

Community Assisted Response and Engagement

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Department Overview

The Community Assisted Response and Engagement (CARE) department, formerly known as the Community Safety and Communications Center (CSCC), was established as a new department in 2021 to provide timely, accurate, and vital information to the City's first responders, city service providers, and to the public. Ordinance 126237 transferred the primary 911 center from SPD to CARE, effective June 1, 2021. Since the transition, the department has continued working to establish itself as a new/independent city department, identify internal ongoing needs, and explore integrating non-uniformed and alternate resources for dispatch. CARE is home to the primary Seattle 911 call center and is the largest in the Pacific Northwest, both by staff size and volume of calls received, averaging over 800,000 per year. The center employs 163 employees who work 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

The CARE department seeks to enhance public safety through a pilot Dual Dispatch program that will provide additional behavioral health professionals available to respond to people experiencing non-violent mental health crises or quality of life concerns. To begin with, these unarmed community responders will be directly dispatched with police to priority 3 and priority 4 person down and welfare check call types. In 2022, Seattle 911 data shows a response time consistently longer than one hour to these call types; the department seeks to reduce that response time and to support SPD's ability to respond to more urgent 911 calls swiftly. The vision for this team into the future is to expand to additional call types as deemed appropriate.

Budget Snapshot

	2022 Actuals	2023 Adopted	2024 Endorsed	2024 Adopted
Department Support				
General Fund Support	21,502,737	20,522,661	21,682,645	26,343,050
Total Operations	21,502,737	20,522,661	21,682,645	26,343,050
Total Appropriations	21,502,737	20,522,661	21,682,645	26,343,050
Full-Time Equivalent Total*	176.00	215.00	150.00	163.00

* FTE totals are provided for informational purposes only. Changes in FTEs resulting from City Council or Human Resources Director actions outside of the budget process may not be detailed here

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Incremental Budget Changes

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	2024 Budget	FTE
Total 2024 Endorsed Budget	21,682,645	150.00
Baseline		
Citywide Adjustments for Standard Cost Changes	1,024,535	-
Increase Operating Budget for improved staffing levels	1,101,840	-
Adopted Operating		
Add 3 FTE Emergency Communications Dispatchers	355,044	3.00
Funding for CARE department planning purposes	607,000	-
Adopted Technical		
Ongoing funding for Dual Dispatch Program	1,812,334	10.00
Council		
SCERS Contribution Rate Change	(143,349)	-
One-Time reduction to fund Domestic Violence Services	(97,000)	-
Total Incremental Changes	\$4,660,404	13.00
Total 2024 Adopted Budget	\$26,343,049	163.00

Description of Incremental Budget Changes

Baseline

Citywide Adjustments for Standard Cost Changes

Expenditures \$1,024,535

Citywide technical adjustments made in the baseline budget phase reflect changes to internal services costs, including rates from the Department of Finance & Administrative Services, Seattle Information Technology Department, Seattle Department of Human Resources, and for healthcare, retirement, and industrial insurance charges for the department. These adjustments reflect initial assumptions about these costs and inflators early in the budget process.

Increase Operating Budget for improved staffing levels

Expenditures \$1,101,840

This item increases appropriation authority for the CARE department to account for improvements in staffing levels and call response time made over 2022-2023. In 2022, CARE was experiencing a very high vacancy rate and long recruitment and onboarding timelines. The department improved the recruitment, hiring, and training process to hire over 45 new employees in 2023 (representing almost one-third of the department). Additional funding will support the department in maintaining improved staffing minimums and create a new budget baseline.

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Adopted Operating

Add 3 FTE Emergency Communications Dispatchers

Expenditures	\$355,044
Position Allocation	3.00

This item adds 1.0 FTE 911 Emergency Communications Dispatcher I and 2.0 FTE Dispatcher II in 2024 to the CARE department. Additional call takers will improve the department's ability to answer the City's 911 Emergency line and better enable the CARE department to maintain call-answering standards while utilizing less overtime. The department has relied on overtime to meet call-answering standards and these positions will support the department to meet standards while reducing overtime usage.

Funding for CARE department planning purposes

Expenditures	\$607,000
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This item increases appropriation authority for the CARE department by \$607,000 to envision and prepare for future needs as the department mandate has grown. A significant focus of the CARE Teams will be to implement community-focused services unrelated to the criminal justice system, non-police efforts designed to build community cohesion, provide opportunities for youth and young adults, strengthen community anchors, and the natural guardians of place. Further expansion of the CARE department is expected in 2024 and beyond to include consolidation of various City efforts. It will focus on the City's non-police and community-based services and solutions to community safety challenges. This funding will provide a staffing study to create a framework for consolidation, establish program evaluation measures, create information collateral, and administrative support.

Adopted Technical

Ongoing funding for Dual Dispatch Program

Expenditures	\$1,812,334
Position Allocation	10.00

This item increases appropriation authority to support the ongoing dual dispatch program in 2024. The Mayor's Office and the City Council have worked collaboratively to envision a dual dispatch program for the City of Seattle. The dual dispatch team responds to low acuity calls with a mental and behavioral health nexus, this provides Seattle community members with additional public safety resources. The program has three teams, which include behavioral health professionals to respond to non-emergency situations. The program has already begun redirecting 911 calls through prioritization and dispatch resources specific to the incident.

Funding was appropriated in Ordinance 120617 for the Dual Dispatch program in 2023, covering the costs of facilities, vehicles, and personnel. This item makes that funding ongoing for 10 full-time positions, including 1 FTE Deputy Director of Alternative Response (Executive 2), 1 FTE Executive Assistant (Exec Asst), 1 FTE Public Information Officer (StratAdvsr1, CL&PS) to provide administrative and policy support. In addition, 7 FTE positions were created for the dual dispatch pilot program - 1 FTE Manager (Manager 2), and 6 FTE First Response Specialists.

Council

SCERS Contribution Rate Change

Expenditures	\$(143,349)
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The City's employee retirement system, the Seattle City Employees Retirement System (SCERS), of which most non-uniformed City employees are members, is a defined benefit pension program funded by a combination of salary-based employer (i.e., the City) and employee contributions, and investment earnings.

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The employer portion of the SCERS contribution is funded through the annual budget process as a percentage of salaries based on several factors including reports from the contracted actuary and the City's long-range financial forecasts. The Mayor's 2024 Proposed Mid-Biennial Budget included an employer contribution rate of 16.22%, which was determined prior to the actuary's recommendation but provided for long-term "smoothing" given the City's long-term financial challenges.

This item reduces the employer contribution rate from the proposed rate of 16.22% to the SCERS minimum actuarial required rate of 15.17%, which was determined to provide sufficient funding to the retirement system to achieve 100% funded status by 2042.

One-Time reduction to fund Domestic Violence Services

Expenditures \$(97,000)

This Council Budget Action removed \$97,000 (one-time) from funding for CARE department planning. This funding will support Human Services Department (HSD) for services to survivors of gender-based violence and abuse. HSD will award funding to up to three community-based organizations that provide culturally specific service to particularly vulnerable communities.

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2023-24 Mid-Biennium Adopted Budget Updates - Expenses

Budget Summary Level	Fund	Budget Process Phase Endorsed	Adopted Changes	Grand Total
911 Call Response	00100 - General Fund	21,682,645	2,350,632	24,033,277
911 Call Response Total		21,682,645	2,350,632	24,033,277
Community Assisted Response and Engagement	00100 - General Fund	0	2,309,773	2,309,773
Community Assisted Response and Engagement Total		0	2,309,773	2,309,773
Grand Total		21,682,645	4,660,404	26,343,049