

**The Bill Blackwood  
Law Enforcement Management Institute of Texas**

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**The Selection, Training, and Management of Field Training Officers in  
Law Enforcement Agencies**

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**An Administrative Research Paper  
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
Required for Graduation from the  
Leadership Command College**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The selection, training, and management of field training officers in law enforcement agencies is relevant to contemporary law enforcement due to the ever increasing demands for qualified law enforcement officers to serve the public. In order to succeed in this challenging goal, the officers selected for employment should receive the most up-to-date training to build on their foundation of skills attained through the licensing academy to enhance those skills for future proficiency in the law enforcement career field.

The purpose of this research is to determine which aspects of a field training officer program have the most significant impact to its overall success. An objective to the program is to produce highly trained officers capable of functioning independently while meeting or exceeding the expectations for agency standards of performance. This research intends to discover which elements of the training program facilitate the programs' overall success, while accessing how selecting, training, and managing such programs impacts the outcome.

The method of inquiry used by the researcher included a review of published literature pertaining to training programs. The Internet was utilized to obtain a broader search of items not readily available through local resources. A voluntary survey consisting of 14 questions was distributed to 17 law enforcement officials to assist with an objective evaluation of this topic.

The researcher discovered that the selection, training, and management of the field training officers and the training program were considered the most vital elements relating to the success of the training program. The researcher was able to determine

that each of these elements is each important and seemingly necessary. Overall, the most important aspect of a successful program stemmed from the original selection of a training officer. The program is further enhanced through the subsequent training and proper management of the program once an ideal training officer is selected.

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## INTRODUCTION

When someone enters the law enforcement career field, the individual will have to endure a lengthy induction into the technical and academic aspects of law enforcement. In 1969, the 61<sup>st</sup> Legislature made it a requirement that all peace officers be certified by the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement Officer Standards and Education (TCLEOSE) prior to appointment. The state of Texas currently requires 618 hours of formal academic instruction and successful passing of the state licensing exam to obtain a peace officers license. During this course of instruction, the individual will be provided with sufficient instruction to obtain the appropriate academic knowledge needed to graduate the peace officer academy (TCLEOSE, 2008). Upon completion of academic instruction, an individual will logically seek employment with a law enforcement agency to pursue a career. A majority of agencies in Texas currently provide a formalized and structured field training program, which utilizes hands-on training to build on the academic knowledge recruits have attained. Significant research (Cronin, Lusser, & Unsinger, 1990) has been conducted into the development of field training programs without identifying which aspect of the training program is of greatest significance. This research will examine field-training programs to determine what aspects of these programs are more important for its success.

This topic is relevant to all law enforcement agencies from the agency administrators down to the newly hired recruit with respect to the need and desire for the best officers possible. Ultimately, recruits are a reflection of the agency they work for which will impact community relations. Ideally, every agency wants to be regarded as a highly professional organization with competent employees; therefore, each agency

needs to ensure its employees are receiving the best training possible to reflect that professional image. Additionally, once a recruit has completed the training program, the recruit will be working daily with minimal supervision and will be entrusted to make decisions that could negatively impact the agency.

The purpose of this research is not to develop a field-training program, but to examine how a field-training program should be structured in order to produce the most effective results. It is intended to evaluate how an existing program is effectively structured, how field training officers (FTO) are selected, and how a field training coordinator/manager should manage the program as a whole.

The research question to be examined focuses on what makes a program effective. It will further examine whether or not there are advantages to how a field-training program is managed and structured. Additional research will be conducted on legal liabilities that could be incurred with an agency that fails to dedicate sufficient time and resources towards the structuring and management of a field-training program. Finally, research will examine the overall benefits a well-structured program has and how it can benefit the agency, the trainers, and the recruit.

The intended method of inquiry will include a review of articles, Internet sites, and relevant publications related to this topic. A survey will be distributed to at least ten law enforcement officials who are intricately involved with their respective field training programs. Additional materials, to include training outlines and policies that govern training programs, will be requested and utilized to thoroughly examine this topic.

The intended outcome or anticipated findings of the research is that there is a significant impact when field training programs are given as much time and effort as

other aspects within a law enforcement agency. It is anticipated that when agencies fail to effectively manage these programs, there is a negative impact on the quality of FTO's as well as the recruits trained by them. Ultimately, this will impact the quality of service rendered to the community.

The field of law enforcement will benefit from the research or be influenced by the conclusions because law enforcement professionals are involved in a society with growing expectations for the public officials within communities. Any and all efforts to emphasize the overall quality of the law enforcement community can surely be beneficial in reducing legitimate legal liability. Over the years, the law enforcement career field has become increasingly more complex, requiring a multitude of skills be learned and applied during the course of duties. In order for these skills to be obtained, an adequate field training program needs to be in place to ensure these skills are properly instructed and disseminated to new law enforcement officers.

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

The researcher investigated law enforcement field training programs to determine program effectiveness and the management needed for programs to be successful. A review of multiple literature resources indicated several elements were necessary for a program to be effective in training new recruits.

Law enforcement training has significantly evolved since the 1950s when there was virtually no formal training for law enforcement officials. In the 1950s, a new officer was lucky to receive a few days with a senior officer in an effort to acclimate them to their responsibilities (Moore & Womack, 1975). During this era, law enforcement officers were individually tasked with learning the necessary knowledge of the law as well as

incident report writing, evidence collection, and court testimony by trial and error. Officers eventually succeeded in gaining the knowledge necessary to complete their daily assignments, even if they were not capable of fulfilling the position's demanding requirements. With the lack of standardized evaluations, issues such as this were overlooked and unqualified officers were often retained.

In the early 1960s, law enforcement began to evolve, specifically in California. Academic instruction was introduced in an effort to provide officers with the basic knowledge necessary to function in the field (Kaminsky, 2002). In an effort to provide officers with training, a recruit training checklist was developed to cover important areas relating to their assigned duties. Officers training the new officers were tasked with covering these topics. Standardized evaluations were still not part of the training regimen at this time. Despite these efforts to advance the training process, the law enforcement field encountered an unfortunate but vital event that resulted in the development of a formalized field training program. An officer functioning in the San Jose Police Department was involved in a vehicle accident resulting in his own serious injury as well as the death of a passenger involved in the collision (Hurley, 1990). Review of the incident uncovered flaws in the training provided to officers. The evaluation process was scrutinized, and it was discovered that despite the officer's failure to conform to expected standards of conduct, there was still insufficient documentation to support it.

Field Training Programs were developed to ease a new officer's transition from an academic setting to the performance of law enforcement duties within their community. Agencies considered its management responsibilities while weighing legal

issues raised by the courts. The programs would further serve to hire and retain only qualified employees. Since the inception of the San Jose model for developing field training programs in the early 1970s, the law enforcement community has been subjected to ever-increasing scrutiny and expectations from the citizenry it serves. Since these times, law enforcement administrators are being tasked with recruiting and developing effective and efficient officers to serve the community needs. It was determined that there was a legal and practical basis for law enforcement agencies to develop and manage field-training programs. This basis rationalized that a training program would improve officer morale, provide a more solid foundation for personnel selection, and improve officer work quality while providing more effective training resulting in reduced agency liability (Hurley, 1990). Ultimately, both the agency and general public will benefit from the improved training program. It was further discovered that certain elements needed to be present to have program success.

Of the three important components of the program (selecting, training, and supervising the FTO), selection is the most important (Kaminsky, 2002). A review of all the literature used to conduct this research indicated the selection, training, and supervision/management of the field training program were the most essential aspects of a successful and productive program. Since the initial inception of the first field training program, agencies have standardized their training materials and often seek accreditation to validate the content of their material. The materials generally include a program overview, an evaluation process requiring daily behavioral observations, a standardized training guide based upon a job task analysis, and any additional agency specific items. Without a training officer capable of disseminating the curriculum, the

program would serve no purpose. Further, a program manager who is equally knowledgeable of the program and capable of supervising all aspects of the training program is vitally important.

Historically, field training officers were often selected based upon seniority within the agency. Oftentimes, agencies have selected training officers from a pool of volunteers without having a formalized selection process. If an officer was willing to take on this vital responsibility of training new officers, it was determined they were a viable candidate and selected. Since most law enforcement agencies offer minimal or no compensation to the training officers, it is often difficult to recruit officers to take on this necessary responsibility. FTO's serve a vital role within an agency as they will be the role models for the new officers they are training. Further, the training officers are expected to disseminate sufficient knowledge as well as represent the expected behavioral approach to their duties. Ultimately, the training officer assumes the role of being an instructor who will need to demonstrate every facet of the job to the recruit. Since this role is so essential to an agencies success, much emphasis must be placed on selecting adequate training officers. Recent research has indicated an agency will benefit from developing a selection process for FTO's. Having a systematic approach of selecting training officers will improve the effectiveness of recruit training as well as the quality of service the community receives from the law enforcement agency (Hurley, 1990).

According to Hermes (2007), an officer interested in being selected for a training officer's position should undergo a selection process to include the submission of a resume, a formal review of the officer's work performance by a selected committee,

and, finally, an oral interview board to determine if the applying officer is capable of fulfilling these duties. The committee will review the officer's performance, judgment abilities, and attitude towards the job as well as his ability to function independently. Since so much emphasis is placed on selecting new officers to be hired by an agency, equal emphasis needs to be placed on the selection of officers tasked with training them (Hermes 2007). The ultimate goal is to select officers who are vested in the agency, who desire to perform the function of training new officers, and who possess a thorough working knowledge of the job to be performed.

Once a FTO has been selected, it is extremely important they receive training before assuming their new role of evaluating and documenting a new officer's progress. The duration and type of training received will be dependant upon the agency's capabilities and should consider utilizing outside agencies and resources if needed. The training should cover a multitude of areas to include trainer-teacher methods, documentation of the recruit's performance as well as formal coverage of the program they will be instructing from. Significant emphasis should be placed on the evaluation process, so they can learn to properly document behavioral issues and recruit activity. Ideally, training should include scenario-based exercises to practice the skills they are learning before working with recruits. Before any officer begins to train and evaluate recruits, the agency should provide formal training to the selected trainer (Cronin et al., 1990).

Selecting the best-qualified trainers has become more important in a society where litigation is commonplace. Liability can be assigned to an employee, line supervisor, or the governmental employee in charge. Indirect liability can be imposed for

negligence in the performance of administrative responsibilities, which can include training, supervision, and guidance (Hurley 1990). In *Hirst v. Gertzen* (9<sup>th</sup> Cir. 1982), a jail prisoner's family sued after the inmate committed suicide. The judges cited systematic failure in the hiring and supervision of the officer involved and further stated that a comprehensive field-training program would be a feasible way to address the problem. While individual officers can be held personally liable, a person seeking legal remedy will often go for the deeper pockets of the governmental agency the officer is employed by. By investing efforts into the selection and training of the training officers who train recruits, an agency will significantly reduce its liability. Without officers who are dedicated to their positions, the training program materials will never be adequately disseminated.

A program that is implemented and then neglected will not serve the needs of the agency in the dynamic and changing field of law enforcement (Cronin et al, 1990). The field training program supervisor assumes much of the responsibilities for the day-to-day management of the field-training program, supervision of the FTO's, and the recruits in training while ensuring program expectations are met (Bennett, 1992). An additional and equal responsibility is added in the maintenance and review of the agencies training programs. Law enforcement agencies are constantly tasked with updating agency operating policies as legal concepts and expectations evolve. It is equally important to apply these changes to the agencies training programs to ensure new employees are operating within the guidelines of the agency and law. An agency wishing to exceed the public's expectations while limiting liability will benefit from an

effectively structured training program instructed by motivated FTO's and supported by every level of command staff ensuring the program is valid (Beaver, 2006).

For a program manager to be effective, they should have an interest in the training function and be aware of how the training function impacts the agencies responsibilities to both the general public and the agency. Active involvement in the program will ensure both the program and those facilitating its instruction are in compliance with agency policy and expectations. The same emphasis placed on the training of FTO's needs to be placed on the field training program manager receiving appropriate training related to the position. Glenn Kaminsky (2002) said, "No private or public enterprise will succeed without the involvement and training of those responsible for its operation" (p. 148-149).

The program manager needs to ensure those training other officers are provided with adequate training. This can be accomplished through regular training sessions. As the training program evolves, the program manager should meet regularly with the training officers to review the program's progress so that the effectiveness of the program can be effectively evaluated (Auten, 1973). Informal meetings can further a program by soliciting FTO involvement. Since the FTO's are active in the field, they will have firsthand knowledge of the issues and circumstances that arise in the field. Informal meetings serve the dual purpose of enhancing morale by giving the FTO's a sense of involvement and accomplishment while making a difference in the program (Beaver, 2006). Meetings that solicit involvement and change can promote the leadership role trainers are active with. Upon completion of the training, modifications in

the training program can be made to ensure the agency and training program is operating efficiently.

It has been determined that a program's success is significantly impacted by those selected to do the training as well as those managing it. To maintain objectivity and effectiveness, a program manager needs to conduct periodic evaluations of the FTO's. This can be accomplished informally by developing an evaluation instrument to be completed by the officer in training. Additional review methods include a review of the observation reports submitted by the training officer, a review of the reports generated by the trainee, and the FTO's behavior towards the trainee during weekly program evaluations (Kaminsky, 2002).

## **METHODOLOGY**

The research question to be examined considers whether or not any particular facet of a field training officer program significantly impacts the success of the program as a whole. A significant amount of research has been conducted into the development and implementation of a field training officer program. Those areas of research will be used to illustrate the importance of particular aspects.

The researcher hypothesizes that certain processes in a field-training program are more significant than others to the overall success of the program. It is believed that for a training program to succeed, its success will lie with the officials having the duties to train newly hired officers. It is further believed that training programs require a significant amount of attention and revision to ensure programs being instructed are up-to-date and current with the agency and public expectations. This duty will inevitably lie

with the manager of the training program but will require support from all involved with the training process.

The method of inquiry will include a review of published literature pertaining to field training programs. A broader search of the Internet will be utilized to attain additional resources possibly not available through local resources. It is the researcher's intention to develop and request law enforcement agency officials' cooperation in the completion of surveys to assist in the research of this topic. The instrument that will be used to measure the researcher's findings regarding the subject of selecting, training, and management of FTO's in law enforcement agencies will include a survey, and if needed, further follow-up questions to elaborate or clarify initial responses to the survey provided. A survey will be submitted to 17 participants of the 75<sup>th</sup> session of the Law Enforcement Management Institute of Texas (LEMIT) Module II. All 17 surveys distributed were responded to. The respondents comprised of various law enforcement entities, including 14 participants from police departments, two participants from sheriff's offices, and one participant from an unknown agency.

The size of the survey will consist of a minimum of 14 questions distributed to various participants of the 75<sup>th</sup> session of Module II of Law Enforcement Management Institute of Texas conducted at the Texas Woman's University located in Denton, Texas. It is the researcher's intent to obtain at least ten completed surveys from various representatives of their law enforcement agencies in attendance at the 75<sup>th</sup> session of Module II. The researcher will include a question requesting an additional contact from the respondent's agency that would be involved with the field training officers program.

If deemed necessary, an additional survey will be conducted in an attempt to obtain more detailed responses and clarification.

The response rate to the survey instrument resulted in a variety of approaches to the overall operations of respective FTO programs. The survey instrument enabled the researcher to validate methods for selecting FTO's as well as evaluate how agencies throughout the state manage their field training programs. This information assisted the researcher in determining what methods proved to be the more productive and successful methods.

The information obtained from the survey will be analyzed by comparing survey responses to the literature researched. The responses will provide the researcher with current field training practices implemented by various agencies within the state of Texas. The information obtained through the surveys will serve by providing the researcher with current practices used by law enforcement agencies to provide their officers with adequate field training officers while comparing current practices to published views on this research topic.

## **FINDINGS**

The basis of the surveys distributed was to determine several factors concerning the respondents' field training programs within their respective agencies. The survey results indicated that all the respondents currently have a field training program in their respective agency. Once it was determined a program was in place, the survey was formatted to determine if there was a selection process for the FTO's, if the FTO's were provided formalized training specific to their positions, if regular training sessions were conducted with the FTO's, and if, in the opinion of the respondents, their training

programs were adequately managed for maximum effective results. Each of the results will be explained in the following paragraphs.

The respondents indicated various methods of selecting FTO's to train new employees. These methods included conducting testing procedures, selection and interview boards as well as recommendations from other members of the applicant's agency. Respondents indicated ranking members of their respective agency usually made these recommendations. Three respondents (17.65%, n=3) stated the number of years an applicant has been with the agency was the significant determining factor in being selected for such a position. Three respondents (17.65%, n=3) reported applicants were selected by the field training coordinator and/or agency department head. One respondent (5.88%) stated applicants were selected solely on a volunteer basis. One respondent (5.88%) stated they did not know how their FTO's were selected. The majority of the respondents (52.94%, n=9) indicated the FTO's were selected by either an interview or selection board or were recommended by members of their agencies.

The respondents were questioned about if they felt their current selection process was adequate and produces qualified FTO's. The majority of the respondents (76.47%, n=13) indicated they felt the selection process was adequate and produced quality FTO's. Three respondents (17.65%) indicated the selection process was not adequate and one respondent failed to answer the question. The respondents who indicated they felt the selection process was inadequate were asked to indicate their belief as to why it was not adequate. One respondent indicated the selection process was inadequate due to the process not being based on officer qualifications but instead

was based only on years of service. The second respondent indicated it was inadequate because of a lack of formalized training for field training officers. The third respondent indicated the process was based upon a “buddy” system that resulted in several poor choices for the position.

The survey further served to determine if the FTO's selected were provided any type of formalized training and what training was provided to them. With the exception of one respondent, all indicated the FTO's received formalized training for their positions. The respondents indicated a variety of training was provided to the training officers. This formalized training consisted of training ranging from three days to a full 40-hour block of instruction. The respondents indicated the training was provided through in-house instruction as well as utilizing outside agencies with qualified instructors who specialized in training FTO's.

The survey inquired if the respondent's agency conducted regular meetings with the FTO's to review the training programs progress. The majority, fourteen (82.35%) of the respondents, indicated regular meetings were conducted with the FTO's. Three (17.65%) of the respondents indicated regular meetings were not conducted in their respective agencies. Responses to how often these meetings were conducted varied greatly from once a week while a recruit was in training to formalize annual training. It was further determined that training programs' contents were reviewed on a variety of time frames. Five (29.41%) of the respondents indicated the programs' contents were reviewed greater than one year ago. Three (17.65%) respondents indicated the programs' contents were reviewed this year. The remainder of the respondents indicated they did not know when the programs' contents were reviewed or updated. All

respondents indicated the FTO's are able to provide input into the training programs' contents.

In an effort to determine what the respondents felt was the most important aspect of the Field Training Program within their agencies, the survey provided them with a question to obtain their opinions. Three of the respondents indicated the selection process for the FTO's was the most important aspect of their respective programs. These three respondents indicated their agencies are currently active in this process. The remainder of the respondents (14) indicated various aspects of the training program to include documentation, continued training beyond initial time frame, officer safety skills, communication between all involved in the program, rotation between FTO's, program duration, and program review at the end of training phases as the most important aspects of their training programs. With the exception of two respondents, all felt their programs were adequately managed to meet agency expectations.

## **DISCUSSION/CONCLUSIONS**

The problem or issue examined by the researcher considered whether or not particular aspects of a training program make a training program more effective. The research examined how programs should be structured and managed to produce the most effective results. An examination was conducted into the benefits of a properly structured program and how an agency can mold an existing program that would result in qualified officers and, consequently, limit agency liability. This structure included a process for selecting, training, and managing FTO's. Additional research was conducted into the need for consistent program revision and update as the agency,

society, and legal stipulations evolve, requiring modifications into operating procedures and possibly methods of instruction.

The purpose of this research was to maximize field training program effectiveness by taking a closer look at the methods used to employ such a program. The research focused specifically on those tasked with ensuring the programs' contents are effectively disseminated. This goal ultimately led to the selection and training of FTO's, supervision of the FTO's, and management responsibilities of such a program.

The research question that was examined focused on how an existing program is effectively structured, how field training officers are selected, and how field-training coordinators/managers can improve the quality of their programs as a whole by implementing processes for the above objectives. The research further examined how developing a selection process for FTO's and then providing them with formalized training would impact an existing program. Additional emphasis was placed on the necessity for program evolution.

The researcher hypothesized that there were particular components of a program that would produce better results from a program already developed and implemented within an agency. The researcher further believed the selection, training, and management of FTO's were vital to an organizations program success. The researcher hypothesized the literature reviewed would indicate the listed beliefs. The researcher believed that programs could not be constructed, implemented, and then set aside without consistent monitoring. Ultimately, continual research and support from all involved with the program would be crucial to the programs success.

The researcher concluded from the findings that an agency would certainly benefit by developing and implementing procedures to select qualified candidates for the position of field training officer. Upon completing this task, equal efforts need to be made to ensure these officers with training opportunities to prepare them for their new assignments. Once this training has been provided, the training officers can assume their positions with the knowledge necessary to complete their task with a high degree of efficiency. The field training program manager/coordinator needs to be afforded equal training to make sure they can adequately supervise the programs progress. Continual training needs to be provided to those involved with the training process to assure they can continue to instruct new officers. Ultimately, the training program needs to be reviewed on a continual basis, consistent with agency needs, to confirm agency and society objectives are met.

The findings of the research supported the hypothesis. The reason why the findings supported the hypothesis is probably due the continual need to provide the best law enforcement officers for the general public. As the law enforcement career field evolves, so do the methods used to obtain this goal. Law enforcement agencies strive to meet society's objectives while limiting its vulnerabilities to civil liability.

Limitations that might have hindered this study resulted because those surveyed did not necessarily have the knowledge necessary to base an opinion on the subject being researched. Most agencies have a single member who is ultimately in charge of managing FTO programs and thus not all those surveyed were assigned to this position. Overall, those surveyed were able to provide sufficient information to enhance the researcher's ability to formulate an outcome to support the findings.

The study of selecting, training, and managing field training officers in law enforcement agencies is relevant to contemporary law enforcement because law enforcement agencies have a duty to provide the best public service to the community it protects and serves. Research into the aspects of training these law enforcement officers is increasingly more important in a litigious society. Furthermore, having law enforcement officers capable of fulfilling their vital roles, while performing in a manner requiring minimal supervision, will enable an agency to better serve its community. Providing new officers with a training regimen that allows them to apply this knowledge in a controlled setting will enhance knowledge of the laws governing society. Selecting and training the officers tasked with this responsibility will enable them to provide the best training to the future members of law enforcement. The law enforcement community and the general public stands to benefit from the results of this research. Much research was conducted into the development and implementation of field training programs and equal research should be placed into the further development of programs currently in place.

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## APPENDIX

Below is the survey instrument provided to the participants of the 75<sup>th</sup> session of Module II of Law Enforcement Management Institute of Texas conducted at the Texas Woman's University located in Denton, Texas.



Comal County Sheriff's Office  
3005 W. San Antonio St.  
New Braunfels, TX 78130



The reviewer of this survey is active in the Leadership Command College of the LEMIT Program and is requesting your assistance in completing this survey. If you choose to assist with this survey, please be as detailed and complete as possible. Your assistance with this research is appreciated and will assist in objectively reaching a conclusion for this research project.

Your participation in this survey is voluntary and all responses will remain confidential. If you choose to complete this survey, please forward your responses to Lt. Scott A. Frakes, at the above address. If you have any questions, feel free to contact me directly at (830) 608-1891. Again, thank you for your time and assistance.

1. Does your law enforcement agency have a Field Training Officer Program?
2. How are your Field Training Officers Selected?
3. Do you feel the current selection process is adequate and produces qualified Training Officers? If no, please explain why.
4. Do your Field Training Officers receive any form of formal training? If so, what training do they receive?

5. Who manages your Field Training Officer Program (i.e Line Officer, Corporal, Sergeant, Lieutenant, etc.)?
6. Does your Field Training Program have Standardized Evaluations to document the progress of recruits?
7. Do you have regular Field Training Officer meetings to review program progress?
8. If yes to number seven (7), how often are meetings scheduled?
9. When is the last time your Field Training Program materials were reviewed or updated?
10. Do the Field Training Officers have input into the program and its content?
11. Does your upper management support a Training Officers recommendation to terminate an employee who is in training and not meeting agency standards?
12. In your opinion, what is the most important aspect of your Field Training Program and is your agency active in this practice?
13. In your opinion, is your Field Training Program adequately managed?
14. Is there someone in your department I could contact if needed to attain any additional information specifically dealing with Field Training Officer Programs?