

Survey to Chief APOs

Issue: Staff bonuses

Question: (from Jefferson County)

For those who budgeted staff bonuses in their JRI II grants – have you been successful or have you received any pushback from your Unions / BTAs / or Commissioners to where you were unable to distribute?

Adams County

Adams had prior issues with the County so did not attempt to get bonuses through the grant. Our PJ previously gave a bonus through the use of Act 35 money.

Bedford County

We have been paying stipends out of our Act 35 money for years. It has worked extremely well for us. It is based on years of experience and to compensate for some of the other tasks that we have added to them over my time here. We are putting an additional stipend in for our dog handler position that we are creating through the JRI2 grant. I have not had any pushback from the union. My commissioners have forced us to also use that money to pay for any additional costs to the county related to pensions and benefits that those payments create. Make sure you account for those expenses when you set that up.

Chester County

In Chester Co we scripted out a proposal for increases for the leadership team, with the county picking up the increases in the 4th year. The commissioner's office was not in favor of using grant money, as they did not want to set a president for other depts to follow. Working with the PJ, we have a plan in place for the county to make salary adjustments accordingly from other funds.

Clarion County

Success in part. Our commissioners outright rejected any bonuses for probation officers (union employees); however, no pushback was received for administrative staff bonuses. There have been union issues in the past where other groups represented by the same union demanded parity when any probation officer bonuses were discussed. The commissioners were open to stipends for EBP training (since the other union entities in the county could not as easily protest). With that, I had approval to write for stipends to be distributed in the 4th Quarter 26/27 to give the county and the union time to work out an agreement.

Cumberland County

Cumberland tied EBP training over the next two years in with bonuses for staff using JRI-II funds. POs will receive \$1500. upon completion and support staff \$700. upon completion. The Commissioners approved the incentive package and no push back from the bargaining unit.

Erie County

We did put in for bonuses. Let's just say I have not made any friends with administration, HR, or fiscal. It has really been a terrible experience thus far. But on the bright side, I am cautiously optimistic that it is going to work out. The ins and outs are more than I want to type out. If anyone would like more info from me in regards to this matter, please feel free to give me a call.

Fayette County

In Fayette, we attempted bonuses. We were initially told by the Finance Dept that we couldn't due to unions. We chose to reach out to the unions, who were completely on board and offered letters of recommendation! We proceeded up the chain with Ct Admin & PJ good with it. Met with HR, Comms and Comm Chief of staff and were denied there.

Franklin County

Franklin had the same issues Westmoreland had with Fiscal/HR.

Lebanon County

I was able to convince the PJ to create APO I Sr/JPO I Sr positions through an administrative order. The APO I Sr position is being funded via JRI 2 funds. I have limited APO II/JPO II positions in the department so this is a way to recognize officers who meet the criteria for promotion to Sr officer (as approved by the PJ so as not to step on statutory authority). The admin order has been completed, my promotion memos for eligible officers have been completed, the judge's approval of my promotion suggestions have been delivered to the Commissioners, but the process seems to be experiencing some constipation currently.

I am waiting for an update from the head of HR, who is on vacation this week. We have had a lot going on which may be impacting the implementation of the promotions, i.e., new union contract, officers waiting for their retroactive pay now that the contract is settled, prison retro pay also being calculated/handled at this time, and the county implementation of a new payroll system. I am sure all of that has impacted the timeliness of the promotions. I have not heard anything—bad or good—about the status from the Commissioners.

Northumberland County

In Northumberland County the Commissioners actually changed my grant submission! I submitted for bonuses over the grant period for all my management as we seem to get overlooked every year, and they changed it to equipment. They don't seem to comprehend that when our managers retire in 3-5 years they won't have anyone to manage because all the line staff will make more money. It's like pulling teeth every day!

Schuylkill County

Schuylkill paid bonuses in 2025, paid from supervision fees. It was a circus... call or email me and I'll tell you my experience.

Susquehanna County

The Court absolutely refuses to give staff any bonuses or stipends. Period.

Westmoreland County

Westmoreland attempted to create bonuses for staff through the JRI-2 grant. I was informed through our fiscal department that if I was to make that request that the request would be denied. I am spending all of the funding elsewhere.