



## Montezuma County, Colorado

### The Organizational, Financial and Budget analysis of the Montezuma County Sheriff's Office

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Submitted to:  
**Board of County Commissioners**

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## Project Team

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## Executive Summary

Montezuma County retained KRW Associates LLC (KRW) to conduct an Organizational and Financial Assessment of the Sheriff's Office (MCSO). KRW commenced work on the project in November 2024 by gathering and analyzing data provided by the County Administrator and the Sheriff's Office. This contract is based on the formal proposal submitted by KRW which outlined the approach and scope of the project. The research design and methodology focused on collecting quantitative and qualitative data to explore topical issues related to the Sheriff's Office.

## Acknowledgement.

Assessments can be stressful, and many times resisted by members of the organization under review. That was not the case during this project. We want to acknowledge the assistance provided by Commissioners Candelaria, Lindsay and Koppenhafer, County Administrator Travis Anderson, County Finance staff, Sheriff Steve Nowlin, Undersheriff Tyson Cox, the MCSO command staff, supervisors, and the employees. Consultants were impressed with the caliber and professionalism of everyone contacted. The broad range of people contacted were candid, thoughtful and interested in offering observations and suggestions directed toward systemic improvement.

## Project Overview

The primary focus of the assessment was to conduct an evaluation of annual budget expenditures, operational and administrative efficiencies, potential cost savings and an analysis of staffing, including the Span of Control. Work on the project commenced in November 2024 with interviews with the County Administrator and a comprehensive review of data provided by the County. In January 2025, a KRW team conducted an on-sight visit to Montezuma County and conducted interviews with the County Commissioners, the County Administrator, the Finance staff, and the Sheriff, Undersheriff and Sheriff's Office staff. The interviews were constructive and provided important perceptions, observations, challenges, strengths, and weaknesses of the organization from their perspective. The KRW team also conducted visits/tours

of the Jail and the Sheriffs Headquarters. The assessment avoided rumor, insinuation, and any individual bias.

The assessment focused on the following major areas of the MCSO:

- Budgeting, Staffing and Resource Allocation.
- Detentions
- Administrative Practices
- Delivery of Services
- Patrol Staffing and Deployment Strategies
- Performance Measures
- Investigations

The Key Issues and Observations, Recommendations and Conclusions included in this report are the results of both a qualitative and quantitative examination of the data accumulated during the assessment and include observations, notes, discussions by the consultants and input from those interviewed and participating in interviews.

The report contains specific recommendations. Emphasis was given to considering the statutory requirements of the MCSO, non-obligatory programs or projects, input from interviews, observations, and review of current operational procedures. Practical, fiscally responsible considerations were incorporated into the rationale for the recommendations.

### **Key Issues and Observations**

The Assessment identifies 35 Key Issues and Observations and results in 15 specific Recommendations. The following Key Issues and Observations are discussed in more detail in the Final Report.

- The Montezuma County Sheriff Office is staffed with talented, proud, and professional employees, both sworn and civilian.
- It is evident from the input we received from employees that the leadership of the Office genuinely cares about the organization and the employees.
- Although there are issues outlined in this report that need to be addressed, there are several reasons to celebrate the accomplishments of the MCSO.
- Declining revenues due primarily to the Colorado State Legislative action reducing the residential property taxation rate and a substantial reduction in production by the Kinder-Morgan mine, are a challenge for the County and all County departments, including the MCSO. It appears there was a policy change by the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) in 2022 to increase county reserve funding.
- In May 2023, in preparation for County Agencies to start developing their 2024 budgets, there were clear guidelines issued to all elected officials and county departments. The Administration contends the Sheriff ignored those guidelines.

- During the assessment it was asserted that in the 2024 budget the Sheriff arbitrarily reallocated a 5% COLA approved by the BOCC intended for all employees to select employees ranging from 0% to 25%. However, the Sheriff presented his Position/Annual Pay Grade plan to the BOCC on August 15, 2023. It was subsequently approved by the BOCC on November 14, 2023. The Sheriff contends this approval was used to set salaries for each MCSO member in 2024 in accordance with the approved pay plan.
- In March 2024, the County Finance Department sent a memo to the Sheriff and MCSO budget staff that the first quarter of 2024 showed an overspending pattern by the MCSO and forecast a sizeable deficit if corrective action was not taken. According to County Administration, this advisory was ignored by the MCSO. The Sheriff contends he was expecting attrition to take care of the projected deficit and believes it would have if the Delores contract had been approved and allocated.
- A series of events and actions by the Sheriff were described as precipitating the erosion of trust between the County Commissioners, County Administrator, County staff and the Sheriff. However, the Sheriff provided reasonable explanations, and it further underscores the lack of trust and communication. This is an untenable situation and must be addressed.
- The public nature of the conflict between the Commissioners and the Sheriff is having a negative effect on MCSO personnel morale and is creating an environment of uncertainty.
- Meaningful communication between Commissioners and the Sheriff is non-existent. This is noticed by personnel within the agency and is fairly well known throughout the community. Several issues precipitating this assessment may well have been avoided with mutual cooperation and genuine communication.
- Communication within the MCSO needs to be improved.
- The Detention operation is well-run. However, there are both safety and liability issues discussed later in this report.
- In Detentions, the lack of both basic custodial officer and supervisory training is both a safety and liability issue.
- The KRW team closely reviewed the supervisory span of control throughout the Office. Although at first glance it appears the Span of Control is top-heavy, further examination indicates the supervisory span of control is appropriate. There are 7 sergeants for 25 personnel (3.5 per supervisor) this includes both patrol and detentions. Patrol has 4 sergeants providing 1 supervisor for each of the four 12-hour shifts. There are two sergeants in Detectives—1 each in Investigations and Narcotics. In our judgement this is clearly justified due to the critical nature of the functions and necessity for supervisory oversight.
- Kitchen Supervision: Although initially it appeared a sergeant supervising eight civilian personnel was not proper use of a supervisor, closer examination determined otherwise. The Administration Sergeant supervises the kitchen staff, Southwest Medical Staff, Axis

Jail Mental Health and is the inmate disciplinary officer. The position also oversees the critical function of records requests for the jail.

- As with most public safety organizations, the primary budget expense is personnel. Patrol and Detentions are all staffed at their (absolute) minimum levels. Care should be exercised in comparing various organizations since geography and environment places different responsibilities on law enforcement organizations.
- Costs to operate the MCSO are similar to other Sheriff's Offices their size in Colorado. Comparable data for other small Colorado Sheriff's Offices is attached as Addendum II.
- The MCSO has a collaborative relationship with other agencies in the county. However, as outlined in this report there are several areas requiring contracts or Memorandums of Understanding (MOU's) where services from the MCSO are being provided. In addition, there is no indication that an Inter-governmental agreement (IGA) or MOU exists regarding the Narcotics Unit involvement in the local task force with the City of Cortez.
- There was significant concern expressed by employees that internal communication needs to be improved. Conflicting and unreliable information results in confusion and cynicism by employees. This issue is discussed later in this report.
- The current benefit of take-home vehicles should be reevaluated. Although this is appreciated by employees, is it cost efficient? A clear public safety justification for the take home policy should be documented and not just a benefit.
- Similar to public safety agencies across the nation, the MCSO is experiencing a relatively high turnover rate, losing significant members of the workforce over the past five years. Pay and benefits were mentioned numerous times as a retention issue. See attrition data in Recommendation # 10.
- The Sheriff proposed, and the County approved, a pay scale with nine steps for Deputies to receive the highest level of pay (job rate). Most law enforcement agencies require no more than four years to reach job rate. We believe this leads to recruiting and retention problems for the Sheriff's Office. We believe this pay scale should be re-evaluated, perhaps with the assistance of the Mountain States Employers Council or a similar agency.
- The county lacks a position control procedure that accurately tracks authorized positions and the salary, benefit package for each position. The county has an expectation that each Department and Elected Office have a pay plan that provides adjustments for each year for nine years, longevity increases after that. The Sheriff's approved pay plan appears to meet these criteria, however, County officials do not believe he is following the required plan.
- The Sheriff's Office is lax in submitting invoices for payment in a timely manner. County Finance personnel asserted that the Sheriff often misses deadlines to approve invoices for payment, citing one instance where an internal vehicle maintenance invoice incurred in 2023 was not approved until well into 2024, skewing the Sheriff's vehicle maintenance budget.

- The reason for significant errors in billing and coding from the Sheriff's Office needs to be corrected. Sheriff's personnel do not believe they have received adequate training in the County's finance system.
- Although School Resource Officers (SRO's) are not a statutory responsibility, their presence in the school environment has proven to be effective in enhancing safety and security, function as a resource for students and staff, and foster positive relationships between law enforcement and the school community. Providing that service, however without a financial partnership with the school district, is not defensible. In addition, there is no IGA with the school district.
- Providing escort security services for the Casino is not a statutory requirement and results in an unrecovered expense. There should be a contract in place that covers the expense of the service, or it should be discontinued.
- Staffing in critical service delivery areas such as patrol and detentions is inadequate. This observation and recommendation(s) will be discussed more in this report. The lack of both leadership and supervisory training is both a safety and liability issue.
- All patrol deputies, sergeants and frequently the Lieutenant Undersheriff and Sheriff handle calls for service.
- Narcotics Enforcement: The MCSO leads a multi-jurisdiction drug investigation team in partnership with the Cortez Police Department. This task force historically operates with assistance from Department of Justice (DOJ), Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) and the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) division of drug investigation under an Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Forces (OCDETF) agreement. This two-person team, with the assistance of an analyst conduct significant numbers of narcotics related investigations and develop cases resulting in arrests. They also provide training to local fire department, the police academy and other area projects. The KRW team was impressed with the effectiveness of the Narcotics team considering limited staffing.
- The MCSO utilizes Best Practices in important administrative areas such as Personnel Investigations, Citizen Complaints, Personnel Evaluations, and Promotional Process. Several other areas, however, need review and attention.
- Best practices in offering "in-service" training are utilized by the Office. It ensures all POST required subjects and firearm qualification requirements are complied with. All full-time, part-time, and reserve deputy sheriffs must participate in at least 24 hours of annual in-service training. Of the 24 hours, a minimum of 12 of those hours must be in perishable skills training (Arrest Control, Driving, and Firearms) and all three of the skills areas must be covered each year. This is a minimum standard. It appears that MCSO is in compliance with the POST training mandate. A thorough and well thought out training program (to include leadership and supervisory training) is one of the keys to reducing liability and being an effective and efficient law enforcement organization. Currently it does not appear there is sufficient budget for more than the basic training required for sworn personnel in any of the MCSO divisions or detentions.

- There was a thorough review of the current policy manual. The sheriff's office uses the LEXIPOL system and is maintained and updated annually by staff at MCSO. LEXIPOL is a private company that provides state specific law enforcement agencies with policy manuals that are researched and developed by industry experts. LEXIPOL is very popular in Colorado and has been endorsed and supported in recent years by counties and cities statewide. In addition to providing an ever-evolving agency policy manual they also provide daily training bulletins, reviews of state specific legislative changes, research papers, survey results, resources, and assistance in obtaining state accreditation. This resource improves liability reduction, assists with meeting state POST training requirements, assists with securing grants, provides law enforcement news and analysis, and contributes to deputy health and wellness.

LEXIPOL currently provides services to more than 10,000 public safety agencies and over 2 million public safety professionals throughout the United States and is widely recognized as the industry standard.

- The functions and services of the MCSO were closely examined and evaluated considering the statutory requirements of the Colorado Revised Statutes. It is our conclusion that, with a few exceptions outlined in this report, Sheriff Nowlin is operating well within those statutory requirements.

## **Final Report**

The Montezuma County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) retained KRW Associates LLC to assess specific aspects of the Sheriff's Office (MCSO). The scope of the project was to compare current practices to both industry standards and best practices; to create a benchmark against which options for future service delivery can be measured; and to provide recommendations for program refinements and efficiencies, and new strategies, budget/fiscal and resource modifications.

Work on the project commenced in November 2024 with discussions with the County Administrator and review of reports and documents. In January 2025, an onsite visit was conducted including interviews of the three County Commissioners, the County Manager, the Sheriff, and the Sheriff's Office Staff Officers. The purpose of these initial interviews was to gain more specific information regarding the scope of the project and the perspectives of individual elected officials and command level employees.

Those contacted by the project team were straightforward, candid, and willing to express their opinions and observations. As with any large organization it is expected there will be differing perspectives and personal bias. The material in this report avoided rumors, insinuation, and isolated, irrelevant comments. Legitimacy comes from general themes contained in the qualitative data.

The protocol of questions used for the interviews was consistently applied to determine the perceived strengths, areas for improvement, current challenges, budget issues, quality of service delivery, organizational environment, communication, and leadership.

The work plan for the assessment was broken down into the following focus areas:

- Information from interviews with elected officials, county staff, the Sheriff, and members of this staff.
- Thorough review of numerous documents provided to the KRW team from both the administration and the Sheriff and his MCSO staff.
- Management and Organizational Issues:
  - Policy and procedure review
  - Organizational structure and management
  - Vision, Mission, and Core Values
  - Budget practices
  - Current services and cost benefit
  - Leadership
  - Performance appraisal process
  - Training
  - Promotion process
- Detentions:
  - Facility review
  - Staffing
  - Security/Safety and Risk
- Delivery of law enforcement services:
  - Patrol service delivery
  - Staffing and supervisory assignments
  - Deployment strategies
  - Investigations
  - Narcotics
- Use of technology:
  - Records
  - Evidence
  - Use of data in decision making

## County Overview

### **Montezuma County Demographics**

Website <https://montezumacounty.org>

Located in the southwestern corner of Colorado it includes the towns of Cortez, Dolores, and Mancos as well as the Ute Mountain Ute Indian Reservation.

Montezuma County Total Area – 2,029 square miles and a population of 12.7 per square mile. As of July 2023, the population was listed as 26,531 with 15,500 living in unincorporated portions. Cortez (the county seat is 6.23 sq miles in size) has an approximate population of 9,033, Mancos (.6 square miles in size) has approximately 1,196 residents and Dolores (roughly 425 acres in size) is approximately 852. There are approximately 1,500 residents of the Ute Mountain Ute Indian Reservation that is 864 square miles in size which is primarily located in southwestern Colorado and northwestern New Mexico and small portions in Utah.

The elevation of Montezuma County ranges from about 6,000 feet to 13,200 feet. The county has the second largest reservoir in Colorado (McPhee Reservoir) near the town of Dolores.

Much of the county is irrigated cropland, that primarily produces fruit, large numbers of cattle and sheep, as well as beans. It is served by U.S. Highways 160 and 491 (formerly US 666), and by the Cortez Municipal Airport. The county has no rail service, although both Mancos and Dolores were established as railroad towns in the 1890s.

As of July of 2023, there were just over 10,915 households with 2.37 per, and 6,500 families residing in the county. The population density was 12 people per square mile (4.6 people/km).

The racial makeup of the county is 81.6% White, 1% Black or African American, 13.6% Native American, 0.9% Asian, 0.1% Pacific Islander, and 2.8% from two or more races. 12.7% of the population were Hispanic or Latino of any race.

There were 12,418 housing units out of which 74.8% are owner occupied and a median value of \$308,100. Median monthly mortgage costs are \$1,481 while median rent costs are \$974. 91% of the population above 25 years old have graduated High School, 30.8% have a bachelor's or higher degree. Median household income is just over \$63,000 and roughly 14% live below the poverty level.

The budget for Montezuma County totals \$50,098,768. The General Fund for County operations is \$16,319,231, with the remainder of the budget in special funds, such as Road and Bridge, Health Department Social Services, etc. The Sheriff's Office combined budgets total \$6,990,875 or 42.8% of the General Fund budget.

### **Sheriff's Office (MCSO) Overview**

Website: <https://montezumacounty.org/sheriffoffice/>

The duties and responsibilities of the Sheriff are set forth in Colorado Revised Statutes. The statutory mandates for the Sheriff cover a wide range of topics. These include topics like maintaining peace and order in Montezuma County, providing general law enforcement services to all unincorporated areas of the County, operating the jail, serving criminal warrants and civil process throughout the entire county as directed by the Courts, coordinating search and rescue efforts, suppressing prairie and forest fires in Montezuma County and performing other duties as directed by Colorado State Statutes and the Courts. Although Montezuma County is over 2,000 square miles, over 70% is Forest and/or tribal lands. The statutory references are listed below:

- Custodian of Jail (C.R.S. 30-10-511)
- Act as Fire Warden (C.R.S. 30-10-512)
- In charge of fire expenses (C.R.S. 30-10-513)
- Transportation of Prisoners (C.R.S. 30-10-514)
- Execution of Writs – Attend Courts (C.R.S. 30-10-515)
- Preserve Peace – Command Aid (C.R.S. 30-10-516)
- Issues Concealed Handgun Permits (C.R.S. 30-10-523)
- Search and Rescue Responsibility (C.R.S. 24-33.5-707(10)

## Recommendations

### Recommendation #1 – Budget

The Sheriff's Office budget, as is the case with most police agencies, is largely personnel expenditures. The Sheriff's Office and the County should come to a clear understanding of the number of personnel that are required to safely administer the jail, patrol the county, investigate crimes, and provide Sheriff's Office administrative services.

### Discussion

As discussed below, we believe Sheriff's Office is critically short of personnel both in Detentions and on Patrol. It appears that there was an assumption that because the sheriff failed to expend portions of its budget, that allocation was not needed. In fact, one of the reasons that he failed to expend the personnel budget was because the Sheriff was unable to attract and retain personnel. This appears to be a contributing factor to the lack of trust discussed above. The County and the Sheriff's Office should consider requesting a salary survey from the Employers Council ([Colorado Offices - Employers Council](#)) or another similar organization to determine appropriate salary levels and pay grades which would reflect practices in similar size sheriff's offices in the state with particular attention paid to the length of time it takes a Sheriff's Office employee to reach job rate. With this done, the Sheriff's Office and the County should be able to predict what the costs would be for an appropriately sized Sheriff's Office operation. Additionally, budgets should recognize that it takes 6 to 9 months to train an individual to become a certified sheriff deputy, and given the rate of pay it is very difficult to attract quality personnel who are already certified. The assumption that budgets which are unspent are budgets which are unneeded is erroneous. Budget plans should recognize that there is a natural ebb and flow in staffing police agencies due to this training requirement and allow for some additional budget to recognize the need to over staff for a period of time at each budget year. (See the discussion on workload analysis below.) Clearly the county will not be able to immediately implement additional positions but can develop a plan to do so over time.

The personnel we interviewed believed that there is a serious lack of cooperation and communication during the budget process. The budget process should be a period where elected officials and department heads can openly and honestly discuss needs and opportunities and have their discussions seriously considered by budget officials preparing the county's budget. Funds are always scarce, and most elected officials understand they are unlikely to get everything they ask for but should be assured that every effort will be made to get the resources they need to do the job they are required to do. As it stands now the sheriff does not feel as though he is being heard at the budget table, and frankly budget officials do not think the Sheriff's Office is sharing an accurate picture of needs and opportunities.

- The Sheriff's office budget has been decreased to bring it into line with its actual expenses. In 2020 the MCSO underspending total combined budget for the Sheriff's office, detentions and law enforcement authority was \$1.1955 million, in 2021 \$967,020, in 2023, the Sheriff's Office underspending was almost \$700,000. Moving forward, the county is trying to ensure that Sheriff's office expenses are appropriately justified in the budget process and encoded correctly to the appropriate line items. However, the Sheriff contends that much of the under spending was due to the fact that he was unable to attract and retain deputies. So, when deputies were hired at a lower range, they did not spend as much money as deputies who had been there longer and then resigned. Additionally, as indicated above, it takes a long time to hire and train a deputy, leaving positions open and resulting in underspending.

- Another reason for the decrease in Sheriff's office budget was the relocation of \$231,000 for software licenses and service contracts that were removed from the MCSO budget to the IT budget. In 2025 those expenses were relocated back to the Sheriff's budget, with oversight from the IT department. In addition, the 2024 budget decreased when the County and the Town of Delores failed to approve the contract amount for law enforcement services to Delores Colorado.
- The county made the decision to spend down the Law Enforcement Authority (LEA) fund which had grown to a reserve of \$1.4 million by 2021. In addition, this decision relieves some of the pressure on the general fund that was brought about by state legislature action. The amount in LEA reserves in 2024 was \$184,994. It should be noted that this action will prevent the Sheriff from using LEA funds for special projects and equipment, as most of the LEA budget will be spent on salaries and benefits. The LEA funds were moved to the Sheriff's budget in 2025.
- KRW was provided with a copy of the proposed salary schedule presented to the Board of County commissioners by the Sheriff on November 14, 2023. The BOCC approved the salary schedule with the comment that he would have to make it work within his allotted budget. The Sheriff implemented the 5% salary adjustment consistent with the salary schedule approved by the BOCC. The salary schedule is more complex than is needed and seems to take an inordinate amount of time to reach the top of the salary scale or job rate. Normally the job rate can be achieved in law enforcement agencies within three to five years, rather than the nine years contained in the approved salary schedule.
- According to data from The Montezuma County budget office, County reserves in 2021 were \$21.708 million, climbing to \$25.08 million in 2022, \$27.284 million in 2023 and \$26.309 million in 2024 (unaudited). The projected 2025 reserve is \$24.347 million. The commissioners have asked for a plan for the county reserves. The Budget Office has proposed that the county set a goal or target of 12 months of general fund operating funds as a reserve fund balance, transfer \$6 million to the capital fund for capital projects, including upgrades at the jail and develop or update a capital improvement plan and transfer \$1 million to the contingency fund. The 2025 general fund budget pulls \$1.7 million of reserves for operations. After the funds transfer there are about \$3 million of reserves over and above the proposed year of operating reserve to supplement the general fund over the next two to three years.
- According to Montezuma county Budget Office personnel, the county asked all departments to maintain flat budgets in 2023, 2024, and 2025. However, the Sheriff's Office net decrease from 2022 to 2024 was \$277,552 or a net decrease of 6.68% in funds available to the Sheriff's Office, excluding the jail which remained fairly stable. The 2025 budget has increased by \$758,069 over 2024. This increase is attributed to an increase of \$275,000 for the Delores contract, an increase of \$231,694 attributed to returning the IT budget to the Sheriff's Office with oversight by the IT Department. The remaining \$251,375 is likely due to the way LEA funding is recognized in the budget. So, it appears the Sheriff's budget is essentially flat relative to 2024.

## **Recommendation #2 – Comprehensive Patrol Staffing Study**

**We recognize the budget issues facing the County; however, we also recognize the safety and performance issues inherent in inadequate staffing. It is recommended that as a follow up to this assessment, a comprehensive, detailed staffing study be conducted of the MCSO to determine staffing needs for Patrol.**

### **Discussion**

Consistent with the Scope of this assessment, KRW analyzed the current staffing and span of control of the MCSO. That included a review of the current scheduling and the deployment scheme and supervisory oversight. It is our conclusion that there are not sufficient patrol deputies to adequately provide for officer safety and law enforcement services to the County when considering required relief factors such as Vacation, Comp Time, Sick Time, Training, Military service, etc.

For the Patrol Division, based solely on total calls for service (cfs) analysis, there were 15,534 calls answered in 2024, or roughly 42 calls per day. Removing an average of 6 calls per day in the town of Dolores, 36 cfs remain in the county. Further analysis is required to determine call types (emergent, etc.), response times and types as well as the average length of time on each call to identify any potential trends or anomalies. Considering that these 13,000 calls for service are handled primarily by 9 deputies and 4 sergeants, the average is roughly 1,000 cfs for each throughout the year or an average of just under 7 per shift every single day by every single person.

The above does not account for cover calls requiring multiple units or calls requiring a supervisor to respond for several reasons. In any case, this number will most likely prove to be more significant as additional analysis is conducted and evaluated. It is, however, less than what most would consider minimal given our experience with rural law enforcement.

The MCSO reports the lack of personnel results in callouts frequently. The need arises to have off-duty deputies called in to work in both patrol and detentions almost weekly. The jail struggles more often with call outs occurring 2 to 3 shifts per week. These call outs generate additional budgetary costs for overtime and added personnel stress and fatigue.

**Note regarding overtime:** There appears to be an inconsistency between actual budgetary funds spent on overtime and the purported drain on overtime funds due to callouts. A thorough examination of overtime budgeted and spent for the past five years shows both patrol and detentions significantly underspent the respective budgeted overtime amounts. In no year through 2023, did patrol or detentions exceed the budgeted overtime.

Sergeants and frequently the Lieutenant, Undersheriff and the Sheriff are often required to cover patrol shifts and handle calls for service. It is anticipated that staffing will be even shorter in patrol in April to cover Dolores while one of the two deputies assigned to Dolores is scheduled to have surgery due to an on-duty injury.

Additionally, the Sheriff found it necessary to cancel a POST grant awarded to MCSO to send non-certified deputies from the Detention Center to the POST LE Academy. This grant is necessary to develop patrol resources from within, as an incentive. He relates that due to low staffing, there is not sufficient workforce to allow personnel off to become certified. The Sheriff relayed that he currently has two deputies in the jail that graduated from the POST Academy last December that he is unable to transfer to patrol.

To ensure adequate staffing it is recommended that a minimum of three deputies and a sergeant be on duty on each shift.

A comprehensive Staffing Study would require the following:

- Through review of Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) data for the past 3 years.
- Computer comparisons of staffing models including 8,10- and 12-hour schedules.
- Use of available discretionary time.
- Thorough review of deployment data such as Calls for Service—day, time, location, type of call, response times and number of deputies dispatched.
- Review all aspects of the Criminal Investigations including case assignment; caseloads; case closure procedures; and case filings/prosecutions.

**Note:** Addendum III contains a discussion on an approach to determining staffing needs. This is intended for reference only and not a substitute for the recommended comprehensive staffing study. If requested, KRW staff will assist MCSO staff with this process for both Recommendations #2 and #3.

### **Recommendation #3 - Comprehensive Detention Staffing Study**

**Similar to Recommendation #2, it is recommended that a comprehensive study be conducted of Detention Staffing, including a Risk Assessment and Training needs and the expected Colorado Jail Standards Legislation.**

#### **Discussion**

Based on requirements being placed on jails by legislators, courts and industry experts, the number of personnel required to run a safe and properly administered facility requires additional comprehensive analysis as well. Requirements for meeting minimal training, supervision of inmates and personnel, minimum requirements for programs, systems, food, and medical service, etc. will substantially modify minimum staffing numbers. The Jail should be conducting ward checks at intervals of not less than 30 minutes based on recent court decisions and best practices. It is likely that upcoming legislative jail standards requirements will require inspections with 15-minute intervals. In addition, there must be sufficiently trained and available personnel inside the jail to respond to emergency situations that have and will arise. These dynamic and quickly evolving situations cannot wait for support personnel to arrive to the facility.

The MCSO Detention Operation has 29 authorized sworn positions including a Lieutenant and five Supervisors (a staff sergeant, an Administrative sergeant and three shift sergeants). Staffing is low with only 13 non-POST certified deputies working in the jail, especially during evening hours when only two deputies are normally present. The remainder for booking, transporting, medical and court transports, food service and general technicians to fix problems. These duties can leave the jail with only one deputy present for periods of time. It is clear there is an urgent need for more personnel in Detentions.

The following are the primary areas of concern as a result of inadequate staff in a detection facility: inability to comply with impending Jail Standards that will come into effect July 2026, Inmate Management, insufficient and inconsistent security rounds, appropriate training for supervisors and detention deputies, overall consistency in operations, and the safety of inmates and detentions staff.

The MCSO detentions facility capacity is 104 beds, and in 2024 the average daily population was 75. While inmate population in the jail has decreased in recent years, the facility continues to

experience a high volume of daily intakes and releases. Operating at minimum staffing levels creates increased liability and safety/security risks. These include:

1. Decreased direct inmate monitoring, observation time and staff availability to detect, mitigate, and respond to potential assaults and other critical emergencies, as well as criminal actions.
2. Increased numbers of inmate lockdowns, which leads to frustration within inmate populations.
3. Cancelled or decreased inmate access to educational and treatment programming.
4. Misplaced use and over-reliance on cameras and sensors. These are now being used as a replacement for staff.

**Training:** Failure to train creates significant increases in liability and potential litigation. Training is being cancelled or scaled back due to staff time constraints or to ensure overtime costs are not increased. New hires go through a basic 3-week course which includes Tactical training, Pepper spray and Taser training but there is no follow-up training to maintain even basic skill levels. There is a lack of proper training for front-line supervisors. This presents an increased failure to supervise and increased liability exposure due to the supervisors being required to fill line-level shifts rather than perform minimal supervisory functions.

**Inmate Management:** There is a lack of inmate management within the facility due to operating at minimal staff levels. Inmates are aware that deputies are busy and spread thin, therefore they openly and knowingly violate housing rules and regulations. Deputies are left to inconsistently attempt to enforce rules, depending on daily duties. In 2024 it was reported that there were over 100 disruptions that needed three or more deputies, 16 inmate assaults and 29 contraband disciplinary actions. Adequate staffing would provide personnel with the ability to conduct consistent security rounds and walk-throughs to ensure a safer and secure detention environment is being maintained.

**Housing area searches:** These searches are critical to the discovery of dangerous contraband such as weapons and drugs as well as a means of clearing housing units of clutter. Searches should be done on a regular basis so that inmates have the expectation that they cannot conceal contraband within the facility without serious risk of repercussion. Searches are now only conducted when and if time permits.

**Emergency drills:** These have been conducted in the past but apparently have not taken place for several years due to staffing shortages, overtime constraints and staff turnover. The lack of conducting these drills creates additional liability and should become prioritized.

#### **Recommendation #4 – Resource Allocation**

**Thoughtful consideration should be given to raising sworn staffing levels to pre-2022 levels and including additional positions in patrol, evidence, and the jail.**

#### **Discussion**

As stated in the above recommendations, a review of how resources are allocated indicates there is a need for additional personnel in both patrol and detentions.

Patrol levels are currently unable to sustain staffing sufficient to meet the needs of the jurisdiction given the response times and the level of calls for service. The result is the need to schedule personnel on 12-hour shifts which allows coverage but not at the level necessary for proactive

enforcement and community engagement. In addition, long shifts tend to lead to fatigue related errors and burnout.

There is a significant amount of illegal narcotics traffic in and through the Montezuma County area. In 2023 there was a record-breaking year by the Montezuma/Cortez Narcotics Investigation Unit (MCNIT) for the most narcotics ever seized in Montezuma County. These numbers included but were not limited to 126,542.812 grams of crystal methamphetamine, 878.4855 grams of fentanyl, and 7.4 pounds of cocaine. The Sheriff is currently considering combining the S/W Drug Task Force with the LaPlata County Sheriff's Office. This would benefit both agencies and result in budget savings by eliminating the civilian analyst position and not extending the current lease of the Task Force facility. The Narcotics Detective Sergeant would be assigned to that new partnership.

There is no budget allocated that would provide advanced or ongoing training, specialized equipment, short-term acquisition of undercover vehicles or short notice travel. There does appear to be a fund available for undercover investigation and related expenses but no specifics regarding that fund were discussed, however certain safeguards for these funds should be clearly established, enforced, and audited.

Evidence collection, storage and maintenance are critical functions. MCSO Policy 802 is comprehensive and consistent with industry standards. It is unclear, however, how frequently there is an audit of stored evidence and property. Yearly audits of the property room are a minimum standard for every agency. Tracing items from entry to disposal through filed paperwork or destruction bins validates the integrity of the agency. It is recommended a full-time non-sworn evidence technician should be added and an immediate audit should be conducted of all items held as evidence conducted within the following six months.

In our view, 12-hour shifts are not ideal for police work. Although favored by some employees, the day gets long, and fatigue could have impacts on driving and officer safety. Also, because of staffing shortages, personnel may only receive 20 hours of training per year. This is only enough to complete POST-required training and in reality, this should be at least 40 hours per year.

Low patrol staffing has a ripple effect on other important aspects of the patrol deputies and sergeant work week and professional development. Staffing impacts the schedule on patrol, impacts the ability of the deputies to get time off, and receive training. The low staffing has officer safety implications and impacts response time to calls in a large county.

In Detectives there is a Sergeant and three detectives (currently two with one long-term sick). At the time of the assessment interviews, the three detectives had a total of nine assigned cases. From the information provided by the Detective Sergeant, there is a Detective Sergeant, three detectives and a civilian digital/forensic analyst who also manages evidence. Detectives are carrying an average daily case load of seven cases each, even though they report investigating 84 cases in 2024. They are also involved in a statewide auto theft task force "*Beat Auto Theft Through Law Enforcement*" (BATTLE) along with the Colorado State Patrol. This team also provides assistance with narcotics investigations when needed.

As stated earlier, the Jail should be conducting ward checks at intervals of less than 30 minutes based on recent court decisions and best practices. It is likely that upcoming jail standards requirements will be more in line with 15-minute intervals. In addition, there must be sufficiently trained and available personnel inside the jail to respond to emergency situations that have and

will arise. These dynamic and quickly evolving issues cannot wait for support personnel to arrive to the facility.

Staff perishable skill training throughout the agency must be increased to avoid litigation, and this can only be accomplished with adding personnel. Leadership and supervisory training must be increased throughout the agency to avoid litigation, and this can only be accomplished by not requiring supervisors and leadership personnel from handling daily line level tasking. They need the time to actually supervise and lead in order to be effective.

#### **Recommendation #5 – Contracts**

**It is recommended that in future years all contracts, MOU's and IGA's be negotiated and signed prior to budget formulation to provide proper planning and fiscal control.**

#### **Discussion**

**School Resource Officers (SRO)** The MCSO has provided a school resource officer for Dolores High School since 2015. There has never been a service contract with either Dolores or Cortez School Districts. The Sheriff has continued to provide the service despite the absence of an IGA or Cost for Service Agreement. While not a statutory requirement, it is prudent to have the SRO present to continue to develop relationships and to deter criminal activity. It is recommended that a cost-sharing partnership between the School District and the MCSO be established and maintained. Recovering the costs for school resource officers is standard practice. In addition, it is recommended that a signed contract be required to ensure service agreements. Failure to operate with a current contract is not responsible and risks civil liability.

**Delores Law Enforcement Contract** This contract has been in place for a number of years and appears to have become an issue in 2024. It appears that communication issues hampered /impaired the signing and implementation of this contract leading to a shortfall in the Sheriff's budget. In discussions with the Sheriff, this contract provides funding for increased levels of law enforcement and traffic accident investigation within the town of Dolores above the minimal amounts provided routinely to unincorporated portions of the county.

The Sheriff indicates he worked for several months with the Dolores City Manager, a Town Board Member, the Town Attorney, County Manager and the BOCC to develop a proposed contract for \$250,000. This represented a \$30,000 increase from the 2023 contract, and he felt justifiable and recovered the costs to the MCSO. An updated contract was prepared and signed by the Sheriff and the Mayor of Dolores as well as the town board. When presented to the Commissioners for their required signature, the Commissioners raised the amount of the new contract to \$375,000 in an attempt to have Dolores cover the cost of firearms, ammunition, body cameras, uniforms and more. That proposed contract was not signed and approved by the Town of Dolores or the Sheriff and consequently there was no contract in effect for 2024. For the 2025 budget that amount was eventually lowered to \$274,000. In this process, it does not appear there was a clear accounting justifying the contract amount and the rationale communicated. We believe there was a clear justification for the BOCC to request a specific accounting of the cost of the services being provided. It is recommended that in future years this contract be negotiated in advance of budget preparation and the MCSO presents clear itemization for the cost projected. Under no circumstances should the service be provided without a contract in place.

**Ute Mountain Ute Reservation Contract** The Sheriff's Office conducts a number of different services for the Ute Mountain Ute Reservation to include contracted security for casino money

escorts, training, and covering calls for service. This ended on June 1, 2023, and became an “as needed” basis.

Again, as is the case with the Dolores contract, it is imperative that in future years that any contract is negotiated and signed at the beginning of each year to provide for the proper planning and training needed. Any future services provided by the MCSO to the Casino should require a contract or approved Memorandum of Understanding.

#### **Recommendation #6 - Internal Communication**

**It is recommended that the MCSO formulate a specific communication plan for the Sheriff’s Office which will focus on accurate, meaningful, and consistent information being shared across the organization. The plan should be transparent and have a mechanism for follow-up and clarification if questions arise.**

#### **Discussion**

The 24/7 nature of a law enforcement organization presents unique challenges ensuring a unity of consistent, accurate, information and direction to employees. From our interviews, a consistent flow of reliable information within the Office is lacking. This creates a void of direction and misinformation relative to the mission and vision of the organization. It also creates an environment for rumors and unproductive guessing. Steps should be taken immediately to improve communication within the organization by establishing weekly informative staff meetings, open communicative shift briefings, and quarterly department meetings.

A consistent theme from employees, both sworn and civilian, was that there is very poor communication throughout the organization and misinformation regarding County Commissioners and Administrator positions and policies. The lack of consistent, accurate and meaningful communication is an issue that results in conflicting messages. Regular staff meetings with the Sheriff and command staff do not occur. There was frustration expressed about the accuracy, consistency, and delivery method of information sharing. Because of the 24/7 nature of law enforcement, communication can be challenging, however it should be made a priority to see that employees feel they are informed about what is happening not only in patrol, but across the organization.

#### **Recommendation #7 – Performance Measures**

**A formal process for setting goals, then measuring and reporting on the progress should be implemented.**

#### **Discussion**

The assessment team thoroughly reviewed the administrative practices and policies of the MCSO. We found that the current administrative practices utilized by the MCSO are consistent with law enforcement organization’s best practices. However, we recommend that certain specific areas should be reviewed and measured.

The Sheriff’s Office should engage in an annual goal setting process with key MCSO staff members and county stakeholders. Those goals should establish an annual strategic plan whereby a report is generated on progress toward those goals. Reports should be developed quarterly and written reports developed annually in a report that is made public. In conjunction to this annual goal setting, the Sheriff’s Office should determine minimum levels of staffing for community and officer safety and report annually the number of times that minimum number was not maintained. As an example, we believe that at least three deputies and one sergeant should be on patrol duty at any one time. This number

will likely be higher during peak workload times, typically 6:00 pm until midnight. Similarly, minimum staffing levels should be determined for Detentions and reported out annually. KRW staff are available to advise and mentor MCSO on developing this recommendation and the benefits it should realize.

We recommend the MCSO develop a method to document and report the number of call outs required in both patrol and detentions and take-home vehicle usage.

#### **Recommendation #8 – Use of Technology**

**MCSO makes appropriate use of available technology. Improved firearms systems are available and should be acquired. In addition, anticipated rising cost for body camera storage should be planned for.**

#### **Discussion**

MCSO utilizes mobile data computers in patrol vehicles that allow deputies to access the agencies records management system. MCSO uses the Eforce integrated records management system. The same system allows deputies to access evidence entry and files. State and Federal reporting programs like the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS). Today, agencies need systems that can guide officers through what are oftentimes complicated reporting requirements.

Body cameras are required by state statute and demand significant amounts of storage and file maintenance. MCSO accomplishes this through an annual contract with Axon and evidence.com. Rising costs to store body camera footage should be anticipated and budgeted for.

MCSO is lacking in state-of-the-art firearm technology. They are not utilizing the latest RMR sight systems that are currently available as well as utilizing external load-bearing body armor. The load bearing systems available in recent years have proven through multiple studies that they reduce back injuries compared to the traditional belt systems. While these systems have increased upfront costs, law enforcement professionals understand the benefits and often use these when making employment decisions.

#### **Recommendation #9 – Internal Controls and Oversight**

**The MCSO has been lax in approving and submitting invoices for payment. On March 1, 2025, County Finance will oversee finances of the Sheriff's Office. It is recommended that the control process is well understood by both the County and MCSO.**

#### **Discussion**

We note that the county has recently decided to manage all invoices and payments for the Sheriff's Office, while charging back the office for the services. The Sheriff must still sign all invoices before they are processed.

General Internal Administrative controls and Oversight are consistent with best practices and the MCSO Policy Manual.

#### **Recommendation #10 – Recruitment and Retention**

**It is recommended that a more formal recruitment and retention plan be developed, including the consideration of a bonus program and salary adjustments to be more in line with current law enforcement markets/policies.**

#### **Discussion**

Recruitment of law enforcement personnel has become difficult throughout the United States. In recent years Colorado law enforcement agencies have been experiencing a 30 percent vacancy factor and extreme difficulty in recruiting, especially in small and rural law enforcement agencies. The State of Colorado developed a grant program called SMART (State's Mission for Assistance in Recruiting and Training) designed to provide grants to law enforcement agencies to increase the number of certified and noncertified law enforcement officers. More information can be found at: <https://dcj.colorado.gov/smart-grant-program>.

The MCSO has several openings for deputies and reports that it has difficulty in recruiting and retaining deputies. The agency needs to improve their recruiting efforts to attract and retain qualified applicants for deputy sheriff positions.

The attrition rate for the past five years is as follows:

- 2021- 10 hired, 14 resigned, 3 terminated
- 2022- 8 hired, 10 resigned, 4 terminated, 1 deceased
- 2023- 7 hired, 9 resigned, 2 terminated, 1 deceased
- 2024- 3 hired, 16 resigned
- 2025- 3 hired

From 2021-2025 MCSO reports hiring 31 people, while 49 resigned, 9 were terminated, 2 died, and 2 retired. Since 2015, 130 people resigned from the office, 18 were terminated, 11 retired, and 2 died. This attrition rate is not sustainable and may reach a point of criticality if not addressed as quickly as possible. This will require significant effort and resources from both the MCSO and Montezuma County.

Starting immediately, exit interviews should be conducted by the County personnel office with all personnel who resign to determine the reason for their departure.

Consider the development of a recruitment bonus program similar to many law enforcement agencies in Colorado. A \$6,000 bonus payable in \$2,000 increments once a year for three years as an example.

Raise the salary to the average of all law enforcement agencies in the region. We have been advised by MCSO personnel that their pay is among the lowest in the State and the lowest in the region. If this is accurate it needs to be corrected as soon as possible to slow or stem the attrition of officers.

See also Recommendation #14, Staffing Over Hire Program.

#### **Recommendation #11 – Take Home Vehicles**

**It is recommended that improved justification and documentation be implemented for take-home vehicles.**

#### **Discussion**

Currently Deputies are allowed to take home their county vehicle. The MCSO Policy #703 outlines this very well. However, this does create an operational expense resulting in vehicles sitting out of service during off-duty time. Although there may be a justifiable reason for this policy, it has not

been well documented or measured. The KRW team was informed that callouts of off duty personnel are common due to no regional tactical team or crisis response team being available. It is recommended that this policy be examined and records kept of callouts and operational advantages of the take home benefit.

**Recommendation #12 – Revisit The Failed Ballot Initiative**

**It is recommended that a group involving County Staff and Community Members be established to study the recent failed ballot initiative and devise a plan to reintroduce the measure.**

**Discussion**

We acknowledge that County Staff are prohibited from actively promoting any ballot initiative. However, we suggest a working group be formed involving interested community members and county staff to discuss and consider lessons learned from the recent failed ballot initiative. Subsequently, county staff can refer their findings and suggestions to a formally established citizen group. At an appropriate point, the county should consider placing another question on the ballot to increase funding in the law enforcement authority, which would reduce some of the pressures on the general fund budget. There should be a carefully thought-out process for adequately and accurately explaining to voters the costs and benefits of a sales tax-based law enforcement authority and how it could result in better overall services from the county and from the Sheriff's Office.

**Recommendation #13 - Staffing Over-hire program**

**It is Recommended during the budget discussions for 2026 a Deputy Over-hire program be considered.**

**Discussion**

Over-hire programs for staffing patrol at a consistent level to maintain minimum staffing is a concept which we believe should be evaluated during the remainder of 2025 for potential adoption by the Sheriff's Office for budget year 2026 and beyond. Our experience in the creation of an over-hire policy is based upon an effort to eliminate the peaks and valleys of staffing requirements in a deputy patrol force. The process of evaluation of an over-hire program is based upon a thoughtful and comprehensive review of the past few years of deputy/patrol attrition. If, based upon that analysis, one finds an attrition rate of two officers per year over the past several years this would then allow for the department to over-hire by one additional deputy position above the approved authorized deputy strength. At the end of the year the dollars or budget for deputies would be in balance. Another example, if one's attrition rate over the past few years has been four deputies then the department can over-hire by two additional deputies, again, at the end of the budget cycle the budget will in all cases be within the approved amount for the budget period. By putting in place an over-hire program a department tends to stay nearer to fully authorized strength during the entire year.

**Recommendation #14 – Best Practices - Staff Development**

**It is recommended that training at all levels of the MCSO be increased to improve and maintain skills and mitigate liability.**

**Discussion**

Failure to train creates significant increases in liability and potential litigation. Training is being cancelled or scaled back due to staff time constraints or to ensure overtime costs are not

increased. New hires in the jail go through a basic 3-week course which includes Tactical training, Pepper spray and Taser but there is no follow up training to maintain even basic skill levels. Outside of POST certification, there is a lack of advanced training. There is a lack of proper leadership training being provided for front-line supervisors. There is also an increased failure to supervise liability due to the supervisors being required to fill line-level shifts rather than perform minimal supervisory functions.

MCSO should develop an individual training plan for each deputy, preferably based on tenure. Deputies from one to five years need to attend training courses in a certain area, Deputies from five to 10 years need to attend training courses in a different area. These training courses are in addition to the POST mandated training. An individual Deputy training plan will better develop the agency's personnel.

It is recommended all MCSO supervisors should attend the County Sheriffs of Colorado (CSOC) First Line Supervisory Training Course. Senior Deputies and Supervisors should attend the Leadership in Police Organizations (LPO) training course. The Undersheriff and Lieutenants (as can be arranged) should attend the University of Denver Public Safety Leadership Development training program.

In future years, Sheriff's should consider attending the Southern Police Institute training course entitled, "Managing Small Law Enforcement Agencies."

The entire agency should attend a short in-service (and easily presented online) training course on ethics as well as a training course on community policing.

MCSO is currently using the Police One training portal. This training program needs to be encouraged and used as often as possible. Police One training is online and can be completed 24/7. Police One training is accepted by POST towards the 24-hour annual training requirement.

#### **Recommendation #15 – Initiate a Community Service Officer Program**

**The State of Colorado significantly modified the traditional Reserve Officer certification requirement. As a substitute it is recommended a Community Service Officer program be researched.**

#### **Discussion**

Community Service Officers (CSOs) typically are paid significantly less than sworn officers, allowing departments to field more people for the same amount of money. This has the effect of providing quicker response times to citizen requests for non-emergency police services. Further, CSOs usually handle low to medium priority calls which do not require an armed police officer with arrest powers freeing sworn officers to concentrate on those incidents requiring their specific skill set. Even a few CSOs can have a significant impact on the efficiency and effectiveness of police services that departments provide.

The CSO can also function as an entry-level position to law enforcement giving the individual the opportunity to transition to a sworn position. The hiring process for CSO's is similar to the process of a sworn officer being hired in most departments. CSO's must undergo oral board reviews and background investigations. This option has budgetary advantages to hiring sworn deputies and provide both improved law enforcement visibility and service to minor calls for service.

## Conclusion

Although the client in this assessment was the Montezuma County Board of Commissioners (BOCC), the primary focus of the assessment was the Sheriff's Office. Assessments involve multiple participants (stakeholders) with shared decision making and shared responsibility for ensuring the findings and recommendations are implemented to produce the expected results.

The Assessment and Organizational Review identified many positive aspects of the MCSO considering the geographical size of the county and resource limitations. The findings also identified areas where improvement is needed. Although restrained by staffing and budget limitations, the MCSO is consistently meeting their statutory responsibilities. That does not mean there is no room for improvement and innovative thinking.

There is broad recognition by employees that the Sheriff and Undersheriff are supportive of their efforts and have the best interests of the community. That said, there is an undercurrent of hostility between the Sheriff and the BOCC that not only troubles them but is contentious and in specific cases undermining morale.

A trusting, cooperative relationship is critical to achieving the mission and purpose of an organization and the challenges of governance. The KRW team has received various perspectives regarding the lack of trust currently present. KRW is not judging who or what has eroded the trust and confidence between the BOCC, County Staff and the Sheriff but it clearly is the central issue to be resolved. The BOCC and the Sheriff, as elected officials, have the same constituents, but their statutory obligations are different. However, the shared goal of serving the public must be bigger than the differences. More effort needs to be devoted to understanding those differences and scheduling time to listen to each other and looking for ways to mutually resolve the clear communication problem.

As with other Sheriff's Offices throughout the state that maintain detention operations, a significant share of sworn deputies are assigned to that function. In a small agency such as MCSO the number of staff are critical to provide the mission of the organization. Equally important is how those staff are deployed and utilized. We conclude that with a few exceptions, allotted staff are utilized efficiently. In fact, recognition must be given to those functions accomplishing their missions with very limited resources.

Staffing is another focus of the assessment and recommendations. As stated in the report, current jail staffing is hazardous and presents safety issues for both jail personnel and inmates. Most small sheriff's offices that maintain a jail operation house fewer than 20 inmates.

Lastly, KRW is confident the Recommendations and Conclusion are linked to the core focus and the fact-finding concerns of the BOCC. More work needs to be done to develop a collaborative response to the findings and a carefully crafted plan to address the observations, findings and recommendations. Efforts will need to be made by all members of the executive team and elected officials to work toward meaningful solutions to the issues raised during this assessment. Leadership and sincere collaboration will be required to develop unity between the MCSO and the County Board.

We recognize the budgetary challenges facing Montezuma County. The fiscal challenges underscore the need for everyone to be cooperating and working together. Entrenched positions do not contribute to transparency and communication. The lack of honest, credible communication is presently an obstacle to resolving the erosion of trust.

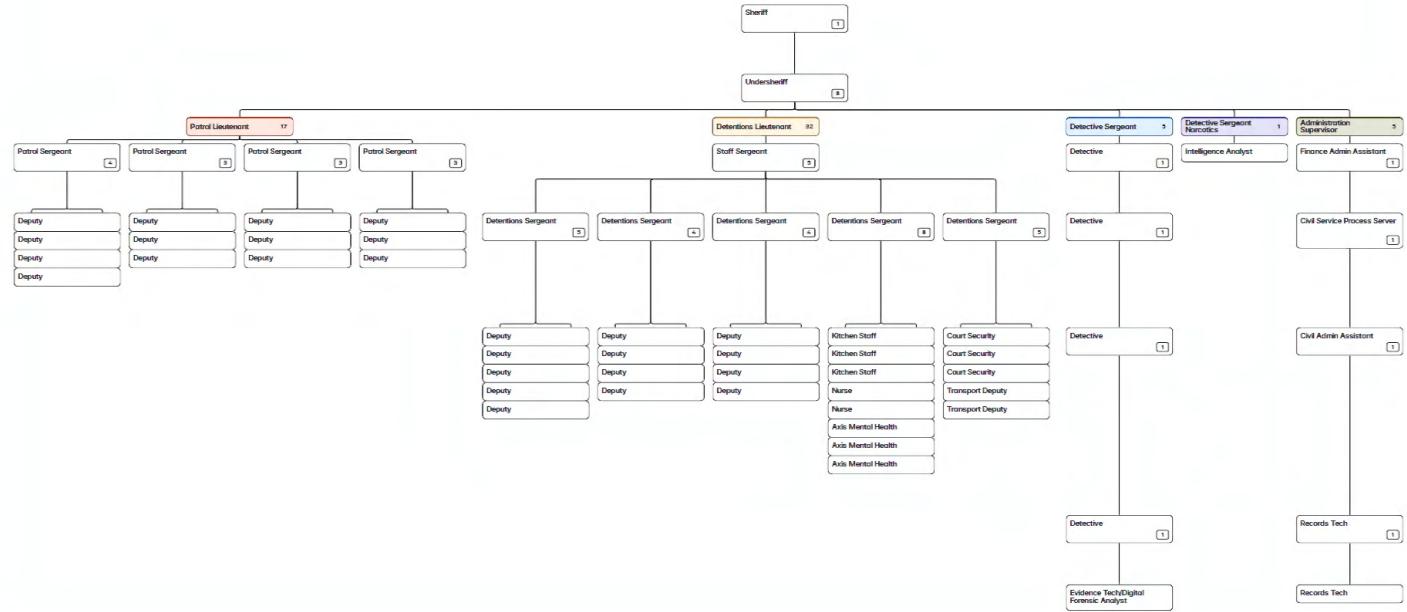
As an initial next step, it is suggested the Assessment Report be submitted to the Sheriff for thorough review and discussion with the Undersheriff and staff. Following that review, a discussion with the County Commissioners should be scheduled to review an action plan addressing the findings and recommendations.

## Addendum I

### Montezuma County Sheriff's Office Organizational Chart

MCSO Org Chart

Sheriff



Staff	2	This is the Sheriff and Undersheriff
Lieutenants	2	Patrol & Detentions
Staff Sgts	1	Jail admin Sgt who supervises all facility support functions, medical, kitchen, etc.
Patrol Sgts	4	1 for each of 4 shifts
Detective Sgts	2	1 for detectives, 1 is the Narcotics detective
Detention Sgts	4	1 for each of 4 shifts
CJS Sgt	1	supervises courts and transports
Patrol Deputies	12	This is roughly 2 per shift 24/7
Detectives	3	This includes one out on long term leave
Court security	3	This barely covers courtrooms and appearance schedules
Transport	1	Used to move inmates around the state as well
Detention Deps	13	This is roughly 2 per shift 24/7 for a relatively large jail
Admin	5	These are non-sworn admin positions
Analyst	1	Narcotics analyst - civilian
Evidence tech	1	Evidence and digital forensic analyst
Control techs	2	Access control
Cooks	3	Necessary
Total 60 Employees		

## Addendum II

### Comparable County Information

The chart below should be used for informational purposes only. Comparative data is difficult to correlate since there are significant differences in geography, service demand and personnel costs. Also, budget policy/practice differs from one County to another. Many budgets do not include human resources and benefit costs in the Sheriff's budget. The research clearly shows there is no "standardized" daily rate for housing inmates and is conditional on food costs, medical costs, and jail operating costs.

County	Population	Sq Miles	Jail	Max Beds	ADP	Daily Cost	Total Budget	Jail Budget	Jail Staff	Total Sworn
Montezuma	26,531	2,029	Yes	104	75	\$120-\$150	6.99 M	\$3.9 M	29	45
Archuleta	14,189	1,356	Yes	64	49	159	\$8.4 M	\$3.6 M	20	43
Chaffee	20,986	1,013	Yes	195						
Delta	32,000	1,150	Yes	87	50	\$76	\$9.4 M	\$3.4 M	28	61
Elbert	27,000	1,854	Yes	34	18		\$9.4 M	\$3.4 M	17	49
Gunnison	17,500	3,260	Yes	80	30	\$30	6.5 M	\$2.6 M	16	35
Logan	22,691	1,838	Yes	110						
Morgan	29,666	1,280	Yes							
Otero	18,158	1,261	Yes	60						
Park	18,117	2,200	Yes	200	15	\$50-\$75	\$7.0 M	\$2.4 M	18	44
Routt	18,117	2,200	Yes	56	15-20	\$75	\$10.2 M	\$4.3 M	25	54
Teller	28,000	557	Yes	115	90	\$215	\$12.9 M	\$4.9 M	37	89
Red=Limited Data										

### **Addendum III**

**The following discussion is an effort to explain an approach to determining staffing needs.**

For the Patrol Division, based solely on total calls for service (cfs) analysis, there were 15,534 calls answered in 2024, or 42 calls per day. Removing an average of 6 calls per day in the town of Dolores, 36 cfs remain in the county. Further analysis is required to determine call types (emergent, etc.), response times and types as well as the average length of time on each call to identify any potential trends or anomalies. Considering that these 13,000 cfs are handled primarily by 9 deputies and 4 sergeants, the average is roughly 1,000 cfs per deputy throughout the year or an average of just under 7 per shift.

The above does not account for cover calls requiring multiple units or calls requiring a supervisor to respond for a multitude of reasons. In any case, this number will most likely prove to be more significant as additional analysis is conducted and evaluated. It is, however, less than what most would consider minimal given our experience with rural law enforcement.

For the Jail Division, based on requirements being placed on jails by legislators, courts and industry experts, the number of personnel required to run a safe and properly administered facility requires additional analysis as well. Requirements for meeting minimal training, supervision of inmates and personnel, minimum requirements for programs, systems, food, and medical service, etc. will raise the bar on minimum staffing numbers.

**Goal/recommendation:** To ensure adequate minimum staffing levels of line level as well as minimum supervision and oversight exists across the agency. These requirements are necessary to maximize effectiveness while minimizing exposure to liability as well as controlling overtime costs for callouts.

In order to accomplish the goal, it is recommended that a minimum service level of 3 deputies per shift be assigned to both the patrol and detentions divisions. In establishing the minimum staffing requirement of 3 deputies per shift in both divisions, they would need a minimum of 18 deputies each.

The additional deputies in both of these divisions will alleviate the majority of (but not all) needs for overtime spending to cover minimum levels. As stated earlier, the Jail should be conducting ward checks at intervals of less than 30 minutes based on recent court decisions and best practices. It is likely that upcoming jail standards requirements will be more in line with 15-minute intervals. In addition, there must be sufficiently trained and available personnel inside the jail to respond to emergency situations that have and will arise. These dynamic and quickly evolving situations cannot wait for support personnel to arrive to the facility.

Failure to train and failure to supervise are the top two issues creating lawsuits of public safety agencies nationwide. These lawsuits have increased significantly in recent years and have impacted budgets, leadership, and personnel alike. To minimize the potential, it is imperative that perishable skills training throughout the agency be increased, and this can only be accomplished by adding personnel and requiring targeted training. Leadership and supervisory training must be increased throughout the agency to avoid probable litigation, and this can only be accomplished by not requiring supervisors and leadership personnel refrain from handling daily line-level tasking and focusing on supervision and leading in order to be effective. Supervisors must be appropriately trained as well.

To determine the number of personnel to be added, we first determine that a single position that covers a 24 hours per day, 365 days per year shift requires 8,760 hours to be worked (24 x 365=8,760). Add to that a minimum of 3 hours per day utilized for overlapping shift for

communication, etc., that total number increases to 9,855 hours. A full-time employee is paid for 2080 hours (40 hr./week x 52 weeks = 2,080) per year. This number is without overtime and before deducting time away from scheduling for vacation (80 hrs. generally), sick time (80 hours generally), holiday time (80 hours generally) and minimal training time (40 hours). After those are removed, the most time that can be scheduled for any employee is 1,800 hours annually. This bare-bones system of staffing allocation therefore requires a minimum of 5.475 personnel (9,855 hours divided by 1,800 hours available to work to cover a single 24-hour shift). This system applies to any assignment (patrol or jail) however it is rare to actually have employees available and working for more than 1,780 hours per year, thus requiring the need to round up to 6 rather than down to 5.

Using this analogy and the establishment of a 3-person minimum, the following additional personnel would apply:

Patrol would need 9 additional deputies (13 employed today with 2 assigned to Dolores, 1 assigned as AG/water related cfs and 1 assigned as an SRO) leaving 9 available to respond to calls.

The jail would need an additional 5 deputies from the 13 available today to work throughout the jail.

This is a total of 14 additional deputies above what MCSO has available at the time of this report but reflects the numbers from previous to 2022 as recommended.