



AACOP

Arizona Association of Chiefs of Police

PRIDE • HONOR • INTEGRITY

ACE and FOCUS Certification Programs



Accredited Chief | Command Executives

Foundations of Command for Unit Supervisors

Revised April 2026

Introduction to ACE and FOCUS Certification Programs

The **Accredited Chief Executive – Advanced (ACE-Advanced)**, **Accredited Command Executive (ACE)**, and **Foundations of Command for Unit Supervisors (FOCUS)** certification programs were developed to raise the standard of leadership across all levels of Arizona’s law enforcement community. While grounded in the shared principles of 21st Century Policing—such as professionalism, accountability, and community engagement, each program is uniquely designed to serve a distinct leadership tier.

ACE-Advanced is the highest level of executive certification, tailored specifically for seasoned Chiefs of Police and top executives. This program recognizes those who demonstrate exceptional leadership, a legacy of community service, and a strategic vision for agency excellence.

ACE serves mid- to upper-level command staff—such as Captains, Commanders, and Deputy Chiefs—who are shaping agency culture and operations. This certification focuses on operational leadership, policy implementation, and accountability systems that drive measurable success.

FOCUS is an introductory leadership certification created for first-line supervisors and unit-level leaders. It provides foundational knowledge in supervision, communication, and team development, equipping emerging leaders with the skills to guide their teams with confidence and purpose.

Each certification program provides a structured pathway supported by mentorship, documentation, and performance-based benchmarks. Through verified assessment, successful participants are awarded ALEAP-sanctioned titles that symbolize their dedication to leadership excellence.

To sustain a culture of continuous improvement, all certifications include a Re-Certification Program, reinforcing long-term professional development and alignment with evolving best practices.

Together, the **ACE-Advanced**, **ACE**, and **FOCUS** programs form a comprehensive framework for cultivating principled, prepared, and progressive leaders within Arizona law enforcement.

We extend our sincere gratitude to the New Jersey State Association of Chiefs of Police (NJSACOP) for their invaluable guidance and leadership in helping us establish the Accredited Chief/Command Executive (ACE) Certification Program in Arizona. Your commitment to advancing professional standards for law enforcement executives has served as an exceptional model, and we are honored to build upon your framework to support Arizona's police leaders in achieving accredited excellence.

Why Certification Matters | Advancing Leadership in Arizona Law Enforcement

Strong leadership is one of the most important factors in the success, stability, and future of any law enforcement agency. The Arizona Law Enforcement Accreditation Program (ALEAP) offers a tiered certification framework designed to strengthen leadership at every level of an organization while supporting long-term professional growth, mentoring, and succession planning.

Through the **Accredited Chief's Executive (ACE-Advanced)** program for Chiefs of Police, the **Accredited Command Executive (ACE)** program for command staff, and **Foundations of Command for Unit Supervisors (FOCUS)** for sergeants and frontline supervisors, ALEAP provides a structured pathway for leaders to grow in knowledge, confidence, and effectiveness throughout their careers.

These certification programs are designed to keep participants engaged in **ongoing education, professional development, statewide networking, and leadership mentoring**. While ALEAP does not directly deliver all training, the program works in collaboration with **AZPOST**, trusted consultants, training providers, and strategic partners to help bring valuable leadership and professional development opportunities to law enforcement personnel across Arizona. ALEAP also seeks to sponsor training opportunities and build partnerships with vendors and organizations that can support special events and advanced training for Arizona's certified officers.

How These Programs Benefit Arizona Law Enforcement Leaders

Builds Strong Leadership Skills at Every Rank

Each certification is designed to strengthen the skills leaders need most, including communication, decision-making, accountability, strategic thinking, team development, and ethical leadership. The training and development expectations are tailored to the participant's current role while preparing them for the next level of responsibility.

Supports Succession Planning and Leadership Readiness

These programs help agencies intentionally develop future leaders by giving personnel a clear path for growth. Certification encourages leaders to prepare early, build professional credibility, and gain the education, training, and mentorship needed to step confidently into higher-level roles when opportunities arise.

Encourages Ongoing Professional Development

Certification is not meant to be a one-time achievement. It is designed to keep leaders focused on continuing education, advanced training, and meaningful professional engagement so they remain informed, prepared, and adaptable in a changing profession.

Strengthens Mentoring and Professional Connection

Through AACOP membership, leadership development opportunities, and statewide networking, participants become part of a broader professional community. These connections create opportunities for mentoring, idea-sharing, collaboration, and support from others who understand the challenges and responsibilities of law enforcement leadership.

Verifies Commitment and Professional Credibility

Certification recognizes a leader's investment in experience, education, training, and professional growth. It demonstrates a commitment to excellence and helps validate that an individual is serious about leading well, growing continuously, and serving their agency at a higher level.

Promotes Stronger Agencies Through Better Leadership

When agencies invest in developing supervisors, command staff, and executive leaders, they build stronger organizations from within. Certified leaders are better equipped to guide their teams, support accountability, navigate change, and help create a healthy culture focused on professionalism and long-term success.

Enrollee Commitment

This program is built on the understanding that strong leaders do not develop by chance, but through intentional effort and ongoing investment.

- Enrollees are expected to be **intentional, proactive, and fully invested** in their own leadership journey.
- Each participant should **pursue growth with purpose** by recognizing that their development has a direct impact on their **agency, their peers, and the community** they serve.



Intentional Growth. Stronger Leadership. Better Agencies.



Certification Requirements and Eligibility

Certification is valid for one year from the date awarded and must be renewed annually by meeting all ongoing program requirements. Failure to meet annual requirements may result in loss of certification. All applicants must meet **all** the criteria outlined below to obtain **ACE-ADVANCED** Certification:

1. Advanced Academic Achievement Standards

- Chiefs must hold a **master's or bachelor's degree** from an accredited academic institution (*Proof of Degree required*)

OR

- Must have served as **Chief of Police for at least two (2) years** and completed **at least three (3)** Executive Level or Advanced Police Leadership training courses listed in Section 3.
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2. Chief of Police Experience

Must have a **minimum of two (2) years of experience** serving as a Chief of Police.

3. Executive Level Training

- Chiefs holding a master's or bachelor's degree must have completed **at least two (2)** of the following Executive Level or Advanced Police Leadership training courses (*Proof of Training Certificates required*)
 - Chief's *without* a master's or bachelor's degree must have completed **at least three (3)** of the following Executive Level or Advanced Police Leadership training courses (*Proof of Training Certificates required*)
 - FBI National Academy
 - FBI LEEDA
 - Northwestern University Executive Management Program
 - Southern Police Institute (SPI) Command Development Course
 - Police Executive Leadership Institute (PELI)
 - Other courses approved by the ALEAP Awards Committee*
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4. Agency Accreditation Requirement

Must be the current Chief of an agency that is **currently enrolled*** or has an existing **ALEAP accredited agency**.

5. AACOP and/or ASA Membership

Must be an **active member of the Arizona Association of Chiefs of Police (AACOP)**, or if you work for a Sheriff's Department, the **Arizona Sheriff's Association (ASA)**.



Certification Requirements and Eligibility

Certification is valid for one year from the date awarded and must be renewed annually by meeting all ongoing program requirements. Failure to meet annual requirements may result in loss of certification. All applicants must meet the criteria outlined below to obtain **ACE Certification**:

1. Academic Achievement Standards

- Must hold a **bachelor's degree** from an accredited academic institution (*Proof of Degree required*)

OR

- Must have served in the position of **Command Executive for at least two (2) years** and completed **at least one (2)** Executive Level or Advanced Police Leadership training course listed in Section 3.
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2. Command Experience

Must have **at least two (2) years of experience** serving at the **rank of Lieutenant (or equivalent) or higher** at their **current law enforcement agency**.

3. Executive Level Training

- Command Executives holding a master's or bachelor's degree must have completed **at least one (1)** of the following Executive Level or Advanced Police Leadership training courses (*Proof of Training Certificates required*)
 - Command Executives *without* a master's or bachelor's degree must have completed **at least two (2)** of the following Executive Level or Advanced Police Leadership training courses (*Proof of Training Certificates required*)
 - FBI National Academy
 - FBI LEEDA
 - Northwestern University Executive Management Program
 - Arizona Post Executive Leadership Program (ELP)
 - Southern Police Institute (SPI) Command Development Course
 - Police Executive Leadership Institute (PELI)
 - Other courses approved by the ALEAP Awards Committee*
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4. Agency Accreditation Requirement

Must be the current command executive at an agency that **currently enrolled*** or has an existing **ALEAP accredited agency**.

5. AACOP and/or ASA Membership

Must be an **active member of the Arizona Association of Chiefs of Police (AACOP)**, or if you work for a Sheriff's Department, the **Arizona Sheriff's Association (ASA)**.



Certification Requirements and Eligibility

Certification is valid for one year from the date awarded and must be renewed annually by meeting all ongoing program requirements. Failure to meet annual requirements may result in loss of certification. All applicants must meet **all** the criteria outlined below to obtain **FOCUS** Certification:

1. Academic Achievement Standards

- Must hold a **bachelor's or associate Degree** from an accredited academic institution (*Proof of Degree required*)

OR

- Must have served in the position of **Sergeant for at least two (2) years** and have completed **at least two (2)** management level or Advanced Police Leadership training courses listed in Section 3.
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2. Experience

Must have a **minimum of two (2) years of experience** serving at the **rank of Sergeant** at an ALEAP accredited agency.

3. Executive Level Training

Must have completed **at least two (2)** of the following Executive Level or Advanced Police Leadership training courses (*Proof of Training Certificates required*):

- FBI LEEDA
 - Arizona Post Executive Leadership Program (ELP)
 - Front Line Leadership
 - Other courses approved by the ALEAP Awards Committee*
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4. Agency Accreditation Requirement

Must be a current Sergeant at an agency that **currently enrolled*** or has an existing **ALEAP accredited agency**.

5. AACOP and/or ASA Membership

Must be an **active member of the Arizona Association of Chiefs of Police (AACOP)**, or if you work for a Sheriff's Department, the **Arizona Sheriff's Association (ASA)**.

Application & Fees for Certification

Application Process

1. Applicants must complete and submit the online application and provide all required documentation as listed on the application.
2. A **preliminary review** will be conducted by ALEAP staff and if the application meets all criteria for enrollment, the application will be sent to the ALEAP Awards Committee for review.
3. Upon approval by the ALEAP Awards Committee, applicants will receive an **email notification confirming enrollment and providing the applicant with the date, time, and location for the award presentation.**
4. **Fees:**
 - a. **Enrollment Fee:** Upon approval by the ALEAP Awards Committee, an invoice for **\$150.00** will be sent to the applicant. Payment must be received prior to award issuance.
 - b. **Annual Program Fee: \$100.00**, invoiced each year on the anniversary of the award.
5. The fees includes administrative costs, awards, challenge coins, pins, and ongoing compliance audits. See Annual Program Requirements to ensure continued compliance.

Awards & Award Ceremony

Approved certifications will be **formally presented at the next AACOP General Membership Meeting or ALEAP Conference**, where recipients will be recognized before law enforcement leaders, peers, and partners from across Arizona.




Applicants will receive notification of their certification approval **at least 30 days prior** to the next scheduled award presentation. Presenting certifications in this setting emphasizes the value of the achievement while recognizing the recipient's commitment to professional growth, leadership development, and excellence in service.

Annual Program Requirements

To maintain certification, participants must meet the following requirements:

AACOP and/or ASA Membership

 **All certified enrollees** must maintain an active AACOP and/or ASA Membership during the term of their certification.

Continued Leadership, Education, and Development


1. AACOP Meeting Attendance and Ongoing Training
 - Award members must attend **a minimum of two (2) AACOP Meetings per year.**
2. In addition, participants are required to **complete two (2) yearly ALEAP-approved continuing education.**
 - Topics will include current trends, legal updates, and leadership content relevant to police executives.
 - Approved continuing education courses will be listed on the ALEAP website.
 - *Other qualified training courses **may be submitted for review** for continuing education credit. Courses will be approved by the ALEAP Awards Committee. **Submissions should be sent a minimum of 30 days prior to the course being taken.**
 - **Courses to be reviewed should be sent via the ALEAP website at: <https://azleap.org/ace/>**

Certification Maintenance

ALEAP provides access to an online application where enrollees can manage their **enrollment, training records, and annual compliance requirements.** The application can be accessed using this link:

[ACE | FOCUS Member App](#)

This same link is also available on the ALEAP website under the **ACE | FOCUS** webpage.

 Please note that **each enrollee is responsible for ensuring their certification remains in compliance each year.** To help with that process, a **user guide** is available on the ALEAP website. In addition, once you log in to your account, you will find **help instructions within the application.**

Annual Audits

Annual Certification Audits

1. ALEAP staff will review each applicant's file and ensure all documentation has been received and meets requirements. All documents will be uploaded to ALEAP's database.
2. If the enrollee's agency does not complete the ALEAP self-assessment, or is no longer an accredited agency, the certification will not be renewed.
3. A report will be submitted to the ALEAP Commission for review during each scheduled ALEAP Commission Meeting. This report will detail all enrollees and their current standing. The report will include each enrollee's name, title, agency affiliation, annual compliance status, and dues payment summary.
4. Enrollees whose compliance requirements are satisfied, and dues payments are current, will have their certification continued for an additional year.
5. **Annual Program Fee:** \$100.00, invoiced each year on the awarded certification anniversary date.

To apply, visit our website at www.azleap.org/ace or scan the QR code below

