



MASSACHUSETTS CHIEFS OF POLICE ASSOCIATION

2026 Annual Leadership Conference

Command Under Pressure: Decisions. Risk. Leadership.

September 15–17, 2026 · Four Points by Sheraton · Norwood, Massachusetts

JUSTIFICATION TOOLKIT

Tools for securing approval and funding to attend

How to Use This Toolkit

Every department answers to someone on spending. Depending on your community that may be a town manager or administrator, a mayor, a select board, a city council, or a finance committee. This toolkit helps you make the case to whoever holds that authority.

The most important point. This conference is not discretionary training. The Municipal Police Training Committee has approved it for Training Year 2027 in-service credit across six mandated topics. You and your command staff must complete in-service training regardless. The question before your appointing authority is therefore not whether to fund optional professional development. It is how to satisfy a legal requirement most efficiently. That framing wins approvals that a general training request will not.

What is inside:

- **Part I** – the core argument
- **Part II** – a justification letter you can adapt and send
- **Part III** – a cost comparison worksheet
- **Part IV** – a benefits worksheet
- **Part V** – talking points
- **Part VI** – a coverage plan
- **Part VII** – a post-conference report template

Everything here is meant to be adapted to your department, your community, and your voice. A letter that sounds like you will always do better than one that sounds like a form.

Part I. The Core Argument

1. This satisfies mandated training

The MPTC has approved this conference for TY2027 in-service credit in six mandated topics: AI in Policing, Controlled Substances, De-escalation and Use of Force, Digital Investigations, Legal Updates, and Operational Planning Using Incident Command.

Attending chiefs and command staff can complete all six across three days. The alternative is meeting those same requirements through separate courses spread across the training year, each with its own registration, travel, and time away from the department.

2. The efficiency argument

Run the comparison in Part III and present it. For most departments the conference costs less in registration, substantially less in travel, and is far less disruptive to scheduling than satisfying the same six requirements separately.

On framing: do not lead with the price of the conference. Lead with the cost of meeting the same requirements another way, then show the difference. An appointing authority evaluating a number in isolation asks whether it is affordable. One evaluating it against a larger alternative asks why you would do it any other way.

3. This is command-level instruction

The standard in-service curriculum is written for line-level delivery, and appropriately so. It teaches the officer what to do at the traffic stop, the doorway, and the arrest. A chief needs the same body of law applied to a different set of decisions: what the policy says, how officers are supervised, what gets documented, and how the department answers for it in court, before the governing body, and in public. This program is built for that. The legal track is taught by MCOPA's General Counsel together with the MPTC's Assistant Legal Counsel, oriented to command decisions rather than field tasks.

4. Risk reduction

Several sessions map directly to the department's civil and legal exposure: use of force and command responsibility, digital evidence and what survives a suppression motion, supervisory liability, and the year's legal developments affecting police operations. For a governing body, the relevant comparison is what a single avoidable lawsuit, suppressed case, or failed policy costs the community against the price of attendance.

5. What the department gets back

Commit up front to bringing the material home. Session materials are available through the conference app, and a chief who returns with a written summary, one or two updated policies, and a training plan converts a single registration into value for the whole agency. Part VII makes that commitment concrete.

Part II. Justification Letter

Adapt the letter below. Replace the bracketed items, cut what does not apply, and add specifics about your department. The strongest version names an actual problem your department faces and ties a session to it.

[Date]

[Name]

[Title – Town Manager / Mayor / Chair, Select Board / City Council]

[Municipality]

Re: Request to attend the MCOPA 2026 Annual Leadership Conference

Dear [Name]:

I request approval and funding to attend the Massachusetts Chiefs of Police Association 2026 Annual Leadership Conference, September 15–17, 2026, in Norwood.

This is not optional professional development. My command staff and I must complete mandated in-service training each training year, and the Municipal Police Training Committee has approved this conference for Training Year 2027 credit in six mandated topics: AI in Policing, Controlled Substances, De-escalation and Use of Force, Digital Investigations, Legal Updates, and Operational Planning Using Incident Command. Attending satisfies all six in three days, in one place. Meeting the same requirements course by course would mean multiple separate registrations across the year, with the associated travel, scheduling, and time away from the department. The attached comparison shows the conference is both less expensive and less disruptive.

Several sessions bear directly on this department's legal and financial exposure: use of force and command responsibility, the digital evidence standards that determine whether cases survive suppression, supervisory liability, and this year's court decisions affecting police operations. [Add one or two sentences naming a specific issue this department is facing and the session that addresses it.]

The instruction is built for command staff rather than line-level delivery, addressing the decisions I make as chief: what our policies say, how officers are supervised, what we document, and how this department answers for its conduct.

If approved, I will provide a written summary to [you / the board], including any policy revisions or training I recommend. Session materials will be available afterward for in-house training at no additional cost.

The estimated total cost is [\$ amount], itemized in the attached worksheet. [If applicable: this is within the department's existing training line item.] Registration details are available at masschiefs.org/upcoming-events/fall-2026-annual-training-conference.

I am glad to answer any questions.

Respectfully,

[Name]

Chief of Police

[Department]

Part III. Cost Comparison Worksheet

Complete both tables. The comparison, not the raw number, is the argument.

A. Cost of attending the conference

Item	Notes	Cost
Registration		\$
Lodging (nights × rate)		\$
Travel / mileage		\$
Meals not otherwise included		\$
Coverage / overtime backfill		\$
Total cost of attending		\$

B. Cost of satisfying the same six topics separately

Estimate what it would cost to meet each mandated topic through a separate course.

In-service topic	Course fee	Travel	Days out	Subtotal
AI in Policing	\$	\$		\$
Controlled Substances	\$	\$		\$
De-escalation / Use of Force	\$	\$		\$
Digital Investigations	\$	\$		\$
Legal Updates	\$	\$		\$
Ops Planning / ICS	\$	\$		\$
Total, separate delivery				\$

Difference (B minus A) – the savings to the community	\$
Days of command staff time saved	

Part IV. Benefits Worksheet

Fill this in before you write your letter. Naming three concrete problems and the sessions that address them turns an abstract request into a specific one.

Issue facing my department	Session that addresses it	What I will do with it

Prompts, if you need them

- Which policy has not been reviewed since the law changed?
- Where has the department had a case suppressed, a complaint sustained, or a close call?
- What technology is the department using, or being sold, without a policy governing it?
- What has your department struggled with in recruitment, retention, or supervision?
- What would you want to have already known if a critical incident happened next month?

Part V. Talking Points

For a hallway conversation, a budget hearing, or a public meeting. Lead with the requirement, not the request.

The sixty-second version

“State law requires my command staff and me to complete in-service training every year. The Municipal Police Training Committee has approved the state chiefs association conference to satisfy six of those mandated topics in three days. Doing it this way costs less and takes less time away from the department than meeting the same requirements course by course. It also covers the areas where this department carries the most legal exposure: use of force, digital evidence, and this year's court decisions. I will bring back a written summary and any policy changes I recommend.”

If asked why it cannot be done online or locally

Some in-service can be. This program is approved for six mandated topics at once, is taught at the command level rather than for line-level delivery, and includes instructors and case studies not otherwise available in the Commonwealth. The comparison worksheet shows what the alternative actually costs.

If asked about the optics of travel and lodging

The conference is in Norwood, in state. [Adapt: given the distance and the 8:00 a.m. start, lodging for the nights of ____ avoids a long commute before and after full training days.] The cost is itemized in the attached worksheet and is [within / below] the department's training line.

If asked what the community gets

Policies that reflect current law, supervision practices that hold up when they are tested, and a department less likely to lose a case or a lawsuit on something avoidable. The material also comes back to the department and can be used for in-house training at no additional cost.

Part VI. Coverage Plan

Approving authorities want to know the department is covered. Attaching this to your request answers the question before it is asked.

Date	Acting in my absence	Notes
Tuesday, September 15		
Wednesday, September 16		
Thursday, September 17		

Additional assurances to include

- I will be reachable by phone throughout and will return for any critical incident.
- [Name] will serve as officer in charge and has handled this responsibility previously.
- No scheduled court dates, hearings, or public meetings conflict with these dates.
- Coverage is being managed within the existing schedule [or: requires ____ hours of overtime, included in the cost worksheet].

Part VII. Post-Conference Report Template

Deliver this within two weeks of returning. It closes the loop on the commitment in your letter, and it makes next year's request easier to approve.

MEMORANDUM

To: [Town Manager / Mayor / Select Board]

From: [Name], Chief of Police

Date: [Date]

Re: MCOPA 2026 Annual Leadership Conference – summary and recommendations

- 1. In-service requirements satisfied.** List each mandated topic completed and the personnel who completed it.
- 2. Key takeaways.** Three to five substantive points, stated in terms of what they mean for this department rather than as a list of sessions attended.
- 3. Recommended policy revisions.** Identify each policy that should be reviewed or revised, and why.
- 4. Recommended in-house training.** What will be brought back to the department, using conference materials, and when.
- 5. Cost summary.** Actual expenses against the estimate, and the in-service requirements satisfied for that amount.

Massachusetts Chiefs of Police Association

Register at masschiefs.org/upcoming-events/fall-2026-annual-training-conference