

COMMUNITY ASSISTED RESPONSE AND ENGAGEMENT (CARE)

2026 PROPOSED BUDGET

OVERVIEW & POLICY CONSIDERATIONS PAPER

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Table 1. Department Budget Summary

Budget Summary Level	2025 Adopted	2026 Endorsed	% Change	2026 Proposed	% Change
Operating Budget					
911 Call Response	\$28.5M	\$30M	5.4%	\$32.1M	7%
Community Assisted Response & Engagement	\$4.4M	\$6.5M	49.1%	\$13.3M	105.1%
Total:	\$32.8M	\$36.5M	11.2%	\$45.4M	24.5%

I. OVERVIEW AND SUMMARY

The 2026 Proposed Budget for the Community Assisted Response and Engagement (CARE) department would increase by \$8.9 million (24.5 percent) relative to the 2026 Endorsed Budget. The increase is the result of additional funds for staffing expansion in the 9-1-1 call center, additional Community Crisis Responders (CCRs), and additional administrative support personnel.

A. Operating Budget

Proposed increases include the following:

911 Call Response Staffing

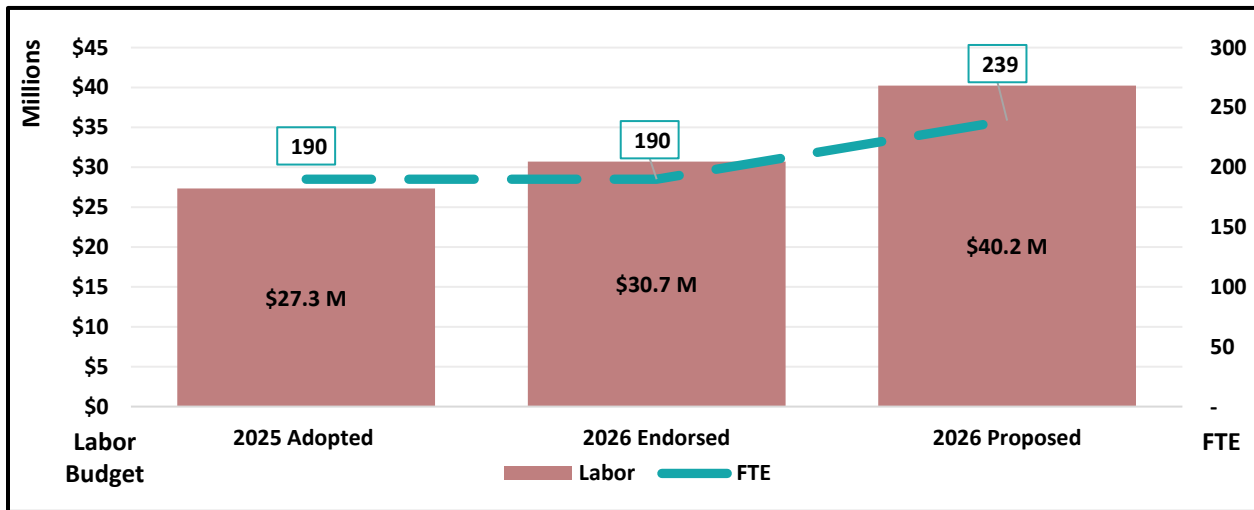
- \$2.6M in ongoing funding, supported by the Public Safety Sales Tax, to add 12 additional call takers, 3 trainers, and the conversion of 3 temporary departmental administrative staff positions to permanent.

Community Crisis Responder Team

- \$4.9M in ongoing funding, supported by the Public Safety Sales Tax, to double the CCR team positions, leading to a total of 48 CCRs.
- \$2M in onetime funding, supported by the Public Safety Sales Tax, to support vehicle acquisition and space improvements necessary for the staffing expansion.

B. FTE & Labor Changes

Figure 1. FTE & Labor Budget Summary

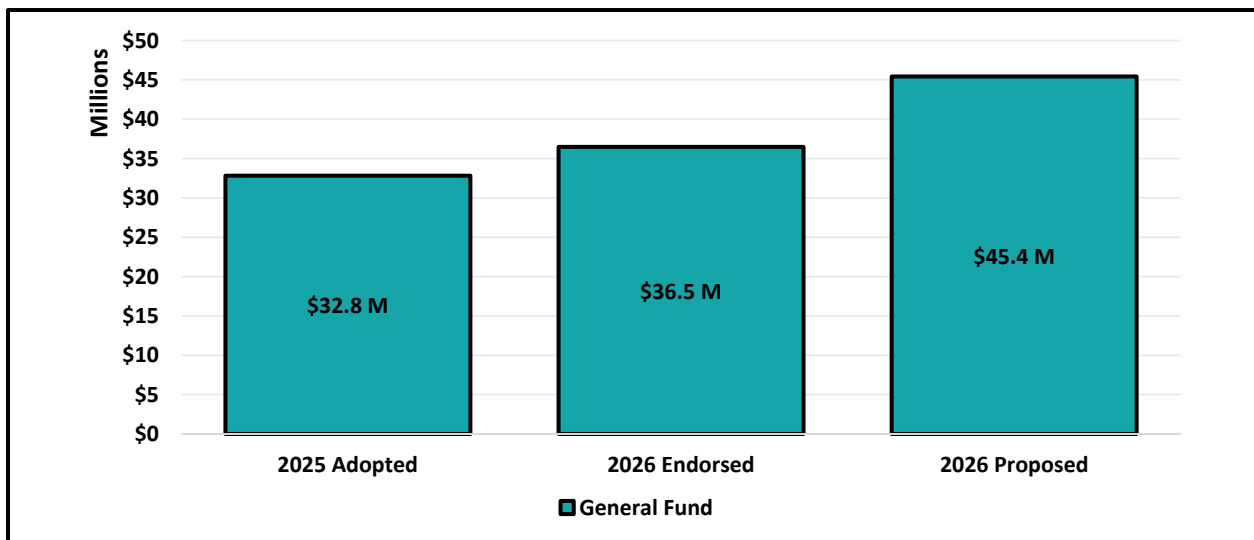


As shown above, CARE staffing increases significantly in the 2026 Proposed Budget. Proposed staffing growth consists of: 1) expansion of the CARE CCR team via 24 additional Crisis Responder positions, 6 additional supervisors, and the conversion of a temporary training manager position to permanent; 2) 9-1-1 call center expansion via 12 additional call takers and three additional trainers; and, 3) department administrative staff expansion via the conversion of three temporary positions to permanent (finance, personnel, and payroll support staff, respectively).

The proposed CCR team expansion would allow CARE to strengthen citywide response and double available daily deployment hours. 12 additional 9-1-1 call takers would serve to reduce use of overtime, reduce staff burn-out, and improve retention. CARE has stated that additional call taker positions, beyond the staffing levels proposed in the Mayor's 2026 budget, could further improve these outcomes. All proposed position additions in CARE are intended to be supported through the Public Safety Sales Tax.

C. Fund Appropriations Summary

Figure 2. Fund Appropriations Summary



CARE has historically been funded exclusively through General Fund dollars. The 2026 Proposed Budget attributes a share of CARE costs to the Public Safety Sales Tax, but any portion of the City's General Fund expenditures on public safety could be paid for by these revenues. Thus, the department is effectively fully supported by the General Fund.

II. ISSUES FOR COUNCIL CONSIDERATION DURING BUDGET DELIBERATIONS

1. Contract(s) with LEAD and other relevant providers

The Human Services Department (HSD) currently administers service provision contracts with Let Everyone Advance with Dignity (LEAD, formerly Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion), CoLEAD, and We Deliver Care (WDC). Taken together, these programs provide outreach, diversion, case management, and temporary housing supports that compliment and coordinate with City-run efforts out of CARE, the Seattle Fire Department, Seattle Police Department, and the City Attorney's Office to respond to public disorder and provide intervention and supports to vulnerable and/or potentially criminal system-involved individuals. As of early 2025, CARE and the Mayor's Office Public Safety team have taken over programmatic oversight of the LEAD contract, participating in contract negotiation and policy changes to this body of work, while HSD continues to provide the contracting administrative infrastructure.

CARE department leadership believes that coordination of services between LEAD, CoLEAD, and WDC and City partners would be improved by moving the entirety of contract administration and dollars from HSD into CARE. It is the position of HSD and the Mayor's Office that CARE does not currently have sufficient staff resources to take on full administration of these contracts, and that in the immediate term this function is better left to HSD under the current arrangement described above where CARE has de facto control of the contracts and can make use of HSD's contract accountability infrastructure for maximal efficiency. The Mayor's Office and HSD believe that CARE would require at least one additional FTE to manage these contracts. HSD would need to maintain current staffing levels to administer existing contracts even if LEAD and related contracts were to move out of the department. Such a contract transfer was considered during the Mayor's 2026 budget development process, but was not included in the Proposed 2026 Budget. The Mayor's Office has stated that this idea was not pursued due to the belief that it would include unnecessary additional net costs without significantly increasing services or overall program efficiency. The total amount of these contracts in the 2026 Proposed Budget is \$16.5 million.

Options:

- A. Transfer funding related to LEAD, CoLEAD, and WDC contracts from HSD to CARE without making departmental staffing changes.
- B. Transfer funding related to LEAD, CoLEAD, and WDC contracts from HSD to CARE, and provide additional 1.0 FTE to CARE for this work.
- C. Enact a statement of legislative intent requesting that HSD, the Mayor's Office, and CARE provide a plan to make this contract transfer in the future.
- D. No change.