

Improving the Data Foundations of Law Enforcement

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Exceptional Item #1 (\$4 million) will help TCOLE to continue fulfilling the Legislature's statutory directives in its 2023 Sunset Legislation. This EI will ensure local law enforcement agencies (LEAs) have access to reliable information to run required pre-hiring background checks, ensuring Texans continue to be served by qualified peace officers.
- Exceptional Item #4 (\$1.8 million) will allow TCOLE to improve the interoperability of its licensee data, improving inter-agency collaboration on school safety and emergency preparedness.
- Ongoing improvement in TCOLE's ability to implement reforms and fulfill its mission require renewed fiscal commitment from the Legislature towards the agency's data and IT needs.

BACKGROUND

In 2022, the Texas Sunset Advisory Commission found deep fundamental problems with the way Texas regulates law enforcement. One of the problems was the lack of oversight into the problem of wandering officers who move between LEAs and are more prone to engage in misconduct. The Legislature answered with a robust set of reforms in 2023 that included a misconduct reporting system and a database to maintain employment records for hiring LEAs to review. Over the past three years, TCOLE has been implementing these reforms, culminating in the development of the OpenText Records Repository (OTRR) earlier this year, which facilitates agency-to-agency record sharing.

2,776
law enforcement
agencies in Texas,
employing over
100,000 peace
officers, jailers, and
911 operators.

TCOLE Statistics, Aug. 2026

PROPOSED ACTION

Texas 2036 supports the adoption of TCOLE's Exceptional Items #1 and 4. Exceptional Item #1 would expand the availability of licenses for LEA users of the OTRR system and bring on additional personnel to help manage records. Exceptional Item #4 covers an IT project to improve the interoperability of licensee data (TCLEDDS) with other agencies (e.g. TEA and TDEM).

BUDGET COST ESTIMATE

TCOLE estimates Exceptional Item #1 to cost roughly \$2,000,000 each fiscal year of the biennium and include 5 FTEs. Exceptional Item #4 would cost \$976,698 the first year and \$834,210 the second year of the biennium, covering 2 FTEs.

PUBLIC POLICY IMPACT

Both exceptional items will solidify the data and IT foundation of Texas law enforcement regulation. If an officer engages in misconduct, the report is sent to TCOLE via OTRR. If that officer is let go, his employment records go to OTRR. And if that officer tries to get another job in law enforcement, an LEA uses OTRR to look at the record before making a hiring decision. Further investments in IT efforts to make licensee data more interoperable will improve inter-agency collaboration on a number of key priorities, including school safety and emergency preparedness. The 2023 reforms understood that public safety depends in part on the public's trust in law enforcement. Investing in TCOLE's data and IT infrastructure continues the state's work towards that goal.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT

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