



# The Office of the Salt Lake County Sheriff

## Employee Survey Report

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Center for  
**PUBLIC POLICY &  
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THE UNIVERSITY OF UTAH

*Utah Criminal Justice Center*

COLLEGE OF SOCIAL WORK COLLEGE OF SOCIAL & BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES **U** S.J. QUINNEY COLLEGE OF LAW  
UTAH COMMISSION ON CRIMINAL & JUVENILE JUSTICE

THE UNIVERSITY OF UTAH

# **The Office of the Salt Lake County Sheriff Employee Survey Report**

## **Executive Summary**

Early on, the Office of the Salt Lake County Sheriff (the Office) under the direction of Sheriff James M. Winder knew that 2010 would bring some daunting challenges and great opportunities. The challenges would come in the form of unprecedented demands on an already tight budget and in the form of substantial culture and climate changes due to the new Unified Police Department. The opportunities would come in the form of developing strategies to aggressively address the challenges. Part of the strategy was to seek an independent party to survey Office personnel and otherwise establish processes where every voice could participate in addressing challenges and continuing to find opportunities to further strengthen the ability of the Office to effectively and efficiently meet the needs of the residents.

To this end, the Office contracted with the University of Utah and specifically The Center for Public Policy & Administration and the Utah Criminal Justice Center to perform survey work. The work began by conducting a number of Office employee focus groups to determine the style and types of survey questions such that the collective perceptions of Office personnel could provide the types of information that can help the Office address challenges and take advantages of opportunities to improve. The University partners then created the survey, surveyed Office personnel, and analyzed the results.

The University partners are pleased to submit this report to the Office of the Salt Lake County Sheriff. The report provides detailed analysis of strengths of the Office, as well as opportunities to improve. Below is a brief summary of the report's findings and recommendations.

### **Strengths of the Office**

The strengths of the Office are: 1) Job Satisfaction; 2) Communication and Cooperation within Divisions; 3) Supervisors; 4) Empowered Decision Making; and 5) Training.

A major strength of the Office is a high level of job satisfaction among employees. Sheriff's Office and UPD employees take satisfaction in the work they do, they find personal accomplishment in it, and they are dedicated to serving the public. Furthermore, employees noted in their written answers that one of the aspects they most value about their work is the public service aspect of their job; that is, that they are able to help people throughout the community. These results are consistent across all areas of the Sheriff's Office and UPD.

In addition, the survey assessed communication and cooperation within divisions and departments from the perspective of employees. Employees are positive about communication and cooperation within their divisions, and with their co-workers. Several questions in the survey assessed working relationships between employees and their supervisors. More than half (56%) of employees agree or strongly agree that they feel valued by their supervisor. The survey results also indicate that employees value their independence as it relates to decision making and the trust that supervisors have in them.

### **Opportunities for Improvement**

The opportunities for improvement are: 1) Morale among Employees and Financial Security; 2) Change, the Unified Police Department and Communication; 3) Cooperation and Communication throughout the Office; 4) Cooperation and Communication across Divisions and Departments; 5) Cooperation and Communication within Divisions and Departments; 6) Recognition and Rewards; 7) Supervisors; 8) Valued by the Office; and 9) Performance Appraisals.

Where survey results indicate that morale is low, the primary cause is due to employee concerns about financial security, specifically job security, and wages and benefits.

### **Recommendations**

A preamble to the recommendations is an understanding that some survey results deal with issues that are beyond the control of the Office. For example, the Sheriff and management team consistently work to ensure equitable and competitive wages and benefits and they do what is possible to secure jobs. However, the reality is that a turn in the economy triggers events that are beyond the control of the Office, County Council, County Mayor, and taxpayers.

Finally, it is important to note that with each recommendation, the Office must take responsibility to examine the results, and determine a process to build on strengths and identify opportunities for improvement. It should be noted that, by design, these are broad recommendations, and the detail of how the Office will implement the recommendations will occur through careful discussion and planning among empowered employee working groups.

The first recommendation is to recognize, celebrate and build upon the many strengths and positives aspects of the Office. Office personnel have high job satisfaction, like the work they do, and feel a sense of personal accomplishment in their jobs. They generally like each other and feel that there is good communication and cooperation within their divisions. They feel camaraderie, friendships, and highly value their working relationships. They also feel valued by their own supervisor and empowered in their decision making.

The second recommendation is that a detailed communication plan be developed for the entire organization. This should include two-way communication (bottom-up as well as top-down) as a priority, and should be developed in consultation with all levels of the organization.

There are other issues identified in the survey that the Office may want to examine. For example, there is an opportunity to improve training for civilian employees.

***Note from CPPA and UCJC***

It has been a pleasure for all of us at CPPA and UCJC to work with Sheriff Winder and his team on this project. We have appreciated the autonomy he provided us throughout the project. We applaud his genuine desire to obtain honest, accurate and complete information from Office employees to improve the future trajectory of the Office.