

Training Funds Available

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Have you been thinking about hosting or presenting some type of negotiator training in your area? Has your team talked about your need to interact with negotiators from adjoining agencies, to prepare for an extended or large incident? Western States Hostage Negotiators' Association wants to help your team get started.

At our Salem meeting, your association representatives approved a policy and procedure to provide funds for agencies to host local training. One of the goals in the WSHNA bylaws is to develop negotiator proficiency by providing training. Our members are very good at providing excellent large training conferences, like Salem, and our hope is to expand on those successes.

Much can be learned at large conferences, but it is difficult to practice and ingrain the skills, lessons and information presented. One of the desires of this policy is to support smaller, local training sessions, where this and other training can actually be practiced and adapted by the negotiators. Smaller sessions allow greater opportunities for participants to interact with speakers and other participants; clarifying, and reinforcing learning, and improving proficiency.

An additional, and important, benefit of more localized training is the chance to interact with other negotiators in your area. A common theme at the Salem conference was the need to prepare for cooperation between negotiation teams. It is highly likely that at some point many of our teams will have to work together with another team, either as relief for an extended incident, a large scale incident, or staffing shortages. The crisis scene is not the time or place to be trying to figure out who you can call for support, or getting comfortable with other teams and procedures.

WSHNA providing funds for small scale local training is not new. In District 2, we have utilized funds for a few training sessions, including an advanced negotiators course presented by NTOA several years ago, and more recently some multi-agency practical training scenarios and a seminar. I believe that funds have been used in Oregon also. The board put this policy in place to encourage more of this type of training, provide a standard method to request money, and still be a good steward of our dues by giving us a system for review of requests. Because this is something new to us, our plan is to keep things simple and flexible for now. At next year's board meeting the board will review how the process is working and decide if changes should be made.

Because all members of WSHNA contribute to association funds, the training must be open to all WSHNA members. However, the facilitators can focus the training and announcements toward their local negotiators. When considering the purpose for the funds, the board will look closely at the affect the funds will have on the training results. To that end, we will not fund alcohol, and souvenir items will be discouraged. Requests for materials, speakers, recognitions and awards, building fees, and food used to benefit training, (i.e. used to keep negotiators in training such as extended scenarios, feeding actors, etc.) will receive stronger support. This is just a limited list, so please submit a request for consideration.

There are a lot of possibilities for the type of training that can be sponsored. There are several negotiator competitions around the country now. Large multi-agency response scenarios, multiple short training scenarios presented in a round robin manner, small inter-active lectures, and presentations by local providers such as mental health providers, are just some ideas you may want to consider.

If you have any questions, please contact your district representative, but the full details will be on the WSHNA website, www.wshna.com. Briefly, it will be easy to submit a request. The board would like at least 6 months lead time to consider the request, but we will look at requests with shorter deadlines. A request will be made to the district representative, (they are also found on the website), who will then contact the board for consideration of the proposal.

We look forward to seeing your requests. Be safe.