforcement community, public safety, and corporate partners who have demonstrated advance knowledge of highway safety initiatives.

The Law Enforcement Challenge judging system is a means to encourage and reward new standards of creativity, commitment and excellence in traffic safety education and enforcement while providing a vehicle that will educate agencies that have just begun their traffic safety efforts in such a way that they will grow and understand and evolve to the greatest level of their potential.

The system acknowledges the joint efforts of the entire agency in a single goal, to save lives through policy, training, rewards, recognition, and public information and enforcement.

General Tips on a Winning Submission

- First impressions count. A neat, well-organized application that is easy to follow during the judging makes a BIG difference.
- Binder/presentation should be no more than ONE-INCH thick.
 - Make sure all the information you want the judges to see is securely attached inside the binder.
- Organize the categories of your binder in the same order as they are listed in the application.
 - Consider tabbing the sections and **highlighting** the appropriate information.
- Make sure you address every question asked — do not just say “N/A” or leave it blank without an explanation.
 - Sometimes the difference between 1st and 3rd place is only 2 or 3 points, so every piece of information is important! If you fail to include one policy or one piece of data, it can make the difference between 1st and 3rd, or placing and not placing at all.
 - Lists and graphs/charts are very helpful to illustrate your accomplishments.
- Scan your articles and photos. Do not forget to use captions telling the judges what the picture is and how it applies to your program.
- **DO NOT include** minutia — include only what counts. **Quality is more important than quantity.**
- **DO NOT include** actual handouts, key rings, pencils, etc — provide a photo.
- No videos, audio or computer-based presentations allowed.

Organizing Your Application

There is no standard format for completing a Challenge application; however, there are some things you can do to make your application more attractive to the judges. Most importantly, follow the application order. **The actual application form should be the FIRST ITEM in your submission. Entries without an application form are considered incomplete and WILL NOT be judged.** Directly behind the application form, your submission should provide a brief introduction about your agency’s traffic safety programs. Following the introduction, include five sections or chapters: one for each section of the judging criteria and following the application order. Include an additional section/tab for each Special Award Category for which you are applying.

Introduction

Give a brief description of your agency’s traffic safety problem as related to occupant protection, impaired driving, and speed and any other traffic safety aspect you have addressed, along with the solution you have developed to combat these problems. Provide one to three years of data or any traffic studies conducted by your agency to back up your problem identification.

Policy & Guidelines

Applicants **MUST provide an actual copy** of their policies and guidelines for safety belt use within the agency as well as enforcement policies and guidelines for safety belt, child passenger safety restraints, impaired driving, and speed. Judges need to see the policy along with critical information such as the date it was written, title, etc. **DO NOT** just type the wording of your policy into the application layout — a copy of the ACTUAL POLICY is required.

- Include only the page(s) with the necessary information, not your entire agency policy manual. If your belt use policy is only one page of a 14 page policy section/manual, you only need to include that one page.
 - Highlight the pertinent information and passages on the page for the judges.
- If your agency has no policy for the requested target areas, provide a brief statement saying so — do not make the judges search for something that isn’t there.
- Do not say that you have a policy and then neglect to include it. You will not receive points unless each policy is included.

- Enforcement policies are clear directives emphasizing the importance of impaired driving, speed, seat belt and child safety seat enforcement for your department.
 - Enforcement guidelines should be specific — one for each: impaired driving, speed, belts, & child seat enforcement.
 - Guidelines may be part of a policy/procedure statement; agency goals & objectives; operational plans; or, internal memorandum.
 - The policies should be directed to ALL agency members, not just a traffic unit.
 - Neither a state law nor a memorandum “recommending” belt use or enforcement of the target areas is considered a policy.
 - DO NOT include operational plans or process procedures (e.g. for DUI checkpoints) unless necessary for the application.

Training

Outline the training conducted during the year in occupant protection, impaired driving (detection and apprehension), speed enforcement, and any other overall comprehensive traffic safety training. Provide a brief narrative about the training your agency conducted/received during the past year. Include the number of officers trained in each category. Also include other recent training over the past few years that still may be applicable today, such as child passenger safety technicians, crash reconstructionists, etc.

- DO NOT include training that has nothing to do with the categories or did not occur in the application year (unless it is the overall traffic safety training).
- DO NOT include basic academy training or FTO training.
- If you say officers were trained, you must show your documentation.
- DO NOT include entire training manuals, certificates, or rosters of each class conducted.
- Be sure to provide the number of sworn personnel trained and the type of training conducted. (SFST, Operation Kids and many other programs can be used over several Roll Call training sessions — take advantage of this type of training.)
- Provide a brief narrative of your training activities — how was it conducted? Roll call, training bulletins, cross-training, formal and informal schools, seminars and conferences should all be included.
- Consider a matrix of the types of training provided and how many officers were trained or updated during the year.
- For past training, include what is still relevant today, i.e. child seat technicians, crash reconstructionists, etc. Past 3-4 years would be sufficient if that training is still being utilized by that person today.

Incentives & Recognition

Additional points are awarded for agencies that reward officers for a job well done and citizens that practice safe driving. Rewards and incentives are important elements in letting people know that traffic safety is a priority in the community and the agency.

- Participation in Saved by the Belt programs (state, local or IACP) — If you have a program that recognizes motorists, you **MUST** include information on how many were recognized in that past year as well as supporting documentation (photos, certificates, etc.).
- Recognition of officers for impaired driving enforcement
- Recognition of officers for speed enforcement

You must include supporting documentation on officers recognized — photos, certificates, etc. Do not include recognition that is not traffic safety related.

Agencies must provide documentation of recognition of officers who excel in impaired driving enforcement and speed enforcement. Letters of commendation, uniform pins or ribbons, plaques, etc. are examples of recognition.

Public Information & Education

This section is very important. Agencies should provide detailed information on their efforts to promote the issues of occupant protection, impaired driving, speed enforcement, and traffic safety. Show your creativity in promoting your programs. Provide a narrative of your public information and education efforts and of your efforts to publicize highly visible enforcement during the year. Tell the judges what you have done and how you got the message out to the public.

This is where agencies need to document all “non-enforcement” activities they participated in during the year to address these topics. Activities should include: Citizen Police Academies (if traffic was a topic), high school mock DUI crashes, posters, signs, billboards, educational pamphlets and brochures, child seat programs, press releases, web site information, newspaper articles, photos and similar items. Agencies should also include their non-enforcement participation in state and national campaigns such as “Click It or Ticket”, “Drunk Driving. Over the Limit. Under Arrest./Checkpoint Strikeforce”, National Drink and Drugged Driving Prevention Month, National Child Passenger Safety Week, etc.

- Show the judges what you have done: Photos/news articles/letters/etc... (insure these have captions that tell the judges what they are). Use pictures to highlight your narrative.
- Give details on each activity/program and how well it worked. Who was involved? Did you build community partnerships?

Enforcement Activity

On the application form, provide the number of citations/warnings issued by your department for safety belt/child safety seats, impaired driving, speeding, and special enforcement efforts for the **past three (3) years**.

- Safety belt citations
- Child safety seat citations
- Speed-related citations (including too fast for conditions and failure to reduce speed)
- Impaired driving arrests (including Zero Tolerance)
- Does your state have a primary or secondary seat belt law?
- Number and type of special enforcement efforts for impaired driving, speeding, safety belt enforcement zones or any other traffic enforcement special detail (assigning an officer to impaired driving enforcement each night is NOT 365 special enforcement efforts).
- The numbers should make sense compared to the number of officers in your department. (If you issued 250 citations for seat belt violations, that is great! But if you have 200 officers and only issued 250 citations, that is not good at all.)
- Include the number of special enforcement efforts. State not only the number of enforcement efforts, but also explain what they were. How many were for speed details, how many impaired driving roadblocks or saturation patrols, how many details targeted red light running, etc.
- Provide a narrative explaining in detail what you accomplished in these waves.
- If you have shown an improvement over previous periods or years, show it. **The application page should show 3 years worth of numbers**, but your attached narrative could explain annual numbers and any improvement over the years. (Recent data – not from 10 years ago.)

How Effective Were You?

The secret to this section is very simple: do the research and find the numbers. This is not only important to complete your application, but also this data will help you evaluate and build your entire traffic safety program(s). This section can be used as barometer on how well your agency is doing.

At a minimum, address your traffic program’s effectiveness in the following areas:

- Change in safety belt use
 - You must show the difference. What was the change in the belt use rate in your jurisdiction during the year? You are required to conduct seat belt use surveys at the start and end of the year.

- You must show the numbers of speed- and alcohol-related fatalities and injury crashes.
 - How do they compare to previous years?
 - Use graphs and charts to illustrate this change.
- If you state “unknown”, you will not get credit! Do the research. Find the numbers.
- Your effectiveness documentation should also include results of some of your enforcement programs.
- Provide a narrative of your effectiveness. How did the programs change your results and did the community support your efforts?
- How many total crashes were there during the application year and how did it compare to previous years?
- Are you conducting traffic crash analysis? Where are your top 5 problem crash areas? What is causing these crashes? Are you directing proactive enforcement to these areas to target the violations contributing to crashes and injuries?

While this may seem difficult for smaller departments, it is ALWAYS a good idea to keep track of this data. It can be used to help plan and make program decisions in your agency and help you determine how to allocate resources. Judges will be looking for information such as:

- Did your safety belt use rate increase?
- Did your total crashes decrease?
- Did your total injury crashes decrease?
- Did your alcohol- or speed-related crashes decrease?
- Did your enforcement of seat belts, child seats, speeding or impaired driving increase?
- Did you increase your number of special enforcement efforts?
- Did you increase your public education initiatives?

Quality of Submission

The following questions will be considered and a score for presentation will be awarded by the judges.

- How well did you organize your application? (Your submission should follow the order of the application.) The judges will look at how much effort you expended in preparing your application.
- Make things easy to find! Remember, there will be hundreds of applications for the judges to review. Make use of bullets and highlight critical points.
- DO NOT send more than one, 1” binder — you will not be judged by weight or volume, but by quality, accomplishments, and completeness. Submissions larger than one-inch will not be judged.
- Do not send video or audio tapes as the judges will not have the time to review these.
- If you have done audio/video PSA’s, then summarize them in narrative form. For the video PSA, if possible, include a “freeze-frame” photo shot from the video.
- Remember to spell out all acronyms.
- Is all the information clearly provided and is it creatively presented?
 - Make the submission clear, concise, and easy to follow.
 - Use tabs to locate important items.

Special Awards

In addition to the first, second, and third place Law Enforcement Challenge awards an agency can receive, there are several other “special awards” for which your agency may compete. But consideration for these special awards is given only if documentation is provided separately from the total Challenge application. If your agency wishes to apply for a special award, your application should include **a separate tab or section at the back of the application for each special award for which you wish to be considered**. Your presentation should

highlight your efforts in the target area(s).

- On the application form, DO NOT check all of the special award categories — only check the special awards for which you have provided the required additional data and information.
- Place these special award sections in the rear of your presentation/book. **If applying for the Commercial Motor Vehicle Safety Award, please also fill out the additional application form in the LEC Application brochure and include it in that special section.**

A Final Word

If you do not “place” in the awards program, it does not mean that you did not do a good job — it only means that another agency in your category did better. Please strive to do more the following year. Interact with others who have successful programs and learn from them. Do not give up! Above all, remember that what you have done has made a difference. The community that you serve has benefited from your work and is a safer place to drive and live. Everyone is a winner!

For assistance with completing your Challenge application, please contact any of the following:

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