Western Connecticut
COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

Western Connect Regional Training Facility

Executive Summary

Police departments in Connecticut are approaching a critical point for firearms training, WestCOG in partnership with local communities and the Fairfield Police Officer Training Association (FCPOTA) have developed a project concept for the Western Connecticut Training Facility (WCTF) for consideration in upcoming municipal budgets.

WCTF Project Objectives

Regional Public Safety Training Facility. A fully functional training facility that provides an efficient and effective solution for Western Connecticut law enforcement institutions to effectively meet State of CT mandated qualifications for de-escalation, less lethal force, defensive tactics, and firearms.

Cost Effective. Leverage regional savings and/or economies of scale to provide the facility objectives identified at competitive pricing. Training Facilities lend themselves to be cost effective in a regional approach as training as a given department only requires a limited number of days of training to meet targets.

Minimize Public Impact. A firing range solution that minimizes negative public impacts for noise, environmental effects, and safety.

Maximize Access. Developing an indoor range dramatically increases the amount of available training opportunities as it is not limited by lighting, weather, environmental impacts, or public concern for safety, sound.

Sustainable Membership. To construct a facility with high demand training features sought after by a wide range of departments (such as tactical training, de-escalation VR Training, and 50yard rifle range) and located to serve a large market of public safety officers. A steady membership will provide the membership fees needed for ongoing operation of the facility.

Tactical Training. Expand functionality beyond firearm training. Examples include being able to drive in vehicles, standup walls, control lighting, and additional props as needed. Currently departments have limited access to tactical training opportunities.

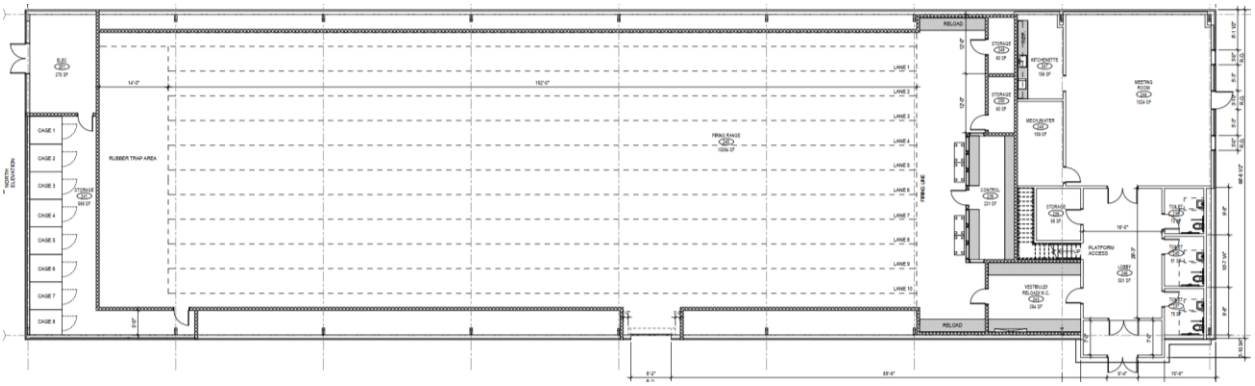
Rifle Capable. A firing range solution that provides the ability to qualify and train personnel for multiple types of weapons including department issued firearms – handgun and patrol rifle up to 5.56-millimeter ammunition capability. Rifle training is mandated to reflect scenarios where targets are 50 yards away. Departments work around this using smaller targets but have noted this is a limited form of training and that a 50-yard range would be a large draw.

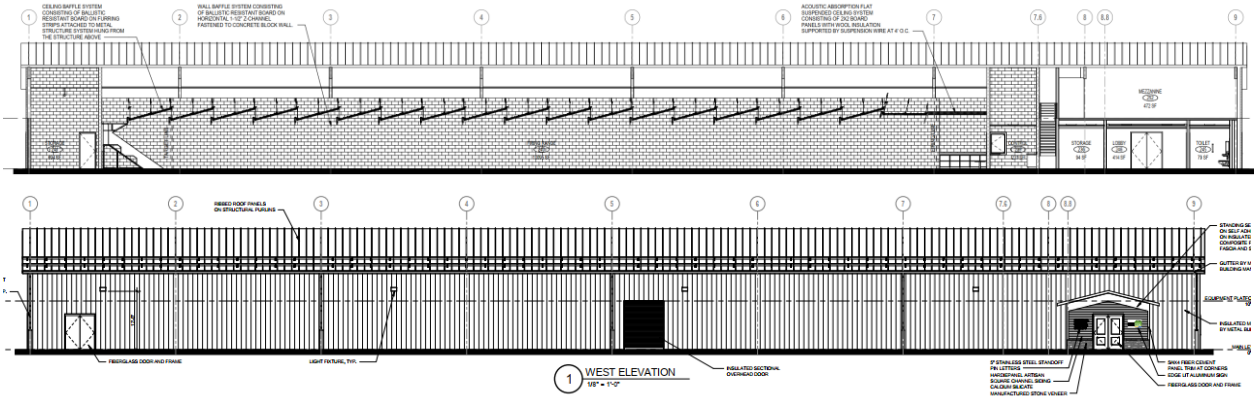
Functional Governance. Implementation of an effective, integrated, Memorandum of Agreement that clearly outlines authority for continued management of the facility and is tied effectively to provide collaboration, cooperation, and communication among stakeholders.

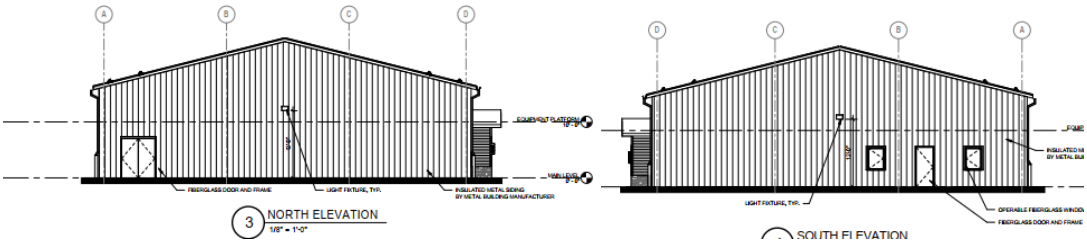
Functional Standard Operations Procedures. To define the responsibilities of those utilizing the WCTF. And such that, it can be readily modified as needed to meet the Facility's needs.

Facility Specifications

An Indoor, Rifle Ready Range, with 10 lanes each at fifty 50 yards length. Located at Newtown Police Department, 191 South Main Street, Newtown, CT. The facility is intentionally designed to serve multiple tactical training scenarios such as de-escalation training, less lethal, forcible entry, mass shooter, and shoot don't shoot scenarios. A classroom space is also included. The facility is designed for a maximum capacity of 1,500 officers and reflects a demand that could readily be met by Western CT. Size of the proposed facility is estimated at 18,000 sq ft.







Membership Benefits

The following benefits are provided following the completion of construction, the processing of initial Startup Membership fees, and initial facility training for training officers.

Guaranteed training Time. The facility can guarantee up to 4 training sessions per officer, scheduled through training blocks using the Facility Scheduling system. Training blocks are assumed to be four-hour training sessions. There are no limitations due to light, weather, noise complaints, or environmental concerns.

Flexible training can be scheduled during off hours when available.

Tactical Training. Vehicles, barriers, and virtual lighting can all be brought into the training facility to develop a variety of training scenarios. The classroom also provides new training opportunities.

Facility Training for Training Officers. Provided by Facility Stewards to follow standard operating procedures (SOP, in development).

Storage and Equipment Maintenance The building design provides space for departments to store special equipment and perform limited weapon maintenance (use of solvents).

Membership Obligations

Membership to use the facility includes the following obligations to cover the financial costs of construction and maintenance while ensuring fair, safe, and efficient use.

Initial Membership Fee. The facility's initial membership costs cover the fees and first year of operational expenses and are presented as cost per officer on the facility costs table.

Annual Membership Fee. This is the annual fee structure following the first year of operation and is presented as cost per officer in the facility costs table.

Founding Member Benefits. Initial funding is critical for the facility's construction, so an incentive system reflects this. Founding members are immediately Vested in the regional program and do not have to pay the 10% vesting fees. They are eligible for annual membership vouchers, which reduce their costs (vouchers are calculated equitably per officer and depend on grant awards and new membership fees collected).

Minimum Membership Terms assumes 5 years of continued membership and fee payments (annual fees).

A Memorandum of Agreement is in draft, but it briefly defines WestCOG as the Executive Council, establishes a Facility Oversight Committee (made up mostly of law enforcement representatives), and presents membership terms (presented here but in more detail).

The Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) are being drafted and provides the day-to-day expectations and requirements for using the facility. The Facility Oversight Committee maintains the SOP, which members are expected to follow.

Cost Benefit Scenarios

For illustrative purposes, three scenarios with three sample municipalities are provided.

Farmville. [1,000 people] A small agricultural community with a single resident trooper.

Midtown. [25,000 people] A suburban community with a department of 50 officers.

Metro City. [125,000 people] An urban municipality with a department of 200 officers.

Business-as-Usual Scenario

This Scenario assumes no investments besides increased costs to meet existing conditions.

Training. Situation Worsens. Existing firearms training sites continue to close and reduce hours while demands for training increase.

Risk. High Exposure. With reduced training opportunities and limited access to real world tactical training scenarios, officers and the public will be exposed to increasing amounts of risk.

Initial Investment Cost. Minimal. Inherently there are no initial financial costs.

Future Costs. Expected to Increase. Costs increase as existing sites charge more for high demand along with increased overtime and travel costs.

Town	#	Initial	Annual Firearm	Tactical
Farmville	1	$0	$613	$304
Midtown	50	$0	$30,628	$15,200
Metro City	200	$0	$122,512	$60,800

Going Solo Scenario

This scenario assumes investments are made for a facility to meet minimum firearm training requirements only (no tactical). Assumes Farmville builds a prefab 2-lane, 25-yard, shipping crate. While Midtown and MetroCity build a 6 lane 25-yard facility.

Training. Targets Met with Context. Firearm minimum requirements are met. Real world tactical training scenarios and flexibility for future training scenarios not provided.

Risk. Medium Exposure. Officers meet firearm requirements but lack ready access to real-world training scenarios through the facility, thus leaves risk exposure for tactical decision making.

Initial Investment Cost. High. Building a range not fully utilized drives cost per officer.

Future Costs. High. The costs per officer under the Going Solo scenario decrease based on the number of officers in the department. Departments, however, are still incurring the costs for sending officers out for rifle training and tactical training scenarios when available.

Town	#	Initial	Annual Firearm	Tactical
Farmville	1	$550,000	$1,350	$304
Midtown	50	$5,945,309	$98,667	$15,200
Metro City	200	$5,945,309	$112,646	$60,800

Regional Scenario

Costs for the Regional Scenario are depicted for both the estimated initial usage of 800 officers as well as the maximum capacity of 1,500 officers. These costs are based on the latest estimate for construction of the facility, first year of operation, $3,471,150 contingency fees, and $1.5 million grant award (total **$13,554,915**).

Non-founding members there is a 10% vesting fee applied to both the initial fee and for 10 years thereafter.

Contingency Fees. If not applied can reduce Initial Fee costs by 25%

	800 Officers	1,500 Officers
Initial Membership Fee per Officer	$16,932	$8,864
Annual Membership Fee per Officer	$311	$201

Training. Fully Covered. Access to the WCTF provides all the training needs and demands for all forms of firearm and tactical training for all members. Also, designed with a dynamic design, it able to be used for a variety of future training requirements.

Risk. Minimum Exposure. By providing for a robust set of training scenarios, departments can be well equipped to meet a variety of public safety situations and thus reduce risk exposure to themselves and the public.

Initial Investment Cost. Medium. Costs fall well under the Go Alone scenario and provide all the training opportunities unavailable in the business-as usual scenario. Cost can be further decreased through higher membership numbers (up to 50%).

Future Costs. Low. There are substantial cost benefits for a Region Scenario over the Going Solo Scenario. e cost effective than the Going Solo Scenario. Cost can be further decreased through higher membership numbers (up to 36%).

Town	#	Initial	Annual Firearm	Tactical
Farmville	1	$16,859	$323	$0
Midtown	50	$842,932	$16,157	$0
Metro City	200	$3,371,729	$64,626	$0

Town	#	Initial	Annual Firearm	Tactical
Farmville	1	$8,864	$208	$0
Midtown	50	$443,214	$10,381	$0
Metro City	200	$1,772,855	$41,526	$0

Next Steps

These cost estimates are presented along with a draft MOA for your department and municipality to resolve financial support for facility construction. Questions regarding the facility can be sent to westcog@outlook.org.

Benefits in Investing in the Western Connecticut Training Facility

Economies of Scale. A Regional Scenario would provide improved training and a lower cost point. Thus, outperforming the Going Solo Scenario. The reduced costs and improved features for training reflect the higher number of Users maximizing the facility's potential (unavailable in the going solo scenario).

Confidence in Meeting Training Compliance. A facility designed for regional use will guarantee training slots for its member communities to meet current and future training targets. As an indoor facility, training space will be available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The guaranteed space also save time and money for the scheduling and rescheduling efforts spent now to find spaces.

Improved Training Environment. WCTF provides for a variety of real-world training scenarios as well as a dedicated classroom space for training beyond standard firearm proficiency courses such as de-escalation, shoot-don't-shoot, less lethal, mass shooter, and virtual trainings. This enhanced space also improves trainers' ability to evaluate personnel proficiency.

Improved Tactical Decision-Making. An improved training environment directly relates to better tactical decision making for officers and directly correlates to improved outcomes and reduced liability during emergency response.

Reduced Liability for Municipalities. Reduced liability to towns from improving law enforcement personnel proficiency regarding deadly force situations and firearm skills.

Potential for Federal and State Support. State and Federal program are encouraging nd seeking regional cost saving projects to provide regional public safety services. This project is competitive for further funding following municipal funding support.

Consequences if the WCTF Does Not Move Forward

Window for a Regional Facility is Closing. When reviewing. Municipalities have already started building limited capacity firearm training facilities across the state of CT at great expense to respective communities. As more municipalities choose the Going-Solo Scenario, the case for a regional scenario weakens. Additionally, the funding incentive for the Regional Training Facility expires in October of 2025.

Unmet Training Compliance Requirements. Training Requirements As facilities and training spaces continue to reduce access and training demands increase, departments will reach a tipping point where they face considerable challenges logistically and financially to ensure firearm training targets are met.

Increase Liability for Municipalities. Communities will have increased financial liability to meet requirements with less training sites, as well as liability due to reduced officer proficiency due to limited training opportunities.