



CITY OF SEATTLE PUBLIC SAFETY CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION

ENTRY POLICE EXAM VENDOR DUE DILIGENCE
REPORT

JUNE 17, 2024

Executive Director Andrea Scheele

Table of Contents

Table of Contents.....	1
I. About the Seattle Public Safety Civil Service Commission	3
II. Executive Summary	4
Key Findings	5
Recommendations.....	5
III. PSCSC’s Role in Exam Selection and Development	5
Legal Authority and Framework	5
Lifecycle of An Entry Level Exam	6
Police Hiring Process Timeline and Overview.....	7
How long does the hiring process take?.....	8
What are NTN and PST?.....	8
IV. Due Diligence Objective, Scope, Limitations, and Methodology	9
Objective.....	9
Scope	9
Limitations	9
Methodology	10
Exam and Vendor Services Criteria.....	11
V. Key Findings	12
1. PST declined to participate in the due diligence. IOS/PST requested not to be considered as a vendor for the police officer exam.	12
2. If PST were interested, its current exam is not likely an option for Seattle.	12
The likely outcome of a validation process of the PST exam would be to develop a new and different exam, not PST’s current exam.	12
Developing a custom PST/IOS exam would not achieve the purpose of the request.	13
3. Use of two different exam instruments would create practical and legal complexities.	13
Background	13
Challenge	13
Subject matter expert guidance	14
PST subscriber terms do not require them to defend use of multiple or blended eligibility lists for the same position.....	15
4. Seattle’s current exam effectively assesses qualities related to constitutional policing and are important to community, is validated for Seattle’s use, and does not have adverse impact.	15

	Content and criterion validity.....	15
	NTN and PST differ in the types of clients they serve.	16
	NTN exam assesses dimensions important to community.....	17
	Racial equity considerations.....	18
	Seattle’s police union supports high standards for assessment of police candidates.	19
VI.	Recommendations.....	19
	Recommendation 1: PSCSC should continue to utilize NTN as the sole test vendor for entry level police exams for substantive and practical reasons.	19
	Recommendation 2: PSCSC should conduct a request for proposal process (RFP) for a sole police exam vendor in 2025.	20
	Recommendation 3: PSCSC should continue to engage in continuous improvement, vis-à-vis the entry/lateral police officer exam process.	20
VII.	Conclusion	21
VIII.	Acknowledgments	21
	Appendix A: A Brief History of the Seattle Police Civil Service Exam	22
	Appendix B: Exam Validation.....	23
	What is exam validity and why is it important?	23
	What are the forms of validity evidence?	23
	What does the process of validating an exam entail?.....	24
	Appendix C: Exam Vendor Comparison Table	26
	Appendix D: NTN Recommendations Regarding the Use of Two Exams	32
	Appendix E: Community Police Commission Survey Report	35
	Appendix F: Benefits of Video-Based Situational Judgment Tests	38
	Why does this matter?	38
	Sources:	38

I. About the Seattle Public Safety Civil Service Commission

The Public Safety Civil Service Commission (“PSCSC” or “Commission”) oversees the civil service system for sworn police officers and fire personnel in the City of Seattle. The PSCSC is an independent administrative and quasi-judicial body, authorized by the Revised Code of Washington and the City Charter. It is housed in the Civil Service Commissions department (“CIV”) and staffed by three employees who also support the Seattle Civil Service Commission (“CSC”). Executive Director Andrea Scheele and Civil Service Commissions’ staff support both commissions.

The PSCSC:

- Makes and enforces rules for examinations, appointments, promotions, transfers, demotions, reinstatements, suspensions, layoffs, discharges, and related matters.
- Directs the development and administration of 11+ merit-based entry-level and promotional civil service exams for the Seattle Fire and Police departments (with the support of Seattle Human Resources); and
- Provides sworn police and uniformed fire employees with a quasi-judicial hearing process to consider complaints and appeals of alleged violations of the PSCSC Rules and applicable provisions of the Charter of the City of Seattle and the Seattle Municipal Code.

The PSCSC conducts business at regular and special meetings that are open to the public.

II. Executive Summary

Like many cities across the United States, the City of Seattle has been grappling with a police officer staffing crisis since 2018. The fallout of COVID-19 and the historic Black Lives Matter protests in 2020 further stressed SPD staffing as the workforce reevaluated its interest in policing, and applications for entry level positions fell to historic lows. Simultaneously, the delay in ratifying a new police officer labor contract with the Seattle Police Officers' Guild (SPOG) diminished Seattle's ability to offer competitive wages. The result of the hiring crisis coupled with officer attrition is that the number of deployable officers is at its lowest point since the 1990s.

To address the surge in officer departures and shortage of qualified applicants, the PSCSC, Mayor's Office, SPD, and other stakeholders formed an interdepartmental team to improve each step of the recruiting, testing, and hiring process. Since August 2023, City has invested more than \$2.8 million in marketing, leveraged new outreach tools, improved communication, and removed barriers to application and testing. To address Seattle's relatively low volume of applications and new hires, Deputy Mayor Tim Burgess in January 2024 asked the PSCSC to consider using Public Safety Testing (PST) as an exam administrator for the City's civil service police exam. City Councilmembers have also expressed an interest in using PST as an exam vendor.

In response to this request, the PSCSC Executive Director initiated a due diligence investigation to compare Seattle's current vendor and exam (National Testing Network and Frontline National Exam, or NTN) with PST. PSCSC staff is cautiously optimistic to see an uptick in police officer applications after the new SPOG contract was ratified by union membership and City Council.

All stakeholders have an interest in ensuring that the City is thoroughly exploring every option to hire a greater number of qualified police officers to serve Seattle, without lowering standards. PSCSC staff is mindful of SPD's commitments to bias-free policing, use of force principles, and police accountability systems as recognized in the [2012 Consent Decree](#) and MOU and the [2017 Police Accountability Ordinance](#). We apply these lenses to recommendations about Seattle's police officer testing process.

This report documents research completed for the due diligence investigation, identifies key findings, and makes recommendations to the Public Safety Civil Service Commission.

Key Findings

- 1) PST declined to participate in the due diligence. IOS/PST requested not to be considered as a vendor for the police officer exam.
- 2) If PST were interested, its current exam is not likely an option for Seattle.
- 3) Use of two different exam instruments would create practical and legal complexities.
- 4) Seattle's current exam effectively assesses qualities related to constitutional policing and are important to community, is validated for Seattle's use, and does not have adverse impact.

Recommendations

- 1) PSCSC should continue to utilize NTN as the sole test vendor for entry level police exams for substantive and practical reasons, as described in detail below.
- 2) PSCSC should conduct a request for proposal process (RFP) for a sole police exam vendor in 2025.
- 3) PSCSC should continue to engage in continuous improvement by ensuring that best practices are being used, monitoring and reporting relevant metrics, conducting stakeholder engagement, and regularly reviewing and updating policies and testing procedures.

III. PSCSC's Role in Exam Selection and Development

Legal Authority and Framework

A primary purpose of the PSCSC is to oversee and direct the development and administration of merit-based civil service exams for ranks in the Seattle Police and Fire Departments. Washington state law, the Seattle City Charter, and the Seattle Municipal Code expressly assign the Commission responsibility to ensure that exams are fair, competitive, and job-related¹.

Essential to understanding the role of the PSCSC and its place within Seattle's governance structure is that it is an independent agency, not a City department. In 2004, the Washington State Court of Appeals affirmed the PSCSC's independent direction of the merit system as a "fundamental purpose of civil service laws," and underlined that civil service systems exist to "protect [police and fire department] employees from the arbitrary and discriminatory actions of their employers in hiring, promotions, discipline and discharge and to ensure that the public is protected by qualified police and fire personnel." *Seattle Police Officers' Guild v. City of Seattle*, 121 Wn.App. 453, 459 (2004).

Civil service commissions are authorized to promulgate and adopt comprehensive rules and regulations regarding the general subject matter of personnel administration, such as how examinations are conducted, and appointments and promotions are made. See, RCW 41.12.040, *Vahle v. City of Lakewood*, 14 Wn.App.2d 1068 (2020)(unpublished).

Individuals seeking employment under the civil service structure have "a fundamental right ... to procedural due process and an equal opportunity to enter public service on the basis of fairly

¹ See, e.g., RCW 41.12.040; Seattle City Charter Article XVI; Seattle Municipal Code 4.08.070(C).

administered competitive examinations.” *Green v. Cowlitz Cnty. Civil Serv. Comm'n, Cowlitz Cnty.*, 19 Wn.App. 210, 217 (1978).

[The Public Safety Civil Service Commission Rules of Practice & Procedure](#) set out the standards and requirements for examinations and other civil service processes. The PSCSC is committed to ensuring that Seattle’s public safety civil service exams are merit-based, fair, job-related, valid, nondiscriminatory, and lawful.

Lifecycle of An Entry Level Exam²

Many jurisdictions, including Seattle, contract with a private exam vendor to provide entry-level exams for the ranks of Police Officer and Firefighter.³ Law enforcement and other professional personnel assessment instruments are generally developed by industrial-organizational psychologists holding advanced degrees that specialize in the development and validation of such exams.

The test developer and the test users are jointly responsible for development and/or evaluation of validity evidence to support the test’s use for a particular purpose.⁴ Local validity evidence is especially important when the exam is being considered for use in a setting that is different from the one in which it was originally developed/validated. As the largest and most densely populated city in the Pacific Northwest, with the largest number of police officers having frequent contact with members of the community, Seattle would be wise to carefully evaluate the appropriateness of any exam prior to its use, including potential impacts on candidate demographic groups.

The PSCSC is responsible for ensuring that all civil service exam processes are valid for the work of the position, and that administration is fair, efficient, and accessible.

In accordance with PSCSC Rule 9.08⁵, after examination, the PSCSC certifies a ranked list of applicants who passed the exam to the appointing authority for consideration for potential appointment to the rank.

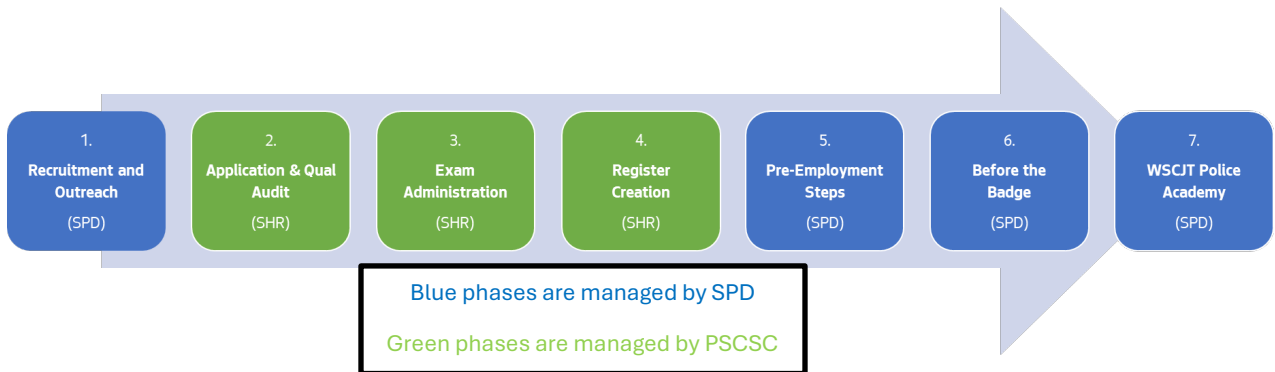
² Promotional exam development is outside the scope of this due diligence report, so it is not discussed in detail here.

³ Seattle utilizes National Testing Network’s law enforcement and firefighter exams for Entry and Lateral Police Officer and Firefighter. For additional information on the history of Seattle police exams, see Appendix A.

⁴ More information about development and validation processes is at Appendix B.

⁵ **PSCSC 9.08 CONTENT OF EXAMINATIONS.** Examinations may include written, personal qualifications, physical, or performance tests, or evaluations of training and experience, interviews, or any other suitable evaluation of fitness, or any combination of such tests. Such tests may evaluate education, experience, aptitude, knowledge, skill, physical condition, personal characteristics, and other qualifications to determine the relative fitness of the candidates.

Police Hiring Process Timeline and Overview



Outreach and recruitment are the first crucial stages of the multi-stage police officer hiring process.

The civil service application and exam are the next steps,

Candidates who pass the civil service exam are placed on a ranked eligibility list (“register”). The eligibility list is certified and referred to the Seattle Police Department for the remaining pre-employment screening steps, which are administered by SPD staff and involve:

- Physical Ability Test
- Oral Board Assessment
- Background Investigation
- Polygraph
- Medical & Psychological Evaluations

After these screening steps, candidates receive a conditional offer of employment and complete the Before the Badge Program, the state police academy, and post-academy field training. After serving a probationary period of one year and completing field training, student officers become police officers.

How long does the hiring process take?

Analyses were conducted to better understand the amount of time that each phase of the hiring process takes. Staff first looked at the application and eligibility dates for all eligible entry police candidates between 2023-2024 (N = 750). On average, candidates spent **27.7 days** in the PSCSC-operated phases of the hiring process.⁶

Staff also analyzed data on all entry police hires from 2023 to May 2024, excluding laterals and rehires (N = 67). On average, **8.2 months** passed between the date a candidate applied for police officer and the date they began the police academy. Of those 8.2 months, candidates spent an average of one month in the civil service process, 5.5 months in the SPD pre-employment screening process, and 1.5 months between the date they were hired and the date they began the academy. Considering this timeline, it will take several months for increased applications and/or changes to the civil service exam process to have a meaningful impact on the number of deployable officers.



What are NTN and PST?

[National Testing Network](#) and [Public Safety Testing](#) are privately held companies, both incorporated in Washington state and headquartered in Lynnwood, WA.

PST and NTN contract with law enforcement agencies to provide testing services. Police officer applicants can apply to and test for one or multiple agencies in their job search via the NTN or PST application online portals. Applicants are required to pass an agency's civil service exam to be considered for appointment to that agency.

The exams administered by NTN and PST are different, proprietary, and developed by industrial organizational psychologists. NTN's police officer exam was developed by their sister company, Ergometrics & Applied Personnel Research, Inc., and both are owned and operated by Carl Swander, Ph.D. NTN and Ergometrics also developed the civil service exam used by Seattle for entry-firefighter, FireTEAM. Seattle selected NTN's firefighter exam after a yearlong study and competitive bidding process.

The PST exam was developed and is owned by [Industrial/Organizational Solutions \(IOS\)](#), a company headquartered in Illinois. IOS's CEO is Chad Legel. The PST law enforcement exam is utilized for police, sheriff, and corrections officer positions. PST contracts with many smaller law enforcement agencies in Washington state, including Tacoma, Bellevue, Spokane, as well as State of Washington law enforcement agencies, among others.

An "apples to apples" comparison of the NTN and PST exams are provided in Appendix C.

⁶ This metric based on an analysis of candidates' actual application and referral dates. It reflects the average amount of time that passes between when a candidate applies and when they're referred to SPD on an eligibility list.

IV. Due Diligence Objective, Scope, Limitations, and Methodology

Objective

The objective of this due diligence was to compare the current police officer exam and vendor services provided by National Testing Network with the police officer exam and services offered by Public Safety Testing, and:

- Provide a written “apples-to-apples” analysis of the two exams and vendor services, and appendices providing further context.
- Make recommendations to the PSCSC, as appropriate.

Scope

The PSCSC Executive Director and staff investigated the exams and services of National Testing Network and Public Safety Testing for the rank of police officer, and police officer/corrections officer (PST).

In addition to an overview and analysis of both exams and vendors, we sought information related to the following questions:

- Do the exams measure characteristics that are necessary to perform the job of a Seattle police officer?
- Are there differences between groups’ test performance? Is there any adverse impact? Are there other ways in which changing the police officer exam vendor could impact candidate diversity or other racial equity outcomes?
- If available to Seattle, would use of PST’s exam and candidate pool likely result in increased applications/potential hires? To what degree?
- What are the benefits, as well as the potential undesired outcomes, of using multiple assessment instruments for a single rank/eligible list?

Limitations

Lack of available information/data. Although PST and IOS initially engaged in the due diligence process, providing PSCSC staff “view-only” access to proprietary exam validation materials, and engaging in early conversations, they ultimately declined to respond to questions about their exam and services.

Without this information, the potential impacts of the request cannot be fully analyzed or understood. For example:

- It is not known whether Seattle would receive more applications if it engaged with PST.
- It is not known whether or how much overlap exists between the NTN and PST candidate pools.
- It is not known how the demographics of Seattle’s applicant pool could be impacted by a change, thereby impacting the demographics of the pool of candidates hired.

- It is not possible to do an exhaustive “apples-to-apples” analysis of the two exams and services. A limited comparison, based on information that was provided and publicly available is in Appendix C.

Methodology

The Executive Director and exam team members:

- Discussed the request with SPD, the Mayor’s Office, and City Council stakeholders, including related to desired outcomes and supporting data, information, reasons, and racial equity analysis.
- Reviewed literature related to each vendor’s products, including user manuals and validation reports.
- Submitted 40+ written questions to PST and NTN, to compare each vendor’s exam instrument and administration services.
- Solicited input and conducted a survey among members and staff of the Seattle Community Police Commission related to important dimensions for assessment of police officer candidates.
- Interviewed:
 - Jon Walters, President, Public Safety Testing
 - Chad Legel, CEO, Industrial-Organizational Solutions (IOS)
 - Carl Swander, Ph.D., owner of National Testing Network and Ergometrics
 - Mike Solan, President, Seattle Police Officers Guild
 - James Britt, President, Seattle Police Management Association
 - Employees of National Testing Network
- Researched police officer exams and processes of comparator and regional competitor jurisdictions.
- Applied and completed the NTN and PST exams.

Exam and Vendor Services Criteria

Information gathering strategies were designed around the following criteria, current circumstances, and historical Requests for Proposal (RFP) conducted by the Fire & Police Exams unit.

Exam Characteristics

- Validation evidence
- Measurement methods
- Exam dimensions (“standard” and “add on”)
- Component weights and cut scores
- Ability to customize weights and cut scores
- Integrity measurement
- Pass rates
- Evaluations of test performance and adverse impact

Exam Accessibility

- Number of testing slots available per day (across all testing platforms)
- Number of in-person testing centers across the United States
- Virtual testing capabilities (compatibility across Mac, PCs, etc.)
- Candidate support
- Score transfers

Candidate Pool

- Demographics (% of candidates with active test scores who identify as BIPOC or women)
- Number of candidates in Washington state
- Exam completion and no-show rates

Experience with Comparable Agencies

- Experience with “comparable” agencies (similar # of officers, similar size and diversity of communities served)
- Experience with “competitor” agencies (Western Washington agencies)
- Experience with agencies under consent decrees

Customer Service

- Vendor communication/support for applicants
- Defense of exam if legal challenge occurs

Other

- Contract costs
- Other terms

V. Key Findings

1. PST declined to participate in the due diligence. IOS/PST requested not to be considered as a vendor for the police officer exam.

In response to early due diligence inquiries, PST provided limited materials and engaged in early discussions about the process. However, in April 2024, PST declined to respond to written questions about their exam and administration services, and discontinued participation in this due diligence process.

PST's withdrawal was communicated to relevant stakeholders. However, several stakeholders continued to encourage PSCSC to pursue PST as a vendor.

When the Executive Director attempted to clarify PST's position, they wrote:

"Yes, we did decline to answer questions related to the Public Safety Civil Service Commission's "due diligence" process. Please understand that our decision in no way reflects our interest in partnering with and serving the City of Seattle. We are confident we can be of benefit to the SPD, especially related to increasing the number of candidates."

On May 1, 2024, Mr. Legel (IOS) and Mr. Walters (PST) requested termination of the due diligence, writing that PST and IOS "are not interested in partnering with the Commission to offer police officer recruitment or pre-employment testing services."

The PSCSC was unable to conduct a thorough analysis and comparison of the two test exam vendors due to lack of complete information from PST. This due diligence report is based on the information PSCSC was able to obtain.

2. If PST were interested, its current exam is not likely an option for Seattle.

The likely outcome of a validation process of the PST exam would be to develop a new and different exam, not PST's current exam.

IOS President/CEO, Chad Legel, indicated that PST's standard exam works to a certain extent, but when considering use of PST's exam for large agencies like Seattle, additional investigation is required. He said that if Seattle sought to engage IOS or PST for an entry-level law enforcement officer examination, IOS would require and conduct a rigorous validation process, which could take months. Such a validation process would require significant time and participation from SPD officers and civil service staff.

Mr. Legel also said that due to its size, risk profile, and other factors, Seattle was likely to require a customized exam, and would probably not be permitted to use PST's standard law enforcement/corrections officer test. Results that would be generated from the mandatory validation process could be used to identify and develop a different composite of exam components that would be valid for the City of Seattle and less likely to result in adverse impact to protected classes. . Any new exam would have to be based on a job analysis, criterion validation study, and analysis of equally valid and less adverse exams options.

Procedures often conducted during a validation study are outlined in Appendix B.

Developing a custom PST/IOS exam would not achieve the purpose of the request.

The primary benefit of engaging PST would be to give candidates applying to other regional agencies that use the PST test the ability to also send their score to Seattle. However, that feature would not likely be available if Seattle required a new customized (different) exam.

3. Use of two different exam instruments would create practical and legal complexities.

Background

Staff investigated the feasibility of using more than one exam vendor for the police officer civil service exam. The goal of this inquiry was to identify whether there is a fair, equitable, and compliant method to accept exam scores from more than one vendor – offering candidates additional testing convenience and flexibility.

Challenge

Each exam vendor utilizes their own proprietary exam instrument(s) that differ in the competencies they assess, difficulty levels, and various other technical psychometric properties (e.g., validity coefficients, reliability coefficients, and adverse impact metrics). When candidates pass the civil service exam, their names are placed on an eligibility list (aka “register”). Candidates are ranked on these eligibility lists based on their total exam score, plus preference points, if applicable.

The challenge in accepting scores from more than one exam instrument is that candidates cannot be fairly or equitably ranked in relation to one another based on scores from tests that measure different characteristics and have varying difficulty levels. This is of particular concern considering the PST exam has a 90% pass rate and the NTN exam had a 73% pass rate for Seattle candidates in 2023.

State and municipal civil service laws and rules require that the PSCSC produce ranked registers to identify eligible candidates for consideration in the selection process:

- RCW 41.12.040(8) states, in part: “It shall be the duty of the civil service commission to ... [p]rovide for, formulate and hold *competitive* tests to determine the *relative* qualifications of persons who seek employment in any class or position and as a result thereof establish eligible lists for the various classes of positions...” (Emphasis added in italics.)
- Seattle Municipal Code 4.08.070(F) states, in part: “With the support of the Seattle Human Resources Director, prepare a register for each class of positions in this system from the returns or reports of the examiners of the persons whose standing upon examination for such class is not less than the minimum established by the Commission. *Persons, when graded, shall take rank upon the register as candidates in the order of their relative excellence as determined by competitive examination.*” (Emphasis added in italics.)
- PSCSC Rules of Practice and Procedure 9.06 states: “CHARACTER OF EXAMINATIONS: All examinations shall be *competitive*, impartial, and practical in their character. They shall be designed to qualify and *rank candidates in terms of their relative fitness to perform the duties* of the class for which the examination was ordered. An examination shall be deemed to be

competitive when applicants are tested as to their *relative qualifications and abilities* or when a single applicant is scored against a fixed standard.” (Emphasis added in italics.)

Caselaw in Washington state has held that candidates have the fundamental right to fairly compete for classified positions – emphasizing the importance that candidates be given the same examination, the same instructions for completing the examination, and approximately the same amount of time to complete the examination. See, e.g., *Green v. Cowlitz Cnty. Civil Serv. Comm'n, Cowlitz Cnty.*, 19 Wn.App. 210, 217 (1978). Similarly, extant research on procedural justice in employment exams has demonstrated the importance of consistency in the scoring and evaluation of candidates. Candidate perceptions of inconsistencies in the employment testing process can negatively impact motivation to remain in the hiring process, and can potentially result in legal challenges.

Subject matter expert guidance

The PSCSC sought consultation on this issue from industry experts who developed the National Testing Network (NTN) and Public Safety Testing (PST) exams.

We first spoke with IO Solutions (IOS) – the company that developed and owns the exam instrument used by PST. IOS advised against the practice of ranking candidates on one eligibility list based on scores from two different exam instruments. They noted potential practical and legal concerns with this practice. From a practical standpoint, candidates may become savvy about which exam is easier and choose the easier exam to boost their scores. From a legal standpoint, they noted that this practice creates risk if the City were to face litigation related to adverse/disparate impact.

IOS also explained two models in which an organization could deploy multiple exams. The first is a multiple-hurdle model, in which all candidates complete one test, and those who pass the first test are all invited to complete a second test. The second is a field-testing model, in which one exam is used for selecting candidates and the other is used for gathering data/information that is not used as a part of the selection process. Since both models would require candidates to complete two exams (rather than one), they likely would not benefit the City of Seattle in its efforts to streamline and retain candidates through the hiring process.

NTN noted similar practical and legal considerations associated with ranking candidates based on scores from two different exams. They provided the recommendation below for the City of Seattle. (Please see their full written response in Appendix D.)

The exams currently in place for SPD cover a wide range of knowledge, skills, and abilities and are valid for use with customized cut scores and ranking of candidates. These exams are balanced to ensure minimal differences between groups, while appropriately identifying the best candidates.

While we do not have direct knowledge of the alternate exam and the validation efforts, we do know the overall pass rate for this exam is much higher. Therefore, a cut score modification would need to be made. Either lower the NTN standards to pass a similar number of candidates, or increase the standards of the other exam. We encourage keeping standards high to maintain the integrity of the process and minimize moving unqualified candidates to the more costly phases of the hiring process, such as backgrounds and psychological screenings.

The alternate choice of raising cut scores on the alternate exam is potentially problematic as well. We do not know if the alternate exam's validity supports raising the cut scores or if adverse impact would be an issue. Typically, exams with high pass rates are masking adverse impact that would be present at higher cut scores or when used to rank order. This would need to be thoroughly analyzed. In addition, it must be determined that the alternate exam is valid at different cut scores and can be used to rank order candidates. Again, we encourage a thorough review of the alternate exam's validation and historical candidate data.

PST subscriber terms do not require them to defend use of multiple or blended eligibility lists for the same position.

The PSCSC also reviewed multiple PST exam subscriber agreements – a standard contract that is signed by agencies when they begin testing services with PST. The subscriber agreements we reviewed stated that PST will not be required to defend a client in court if there are legal challenges relating to “blended eligibility lists” that are based in whole or in part on other exams. Below is a direct quote from the subscriber agreements:

Provided, however, Contractor shall not be required to appear at its cost nor to defend in any administrative or court proceeding arising from or out of a claim or challenge relating to Subscriber's use of other testing process(es) or out of Subscriber's attempt to establish multiple or blended eligibility lists for the same position based in whole or in part on other testing process(es). “Other testing process(es)” means any test or testing process other than those provided by the Contractor under this Agreement.

4. Seattle's current exam effectively assesses qualities related to constitutional policing and are important to community, is validated for Seattle's use, and does not have adverse impact.

Content and criterion validity

The National Testing Network's (NTN) Law Enforcement Testing System was custom developed for Seattle to assess candidates for the role of police officer. The test components are designed to evaluate candidates' ability to interact appropriately with others, work as part of a team, exercise restraint in their use of authority, demonstrate good judgment, and collaborate effectively to achieve management objectives. The NTN exam primarily consists of video-based situational judgment scenarios, a reading test, and an incident observation and report writing test.

In 2021, the PSCSC added two exam components, the Public Safety Self-Assessment Parts 1 and 2, to ensure that the exam selects for characteristics the City of Seattle wants its police recruits to possess, such as service orientation, impulse control, social awareness, integrity, and commitment to equality.

The Seattle Police Department played a central role in the development and validation of NTN’s Law Enforcement Testing System, participating as actors and subject matter experts in the situational judgment and incident observation videos⁷. The exam also includes a multiple-choice reading and writing test. The testing system has been locally validated with the Seattle Police Department in terms of both test content and predictive performance.

It is important to note that the civil service exam is the only part of the police officer hiring process with criterion-related validity evidence. That means it is the only step of the hiring process demonstrated to statistically predict candidates’ performance of duties and responsibilities as a Seattle police officer.

NTN and PST differ in the types of clients they serve.

PST supports many police agencies in Washington state as well as a small number of agencies in Alaska, Idaho, and Oregon. By and large, the agencies using PST’s exam differ from Seattle in terms of their police staffing needs and the demographics of the communities they serve. PST also provides recruitment and application support for the City of Dallas; however, Dallas does not use PST’s exam instrument.

NTN supports many of Seattle’s peer/comparator cities, including six of the "West Coast 7" cities (San Francisco, Portland, Oakland, Long Beach, San Diego, and San Jose)⁸, and more than half of the fifty largest cities in the United States. Larger agencies tend to have more racially diverse populations and applicant pools than smaller, more rural jurisdictions like those served by other testing companies. Seattle benefits from the diversity of NTN’s other clients’ candidate pools, as those applying to large jurisdictions elsewhere can easily and often do “opt in” to have their passing test scores sent to Seattle.

Seattle collaborated with NTN to develop the current exam as the City was entering a consent decree, which the Seattle Police Department (SPD) is under, in part. SPD’s goal in partnering with NTN was to develop and validate a police officer exam that more heavily emphasized measuring candidate abilities related to constitutional policing. Several other large police agencies have switched to the NTN exam after going under a consent decree or receiving inquiries from the DOJ regarding their hiring processes. These agencies include the: Baltimore Police Department, Portland Police Bureau (Oregon), New Orleans Police Department, Los Angeles Police Department, and Minneapolis Police Department, among others. Other large urban cities that use NTN for their entry-level police officer exam are San Francisco, Washington D.C., Denver, Kansas City, Cincinnati, Orlando, Mesa, and Los Angeles.

⁷ For more information about Seattle’s role in the development of NTN’s law enforcement testing system, see Appendix A.

⁸ The West Coast 7 agencies located in CA also accept scores on a test called the Pellet B, which is a state-facilitated exam developed by California’s Commission on Police Officer Standards and Training. This exam is considered [one of the most difficult police entry exams in the U. S.](#)

On "Comparator Agencies" and Testing Standards:

When comparing the City's testing processes with other jurisdictions, we consider our "peer" jurisdictions to be those who serve large, diverse communities; who have similar departmental values; and whose department size is similar to or larger than the City of Seattle. It is a standard practice at the City of Seattle to compare ourselves with the "West Coast 7" (Portland, Oakland, San Francisco, Long Beach, San Jose, Sacramento, and San Diego).

NTN exam assesses dimensions important to community.

In a recent survey, Commissioners from the Seattle Community Police Commission (CPC) rated all dimensions measured by the NTN as *"very important for a police officer candidate,"* to *"extremely important for a police officer candidate."*

This community feedback suggests that the current exam assesses candidates on dimensions that are important to the community, and crucial for constitutional policing, such as restraint in use of force.

CPC Commissioners' top-rated dimensions are all weighted heavily in the NTN exam:

Category	Average Rating (out of 5)
De-escalation and Restraint in the Use of Force	4.88
Equity Orientation	4.70
Integrity/Ethics	4.60
Service and Teamwork	4.48
Judgment and Initiative	4.47

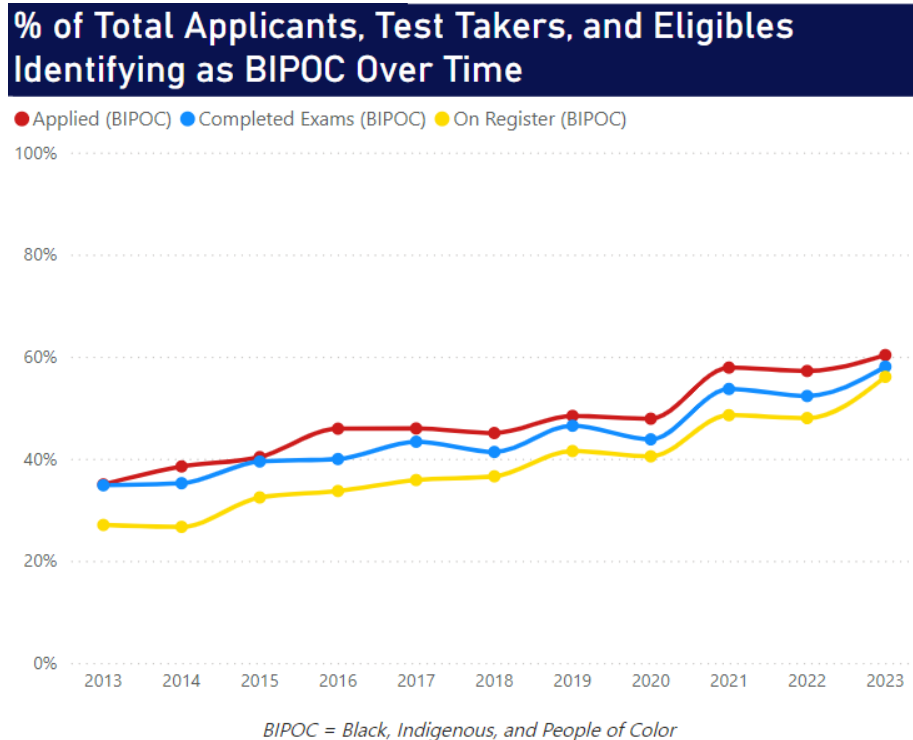
Qualitative feedback from CPC Commissioners provides additional evidence that NTN's exam assesses dimensions that are important to community members. Several Commissioners wrote directly to the PSCSC:

- *"It is important to me that officers have a "we" attitude/perspective with the community, and not an "us vs. them" attitude. The police department should be a reflection of the community and its values. Officers are there to protect and serve the community, and an adversarial view is harmful to that charge. Officers should be curious to learn, understand, and abide by the community's values and norms. They serve us."*
- *"Just to keep Seattle's standards as high as possible -- we deserve the best with the most integrity to serve us."*

The PSCSC and staff appreciate that CPC Commissioners shared their valuable time and perspectives as part of this project. More information about the PSCSC's Community Police Commission Survey is at Appendix E.

Racial equity considerations

Since 2013, Seattle’s candidate pool and SPD ranks have become more racially diverse. In 2013, only 35% of applicants identified as BIPOC. By 2023, 60% of police applicants identified as BIPOC. Having a police force that reflects the demographic composition of the community benefits SPD and residents. Diversity is a priority and source of pride for SPD.



The City of Seattle and NTN closely monitor candidate groups as they move through the application and other phases of the testing process to ensure that the exam does not disproportionately affect protected groups. This analysis helps ensure that practices are fair and compliant with anti-discrimination laws.

NTN’s national candidate pool enables the City of Seattle to access candidates from areas more diverse than Washington state. Our out-of-state applicant group is consistently more racially diverse than our in-state applicant group, and a substantial number of police officer hires who identify as BIPOC come from out of state.

Additionally, NTN’s exam was specifically designed to achieve equitable outcomes and thoroughly assess police officer candidates. By using a video format instead of a written format, the exam measures a candidate’s judgment independent of educational and experience factors. NTN’s exam assesses a candidate, not their ability to “test well.” The benefits of using a video-based exam are outlined in Appendix F.

The City of Seattle is committed to addressing any race-based disparities and centering those most impacted by racism and other forms of oppression. Some of the ways the PSCSC exams team centers anti-bias are:

- Utilizing a job-related exam instrument designed to reduce the possibility of adverse/discriminatory impact;
- Partnering with a vendor that centers equity in the exam development process;
- Continuously monitoring test performance and demographic data to ensure there is no evidence of adverse impact; and
- Promoting equity by removing barriers to taking the exam.

Without information about PST’s applicant pool, it is impossible to assess how Seattle’s potential use of the PST exam might impact Seattle’s applicant pool demographics and hires.

Seattle’s police union supports high standards for assessment of police candidates.

The Seattle Police Officers Guild (SPOG) Executive Board approved the following statement:

“SPOG supports the PSCSC’s independent authority and role in selection and development of civil service exams, including the police officer exam.

SPOG does not support lowering standards for assessment of police candidates.”

VI. Recommendations

Recommendation 1: PSCSC should continue to utilize NTN as the sole test vendor for entry level police exams for substantive and practical reasons.

Use of PST as an exam vendor is not an option; PST has told PSCSC it does not want to provide police testing services for the City of Seattle right now. Additionally, the PSCSC was not able to determine whether PST’s exam was appropriate to the task of testing Seattle police officers because PST declined to participate in the due diligence process. PST exams are not validated for use to test Seattle police officers.

In contrast, NTN’s exam content and test practices are highly appropriate for testing for the job of a Seattle police officer. NTN developed and validated its exam to test an applicant’s capacity to do the job of a Seattle police officer, including qualities that support constitutional policing. NTN specializes in administering exams for large, urban departments with similar legal risk profiles, several of which – like Seattle – are under a federal consent decree. Although NTN does not contract with or serve as a “common application” for many of Seattle’s regional peers, it does share a national candidate pool with other larger urban police departments, allowing candidates around the United States to apply to Seattle.

Several stakeholders have suggested that PST could be contracted with as a second option to NTN testing. After careful review and consideration of relevant legal authority, industry literature, and subject matter expertise on this topic, the PSCSC does not recommend use of more than one exam instrument to create ranked eligibility lists for the same classification. While certain agencies in Washington state engage in this practice, those agencies may have different legal risk profiles than the City of Seattle, operate under different statutory requirements, and/or may not rank candidates on their police officer eligibility lists. Washington state law, the Seattle Municipal Code, and the PSCSC Rules all require ranking of eligible candidates, which is not advisable with two different exams.

Recommendation 2: PSCSC should conduct a request for proposal process (RFP) for a sole police exam vendor in 2025.

The PSCSC can complete a thorough comparison and analysis of interested police exam vendors through a formal RFP process. Such an RFP process would identify interested vendors and require that they provide information critical to assessing their ability to meet the City's police hiring goals, including:

- The volume of candidates each vendor has access to and candidate demographics and other qualities;
- Exam characteristics such as dimensions (including those which support constitutional policing), cut scores, pass rates, and validation evidence;
- Exam frequency, location, and other measures of flexibility and candidate support;
- Each vendor's track record with comparable agencies and with police candidates; and
- Cost and contract terms.

PSCSC staff and public safety departments are carrying out the 2024 exam workplan and will plan to conduct an RFP process in 2025.

Recommendation 3: PSCSC should continue to engage in continuous improvement, vis-à-vis the entry/lateral police officer exam process.

As part of the PSCSC's continuous improvement efforts, it should continue to monitor and report data analytics, engage stakeholders, and solicit feedback including but not limited to regular applicant/candidate surveys, and regularly reviewing and updating policies and testing procedures, as needed. The PSCSC and its staff should remain open to innovation, new technologies, and ideas. The PSCSC may want to consider publishing reports or data that is of interest to the public on its website to maintain transparency.

VII. Conclusion

Based on our research, we found that NTN exam is highly appropriate for its current use, assessing candidates for the rank of Seattle police officer. It assesses for dimension that align with the goals of the Consent Decree and 2017 Police Accountability Ordinance, particularly: restraint in use of authority, integrity, ability to understand and help with human distress, group bias awareness, and commitment to equality. The NTN exam was custom built for SPD in partnership with SPD officers and leadership, is job related/validated for SPD, predictive of success on the job, and designed to mitigate the potential for adverse impact.

PSCSC's entry police officer exam is the only part of the police officer hiring process administered by an independent, non-police agency. The exam is highly predictive of candidates' ability to succeed in challenging police officer positions (content *and* criterion validation), and its 75% pass rate indicates that the exam is selecting candidates who are best suited for the job, not simply a performative task.

Post-contract ratification, Seattle's officers are now the best paid in Washington, and SPD's applications numbers are on the rise. In a few weeks, PSCSC will certify to SPD an eligible list that contains more candidate names than in years. SPD's staffing issues cannot be resolved by switching to an exam that has not been validated and has a higher pass rate. Rather, they must be addressed through making SPD the best police department to work for, strengthening relationships with community, and creating new pipelines for hiring.

VIII. Acknowledgments

This report reflects the invaluable contributions of multiple individuals. We would like to recognize the important and often unrecognized work of the Seattle Department of Human Resources, Fire & Police Exams Unit. The following staff served key roles in the development of the report: Adelaide Alderks, Sarah Butler, and Dave Wright. Additional thanks to PSCSC Commissioners, past and present, and the Seattle City Attorney's Office.

Appendix A: A Brief History of the Seattle Police Civil Service Exam

Competitive exams under a civil service system ensure that hiring processes are effective, fair, and insulated from the political pressures of elected officeholders. The PSCSC has overseen competitive police exams to identify qualified candidates since the creation of the civil service in 1896.

Seattle police exam processes underwent some notable changes in the 1990s. Previously, exams were developed in-house, with the PSCSC working with subject matter experts at SPD to develop test questions. Exam content was largely based on cognitive abilities and measured by written exams. To address growing concern about legal risk, the PSCSC in the mid-1990s contracted with industrial/occupational psychologists to complete job analyses and identify whether the exam adversely impacted any group of test takers (also known as the validation process). Also in the mid-1990s, Seattle began expanding its exam content to include human relations and other behavioral assessments, and employed use of videos and using scenario exercises that police officers were likely to encounter in the course of performing their duties.

The next large shift in Seattle police examinations began shortly after SPD entered into a Federal Consent Decree [settlement agreement](#) and [memorandum of understanding](#) (MOU) with the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) in 2012. In response to federal scrutiny of SPD and to calls from the community for change, the City of Seattle prioritized developing an exam to better assess the knowledge, skills, and abilities required of police officers to achieve constitutional policing.

Seattle invested heavily in the partnership with the National Testing Network, providing staff and other City resources to develop the exam Seattle currently uses. Seattle's investment likely exceeded \$1 million. The resulting exam measures candidate dimensions related to concerns outlined in the Consent Decree, including restraint in use of authority, ethical orientation, and the ability to understand and help with human distress. In 2021, The PSCSC added the PSSA component which assesses appropriate use of force and authority, and as well as group bias, integrity, and commitment to equality. The test was validated with Seattle police officers and first used by SPD in 2012. It has since been adopted by many cities that are Seattle's size and larger nationwide, Seattle police officers and staff are still featured prominently in video portions of this test today.

The landscape of police testing again changed significantly in 2020 when COVID-19 prompted stay-home orders by health officials across the country. To comply with stay-home orders and operate as an essential business, Seattle's exam vendor (along with others across the country) added remote testing and reopened testing centers as soon as permitted. Although stay-home orders ended, remote testing continues to be available and has streamlined the ability for candidates to test almost every day of the year, from any location where they have internet access. Candidates may currently apply via a "common application," along with other jurisdictions contracted by the test vendor (NTN). Seattle has seen a shift to larger proportions of historically underrepresented racial groups since video-proctored exams have gone more mainstream.

Appendix B: Exam Validation

What is exam validity and why is it important?

In employment testing settings, there is an assumption that a test taker's score on the exam instrument is indicative of their ability to perform on the job. Exam validity refers to the degree to which empirical evidence supports this assumption.

Validation is a practical, ethical, and legal requirement. Its role is to confirm that personnel assessments are job related and consistent with business necessity. The absence of such evidence could result in unfair employment practices, legal risk, and potential harm to test takers. The concept of validation is nuanced and the process for establishing validity evidence is highly technical and situationally dependent.

Validity is not a dichotomous exam characteristic. As such, an exam is not "valid" or "invalid" (Cascio & Aguinis, 2011). Exams should be validated for the specific situations in which they are used. Test development experts undergo continual investigative studies to gather *sufficient validity evidence* that supports the use of an exam in a particular setting. Validity is also not a static or permanent exam characteristic. Test developers are responsible for periodically reevaluating their exams and the job for which the exam was developed, to support the continued use of an exam over time. (Principles for the Validation and Use of Personnel Selection Procedures, 2018). *"The fact that previous research demonstrated the usefulness of a scale does not necessarily imply that it will be valid in another setting, with different respondents, or at different times."* (Crano & Brewer, 2001).

What are the forms of validity evidence?

The overall goal of an exam validation process is to ensure an exam instrument is job-related and meaningfully predicts critical work behaviors. The [Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection Procedures](#) establish three acceptable types of validation evidence: **content-related validity** (the content of the exam is job related), **criterion-related validity** (exam scores significantly predict or correlate with job performance), and **construct validity** (the exam measures the traits or constructs that it was designed to measure). More information is below:

Validity Evidence Type	Definition	Possible Sources of Evidence
Content-related	The exam's content is job-related and measures the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to perform the job.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Job analysis• Linkage analysis• Content Validity Index (CVI)• Subject matter expert review and input on the exam questions and scoring criteria
Criterion-related	Scores on the exam statistically correlate with, or predict, performance on the job.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Predictive validation studies• Concurrent validation studies
Construct-related	The test measures the traits or psychological constructs that it was designed to measure.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Internal consistency• Structural equation modeling• Convergent validation• Discriminant validation

What does the process of validating an exam entail?

Exam validation processes are highly technical, and validation strategies depend on multiple factors, including (but not limited to):

- The size of the organization
- The legal and labor environment of the organization
- The number of incumbents in the job for which the test is being developed/validated
- The availability of staff to participate in the validation process

These processes require considerable time/resources and often involve the following procedures:

Validation Step	Procedures Involved
Continual Project Planning Meetings	<p>Test developers coordinate kick off meetings and periodic project planning meetings with City staff to review procedures and establish logistics, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timelines for the job analysis, exam development, and criterion-related validity study • Scheduling ride alongs/job observations and focus groups • Recruiting and convening a diverse group of internal subject matter experts (SME) to participate in the validation procedures • Job analysis survey dissemination • Supervisor training for the criterion-related validity study • Police officer exam participation for the criterion-related validity study
Job Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Test developers identify all job tasks and the knowledge, skills, abilities, and characteristics (KSAOs) needed to perform them through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Reviews of extant research, class specifications, prior job analyses, and other resources ○ Participating in ride alongs/job observations with incumbent police officers ○ Conducting focus groups with subject matter experts/SMEs (incumbent police officers and police sergeants who directly supervise officers) • Test developers categorize individual job tasks into higher-level duty areas and individual knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics into higher-level competency areas. • A representative group of SMEs complete in-depth job analysis surveys in which they may rate: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The frequency and importance of the job tasks and/or duty areas ○ The importance/criticality of the KSAOs and/or competency areas ○ The level of proficiency needed at entry for each KSAO and/or competency area ○ The linkage between each job duty and the competency areas needed to perform them effectively • Test developers document the findings and produce a final job analysis report.

Validation Step	Procedures Involved
Exam Development <i>*This step may not apply to validating pre-developed exam products</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Test developers create an exam blueprint to ensure the competency areas are adequately measured by the exam components they intend to use. • Depending on the exam vendor and their measurement methods, SMEs may be invited to participate in the development of the test questions and scoring criteria. • SMEs review the test content and rate the degree to which each question and its scoring criteria are job-related.
Criterion-Related Validity Study (Concurrent Design)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Test developers use the information gathered in the job analysis to create a performance evaluation instrument that will be used to rate police officer job performance. • Incumbent police officers participate in the examination. • The officers' supervisors are trained in utilizing the performance evaluation instrument. • Supervisors provide objective performance ratings for each police officers who completed the exam. • Test developers conduct statistical analyses to examine the relationship between test scores and job performance ratings. This information may be used to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Establish criterion-related validity evidence. ○ It may also be used to inform decisions on the construction and scoring of the final exam instrument (e.g., exam component weightings, cut scores, and inclusion/exclusion of certain exam questions/components).

Appendix C: Exam Vendor Comparison Table

Criteria	NTN	PST	Notes
Exam Characteristics	<p>Validation Evidence</p> <p>Content-related:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All test items are linked to knowledge, skills, abilities, and characteristics identified through extensive job analysis. 300+ incumbent officers participated in the job analysis process. 40+ SMEs from Seattle PD, Bellevue PD, Aurora (CO) PD, Kennewick PD, and Utah Highway Patrol partnered with NTN to develop and review all test items and response options. <p>Criterion-related:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 300+ incumbent officers from Seattle PD, Bellevue PD, Aurora (CO) PD, and Utah Highway Patrol completed the exam. NTN obtained job performance data for all participating officers using a performance instrument specifically designed for the study. Results indicated that the exam is highly predictive of on-the-job performance for police officers. 	<p>Content-related:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The exam was developed approximately 8-10 years ago in partnership with some of PST's clients at the time. PST declined to share the names of the departments who participated in the exam development and validation efforts. Mr. Walters shared that most of PST's client agencies did not complete validation studies. <p>Criterion-related:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Study showed that PST's Law Enforcement Selection Tool scores are correlated with police academy performance. 	<p>While the PST exam was found to be predictive of academy performance, this is not the same as being predictive of on-the-job performance as a police officer.</p>
Exam Characteristics	<p>Standard Exam Measurement Methods</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Video-based questions and scenarios. Designed to be independent of educational and experience factors. Video format allows measurement of a candidates' judgment without requiring the candidate to have advanced reading ability or other academically developed skills. Language skills are separately evaluated in a job-relevant measure. Questions on all exam components are job specific. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All questions are written format, including situational judgment questions Exam is generalized to both police and corrections 	<p>See Appendix F regarding the benefits of video-based testing</p>

	Criteria	NTN	PST	Notes
Exam Characteristics	Standard Exam Dimensions	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Frontline National</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human Relations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Observation, Assessment, Critical Thinking ○ Interrogation/Investigative Communication ○ Team Orientation ○ Initiative in Confrontation/Enforcement ○ Restraint In Use of Authority ○ Ethics/Integrity ○ Ability to Understand and Help with Human Distress ○ Organizational Support ○ Customer/Community Relations • Written Language Ability <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Factually and logically report situational events. <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Public Safety Self-Assessment (PSSA):</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrity – “ethical conduct and work values” (appropriate use of power, honesty and rule abidance, work ethic and values) • Group Bias Awareness – “disfavoring use of demographic groups and stereotypes when making decisions” (implicit bias, stereotyping, prosocial interpersonal approach) • Appropriate Use of Force/Authority – “exercising the lowest level of intervention required” (calm approach, ethical approach, impulse control) • Commitment to Equality – “preference for a community and people oriented public service approach” (social awareness, advocating for others, bias training readiness) 	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>LST & SBSA⁸</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cognitive Ability • Work Styles/Personality • Bio-Data • Integrity/Ethics*Weighted at 0% on LST, 20% in SBSA (according to user manual) • Situation-Based Judgment • Intercultural sensitivity⁹ 	<p>Some subdimensions measured in the LST present potential equity concerns, and analysis would be needed to ensure that outcomes do not result in adverse impact at various cut scores.</p> <p>In evaluating any policy, initiative, program, or employment selection tool, we must center those most impacted by structural racism.</p> <p>RSJI Truths 10.13.20.pdf (seattle.gov)</p> <p>why-lead-with-race.pdf (seattle.gov)</p> <p>More information about the Intercultural Sensitivity Measure may be needed to evaluate potential impacts.</p>

⁸ PST shared more detailed information about exam component dimension subcategories, but is not reported here, to avoid potential disclosure of proprietary information.

⁹ PST shared information about the Intercultural Sensitivity Measure (ICSM) with PSCSC, marked as “confidential”. Therefore, details on this measure are not shared in this report. PST also declined to share how this component is weighted in candidates’ total exam scores.

	Criteria	NTN	PST	Notes
Exam Characteristics	Component Weights and Cut Scores	<p>Candidates' total exam score is calculated using the following weights:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 50% Human Relations • 50% Public Safety Self Assessment <p>Currently, candidates must earn the following minimum scores to pass:</p> <p>Human Relations: 65% Reading: 70% Report Writing: 70% Public Safety Self Assessment: 52%</p> <p>Local and national data are used to recommend cut scores and weighting strategies. Consultation is available to determine the methods that best suit a department's hiring needs and practices.</p>	<p>PST declined to share how the exam components are weighted in a candidate's total exam score.</p> <p>PST declined to answer whether the integrity measure is still weighted at 0% for the LST exam component.</p> <p>Candidates must earn the following minimum scores to pass:</p> <p>Cognitive Ability: 60% Composite (Overall) Score: 70%</p> <p>PST does not support and will not defend the use of any other cut scores without explicit local research.</p>	
	Pass Rates	73% in 2023 (for Seattle candidates)	90% in 2023 <i>("As Seattle police applicants lag, City Hall looks to bureaucracy," Seattle Times, citing Jon Walters, March 13, 2024)</i>	
	Integrity Measurement	Measured in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frontline National through video-based situational judgment questions • PSSA 1 through personality, attitude, and behavior scales 	Measured in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SBSA through written situational judgment questions • LST with personality, attitude, and behavior scales *Weighted at 0% on LST 	
	Evaluations Of Test Performance & Adverse Impact	<p>Department-specific adverse impact data is available at any time. In-house staff with advanced degrees in I-O psychology are available to consult on any potential adverse impact concerns.</p> <p>National data on test performance and adverse impact data is evaluated yearly.</p> <p>Continuous validation studies are performed on the exam.</p>	<p>Department-specific adverse impact data is made available via client account.</p> <p>PST declined to share how often their exam instruments are evaluated to see if there are changes in 1) test performance, 2) adverse impact, and 3) relevance of exam content.</p>	

	Criteria	NTN	PST	Notes
Administration	Testing Slots Per Month	<p>~ 17,000 total per month</p> <p><u>Virtual Testing</u> 3,000+ slots per month</p> <p><u>In Person Testing</u> 500+ slots in Washington State 13,500+ slots out of state</p> <p>“Significant scalability to increase in-person testing as needed to meet any fluctuating needs of our client agencies”</p>	PST declined to share this information.	
	Testing Centers Across the US	<p>128 across the US and Canada</p> <p>6 locations in WA, including: Seattle, Renton, Federal Way, Everett, Olympia, and Pasco</p>	PST declined to share this information.	
	Virtual Testing Compatibility	<p>Candidates need one device:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Laptop, Chromebook, or desktop using Windows, Mac/Apple, or Chrome OS <p>No smart phone needed</p>	<p>Candidates must have 2 devices:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Windows PC (not compatible with Mac or Chromebook) Smart phone with virtual meeting program installed 	
	Candidate Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Phone – 7 days a week (6am – 5pm PST Monday – Friday, 7am – 3pm PST Saturday – Sunday) Chat/IM – 8am – 4pm Monday -Friday Email – Anytime <p>Tier 1, Tier 2, and supervisory level support</p> <p>Less than 60-second wait time average for phone inquiries</p>	PST declined to share this information.	
	Score Transfers	<p>Candidates can transfer existing “valid” test scores to the Seattle Police department at any time.</p>	<p>Candidates who tested in the last 6 months can transfer scores to SPD when SPD first subscribes.</p> <p>PST declined to share whether this option would be continually available, or a one-time offer upon subscribing.</p>	

	Criteria	NTN	PST	Notes
Candidate Pool	Candidate Demographics (% BIPOC and Women)	53.8% of candidates with active test scores identify as BIPOC 17.3% of candidates with active test scores identify as women	PST declined to share this information.	
	# of Candidates in WA State	23,717 candidates scheduled an exam in 2023 (nationally) There are 667 candidates with active test scores in WA state as of 3/27/2024. This number fluctuates daily and has likely increased between the date the data was shared and the date this report was published.	PST declined to share this information.	
Clients	Experience with Comparable Agencies	<p>NTN provides police officer exams to 6 of the 7 “West Coast 7” agencies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Portland, OR Police Bureau San Jose, CA Police Department Oakland, CA Police Department Long Beach, CA Police Department San Diego, CA Police Department San Francisco City and County Police Department <p>West Coast 7 agencies are considered standard comparators by the City of Seattle when benchmarking policies, practices, and procedures.</p> <p>Additionally, NTN provides police officer exams to the following Departments with >800 officers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Los Angeles, CA Police Department Washington DC Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) Minneapolis, MN Police Department New Orleans, LA Police Department Baltimore, MD Police Department Denver, CO Police Department Santa Clara, CA Police Department Mesa, AZ Police Department Orlando, FL Police Department Kansas City, MO Police Department Cincinnati, OH Police Department Cleveland, OH Police Department <p>*Note: this list does not include the several county sheriff’s offices or state police departments working with NTN</p>	PST declined to share this information.	PST works with 100+ smaller law enforcement agencies in Washington, at local, state, and county levels. It is not known whether those agencies participated in local validity studies prior to use of the exam. However, Mr. Walters shared that most PST clients did not complete local validation studies.

	Criteria	NTN	PST	Notes
Clients	Experience with Agencies Under Consent Decree	<p>NTN has experience working with several police departments under consent decrees. The following departments switched to NTN’s police officer exam after going under a consent decree or receiving DOJ inquiries:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baltimore, MD Police Department • Portland, OR Police Bureau • Minneapolis, MN Police Department • New Orleans, LA Police Department • Aurora, CO Police Department • Cleveland, OH Police Department 	PST declined to share this information.	NTN’s assessment tools have has been approved by DOJ for use by other cities.

Appendix D: NTN Recommendations Regarding the Use of Two Exams

The following provides a basic overview of the process and challenges of using two different exams, or entry points, within one selection process. A “dual process,” as we refer to it, occurs when agencies opt to use two or more examining systems to select candidates. While we have the expertise to support a dual process, several critical factors must be evaluated before proceeding.

1. **Exams must measure the same Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities.** A thorough review should be completed to ensure both exams cover the same content domains and have the same overall coverage.
2. **Exam scores need to be standardized to equate cut scores and ranking of candidates.** Most exams have different means, standard deviations, and cut scores. These variables must be placed on the same scale to compare the exams. Historical data is required to complete this analysis.
3. **Validation must ensure both exams can be used appropriately.** While all exams can be standardized, comparing the results is often not recommended. For example, one exam may be valid for rank-ordering candidates, while another is not. Some exams have validation that supports customized cut scores while changing cut scores on another exam may invalidate its use.
4. **Adverse impact must be comparable across the exams.** Differences in adverse impact across exams must be evaluated at the equated cut score for each exam. If candidates are ranked based on their score, adverse impact must also be evaluated at each ranking level. Some exams have very low cut scores, passing most candidates. Adverse impact may not be present at low cut scores but can be very problematic at higher cut scores or when ranking candidates.

Does NTN have any recommendations regarding the practice of ranking candidates on a single eligibility list based on scores from different exam instruments?

Ranking candidates using two different exams requires a thorough understanding of both exams. The first step requires an evaluation of the validation and job analysis to ensure the content of the exams cover the same elements of the job. Second, using historical data, the exam scores must be converted to the same scale using standardization. Third, an adverse impact analysis must be completed at both the equated cut scores and at each level of ranking. Any changes to cut scores or application of rank ordering based on these steps would require support from the validation of the exam.

Are there any risks or considerations associated with this practice?

There are many risks to using a dual process. Some risks are associated with proper execution and others are inherent in having two or more channels for candidates to enter the process. While there will always be risks associated with a dual process, some have the potential for serious negative consequences:

1. **Invalid exam use.** If a dual process results in modifications to cut scores or use in rank ordering of candidates that are not valid, the exam and process become vulnerable to legal challenges.
2. **Adverse Impact.** If there is greater adverse impact from one exam, the process is open to legal challenge. In this scenario, the examining process would be in direct violation of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's (EEOC) Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection Procedures (Guidelines).

In addition to the technical risks mentioned above, having multiple entry points through a hiring process can lead to greater candidate confusion when navigating the hiring process. We have provided additional risks and considerations below:

- 1) **Greater candidate confusion.** While the intention is to increase the entry points for candidates, the presence of multiple examining options often results in confusion among those navigating the hiring process.
- 2) **Candidates taking two or more exams.** With two vendors working independently, a candidate can test and sign up for the City's job twice in one hiring cycle. The result is candidates trying to earn the highest score to better their chances for hire. Additionally, if exam takers fail one of the exams but pass the other, agencies have to be able to defend their choice of whether they move the candidate forward in the hiring process.

Are there legally defensible ways to standardize scores from two different exams such that candidates can be ranked on one list?

From a statistical perspective, standardizing scores can make exam performance comparable. As mentioned above, the more critical evaluation relies on the validation, the content domains covered, and adverse impact. We do not recommend ranking candidates using scores from different exams on a single list unless it can be established that the exams measure the same knowledge, skills, and abilities, are valid for use with customized cut scores and ranking, and have equal adverse impact.

Recommendations for the City of Seattle and the Seattle Police Department

The exams currently in place for SPD cover a wide range of knowledge, skills, and abilities and are valid for use with customized cut scores and ranking of candidates. These exams are balanced to ensure minimal differences between groups, while appropriately identifying the best candidates.

While we do not have direct knowledge of the alternate exam and the validation efforts, we do know the overall pass rate for this exam is much higher. Therefore, a cut score modification would need to be made. Either lower the NTN standards to pass a similar number of candidates, or increase the standards of the other exam. We encourage keeping standards high to maintain the integrity of the process and minimize moving unqualified candidates to the more costly phases of the hiring process, such as backgrounds and psychological screenings.

The alternate choice of raising cut scores on the alternate exam is potentially problematic as well. We do not know if the alternate exam's validity supports raising the cut scores or if adverse impact would be an issue. Typically, exams with high pass rates are masking adverse impact that would be present at higher cut scores or when used to rank order. This would need to be thoroughly analyzed. In addition, it must be determined that the alternate exam is valid at different cut scores and can be used to rank order candidates. Again, we encourage a thorough review of the alternate exam's validation and historical candidate data.

Appendix E: Community Police Commission Survey Report

City of Seattle

Public Safety Civil Service Commission

Community Policing Commission Survey

May 2024

Introduction

The City of Seattle Public Safety Civil Service Commission (PSCSC) sought out perspectives and input from the Community Police Commission (CPC) as a part of its investigation into the police officer civil service exam process. While considering any changes to the Seattle police officer selection process and/or standards, we believe it is crucial to include community stakeholders so that we may consider the voices of those who are most impacted by policing in Seattle.

The PSCSC met with the CPC on February 7th and April 17th, 2024, to discuss the police officer civil service exam and the PSCSC's role in the police officer hiring process. After the April 17th meeting, the PSCSC invited CPC Commissioners and staff to participate in a survey. The goal of the survey was to better understand the CPC's perspectives on what is important to assess in candidates who want to become Seattle police officers. This feedback will be used to inform the PSCSC's analysis of the police officer exam and will also be considered when there are changes or updates to future exams.

The PSCSC would like to thank the CPC for making time to speak with us and participate in this survey. We welcome continued partnership and collaboration between our groups.

Response Rate

The survey was shared with all CPC Commissioners and staff on April 19th, 2024, and responses were requested by May 1, 2024. All 23 CPC Commissioners and staff were invited to participate in the survey. 5 commissioners responded, with a response rate of 22%.

Measurement Methods

CPC Commissioners were tasked with evaluating 48 sample characteristics that a police officer entrance exam may assess. They rated each characteristic using the 5-point rating scale below:

Rating	Description
1	Not important for a police officer candidate
2	Somewhat important for a police officer candidate
3	Important for a police officer candidate
4	Very important for a police officer candidate
5	Extremely important for a police officer candidate

The 48 sample characteristics were grouped into 8 high-level assessment categories:

- De-Escalation and Restraint in the Use of Force
- Equity Orientation
- Integrity/Ethics
- Service and Teamwork
- Judgement and Initiative
- Work Ethic
- Cognitive Ability
- Other Characteristics/Preferences

After rating the characteristics, participants were asked to respond to two open-ended questions. The first question asked if there were any other potential areas of assessment that should be considered for the Police Officer exam. The second question asked if there were any other thoughts the respondent would like to share with the PSCSC as we conduct our research into the police officer exam.

Survey Results

Summary

Overall, the commissioners rated the majority of the characteristics as being important for a police officer candidate. 96% of the characteristics received an average rating of 3 (*“important for a police officer candidate”*) or higher. Only 2 characteristics received an average rating that was lower than 3 (*“important for a police officer candidate”*).

Of the 48 sample characteristics rated by the commissioners, 15 are measured in the current police officer exam. The characteristics that are measured in the current police officer civil service exam received an average rating of 4.5 (*“very important for a police officer candidate”* to *“extremely important for a police officer candidate”*). Additionally, each characteristic measured in the current exam individually received an average rating of *“very important for a police officer candidate”* or *“extremely important for a police officer candidate”*.

The table below summarizes the participants’ average importance ratings by category:

Category	Average Rating
De-Escalation and Restraint in the Use of Force	4.88
Equity Orientation	4.7
Integrity/Ethics	4.6
Service and Teamwork	4.48
Judgment and Initiative	4.47
Work Ethic	4.17
Cognitive Ability	3.44
Other Characteristics/Preferences	3.40

CPC Commissioners’ responses to the open-ended questions are located on the following page.

Open-Ended Feedback

From your perspective as a Community Policing Commissioner, are there other areas of assessment that should be considered for the Police Officer exam?

- I cannot think of any other areas.
- It is important to me that officers have a "we" attitude/perspective with the community, and not an "us vs. them" attitude. The police department should be a reflection of the community and its values. Officers are there to protect and serve the community, and an adversarial view is harmful to that charge. Officers should be curious to learn, understand, and abide by the community's values and norms. They serve us.
- NO; it looks pretty comprehensive
- How about more street experience questions. Street experience even of you never been a police officer. Street awareness.
- I want officers to take responsibility for their actions and be willing to be held accountable when they harm members of the Seattle community.

Are there any other thoughts you would like to share with the Public Safety Civil Service Commission as we conduct our research into the police officer exam?

- I do wonder how all of these qualities (the last several pages) are measured? Is this through an interview (verbal/physical) process or exam (multiple choice/written)? Police officers should be held to the highest standards possible because of the powerful discretion they're given in exercising their authority as an officer. Many of the qualities analyzed could be tested through an FTO process (more where they assess the candidates decision making, reaction, and professional practice or a written exam where they're asked to assess a set of facts. Happy to discuss and brainstorm additional possibilities.
- Thank you for your service.
- Just to keep Seattle's standards as high as possible -- we deserve the best with the most integrity to serve us.
- This survey felt like I was taking a test. Most of the questions felt like I had to give a 5 too. Most of The questions you had to pick 5 on you had no choice. Some of the questions were confusing. As if I was taking a test, and that I was trying to be tricked.
- On question #8, what is an appropriate attitude toward drugs? Appropriate to whom? Who gets to determine what is appropriate? I also felt question 14 inferred judgement and bias.

Appendix F: Benefits of Video-Based Situational Judgment Tests

It is important to note that the majority of the current police officer civil service exam utilizes a video-based situational judgment test (SJT) format, in which candidates are presented with job-related video simulations and asked how they might respond to each situation. The standard PST test, and any custom test developed by PST/IOS for the City of Seattle, would likely use a written format, rather than a video format, for any SJT questions.

Why does this matter?

There are several documented benefits of using video-based SJTs compared to written SJTs. Video-based SJTs:

1. Are less likely to produce adverse/discriminatory impact ^{1,2,4}
2. Have higher predictive validity, particularly for interpersonal and communication skills ^{1,4}
3. Increase the quantity and quality of information test-takers are presented with ⁴
4. Are received more positively and considered more job relevant by test takers ^{2,3,4,5}
5. Provide candidates with realistic job previews, which are recognized as one of the most efficient tools an organization can use in recruitment processes ^{6,7,8}

Please note that statements 1-2 are supported by academic research as well as a case study of a real testing context in the early 2000s. **In this case study, a governmental body mandated a switch from video based SJTs to written SJTs for admission exams. Researchers found that this change significantly reduced the test's ability to predict candidates' interpersonal and communication skills.** They also found that performance on the written SJT was more strongly tied to cognitive ability compared to the video-based SJT.¹ Studies have shown that unnecessary cognitive load and linguistic complexity in assessments disadvantages certain groups of test takers.^{2,4} Further, this practice can introduce "construct irrelevance," in which the test is measuring candidates' language proficiency and reading comprehension rather than the competencies/characteristics it was designed to measure.⁴

Sources:

1. [\(PDF\) Video-based versus written situational judgment tests: A comparison in terms of predictive validity \(researchgate.net\)](#)
2. [Video-based versus paper-and-pencil method of assessment in situational judgment tests: Subgroup differences in test performance and face validity perceptions. \(apa.org\)](#)
3. [Examining the impact of administration medium on examinee perceptions and attitudes. \(apa.org\)](#)
4. [Full article: Animated videos in assessment: comparing validity evidence from and test-takers' reactions to an animated and a text-based situational judgment test \(tandfonline.com\)](#)
5. [Examining Applicant Reactions to Different Media Types in Character-based Simulations for Employee Selection - Bruk-Lee - 2016 - International Journal of Selection and Assessment - Wiley Online Library <https://concept.journals.villanova.edu/index.php/concept/article/download/2772/2707/10433>](#)
6. [Realistic Job Previews \(opm.gov\)](#)
7. [Transparency in Hiring: The Benefits of Realistic Job Previews - BarRaiser](#)