



**Responding to the Homelessness,  
Mental Health and Substance Use  
Crises:**

# **The City's new Crises Response Team**

**ON TABLE**  
City Council Meeting  
October 30, 2023  
re: Item 3.2.a

# Presentation Outline

1. Context and Purpose (3 min) – Lisa Spitale
2. 2023 Point-in-Time Homeless Count (2 min) – John Stark
3. Advocacy Efforts (5 min) – Brad Davie
4. Principles with the New Approach and Framework (5 min) – Lisa Leblanc
5. New Crises Response Team - Two-Year Pilot Project (7 min) – Jackie Teed
6. Enhanced and Formalized Relationships and Engagement Advocacy (5 min) – John Stark
7. Evidence-Based Approach (3 min) – Brad Davie
8. Recommendations and Next Steps (5 min) – Lisa Spitale

# Purpose

1. To provide background information and context on the three related crises of homelessness, mental health and substance use;
2. to document research and consultation to inform organizational responses to these crises; and
3. to outline and seek Council direction on a two-year organizational pilot project and implementation strategy to more effectively address these crises and to transition responsibility for them to the senior levels of government.

# 2023 Point-in-Time Homeless Count

- 203 unsheltered and sheltered homeless
  - 57 unsheltered and 146 sheltered
- 65% increase in homelessness from 2020 to 2023
  - 39% increase in unsheltered and 78% increase in sheltered
  - 63 stayed in nightly shelter on night of the count
  - 120 unsheltered during the day (8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.)
- 27% self-identify as Indigenous verses 3.1% of city population
  - 43% of unsheltered and 12% of sheltered homeless
  - 58% report they or a family member experienced residential schools
- 44% lived in community for 6+ years and 19% lived in community for 1 to 5 years
- 47% self-report mental health and 52% self-report addiction issues



# Consultation and Advocacy

# Consultation and Advocacy

- Response to the Substance Use Crisis
- Response to the Mental Health Crisis
- Improved Cleanliness including 24/7 access to public toilets
- Enhanced Homeless Outreach
- Added Shelter and Supportive Housing Capacity



# Consultation and Advocacy

- Ministry of Housing
- Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions
- Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction
- BC Housing
- Fraser Health Authority
- New Westminster Homelessness Coalition Society
- Assertive Community Treatment Team
- Integrated Homelessness Action Response
- Overdose Outreach Team
- Peer Assisted Care Team
- Substance Use Services Access Team

# Recent new commitments: BC Housing

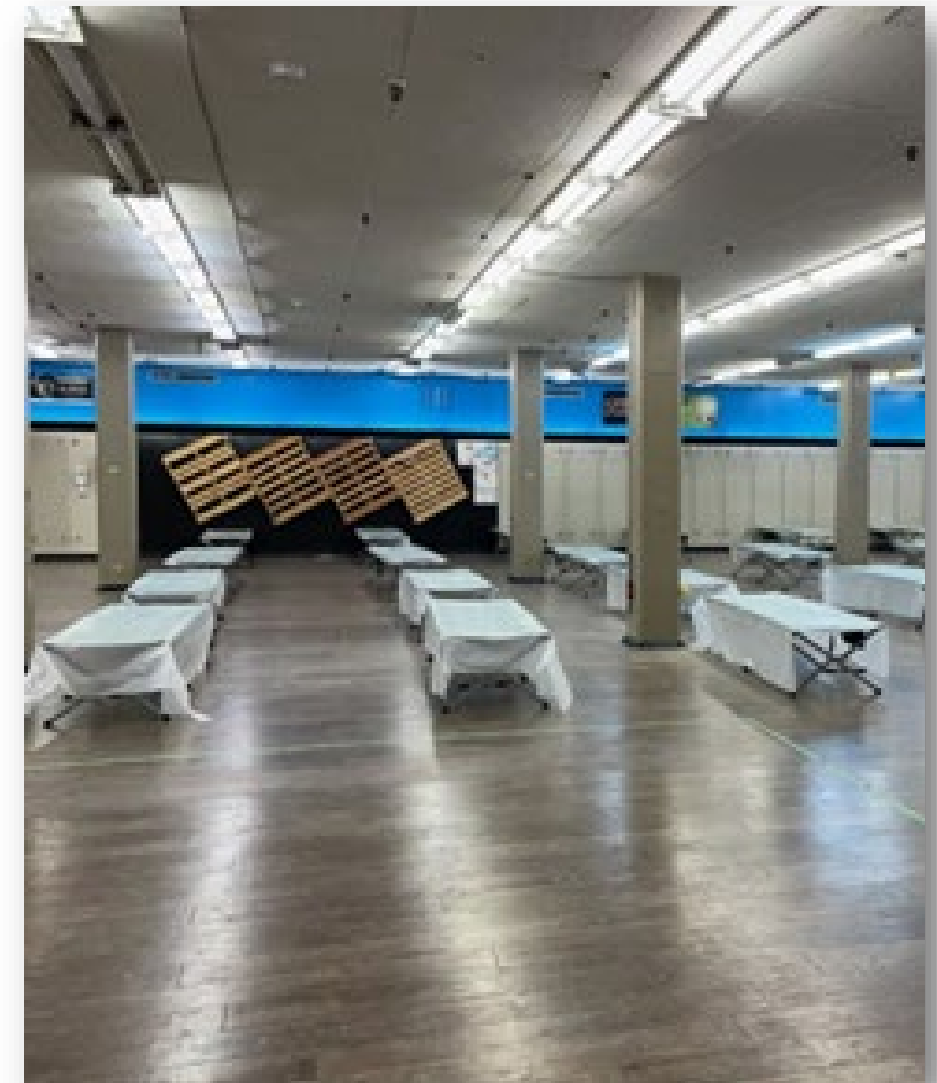
- Retroactive financial reimbursement and continued funding for the following:
- Portable toilet
- Prefabricated, free-standing toilet (24/7)
- Sanitation trailer, including connection, maintenance and attendant services
- Biohazard (human waste) clean-up and disposal



# Ministry Mental Health and Addictions, Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction, Fraser Health Authority and BC Housing

## Build and Fund Culturally Appropriate:

1. 50-60 24/7 shelter beds
2. 50-60 supportive housing beds
3. 10-20 complex care beds
4. Health Connect and Resource Centre:
  - Active non-clinical outreach services
  - Hygiene services
  - Health, mental health, harm reduction, substance use treatments
  - Case management and referral services
  - Social supports (education, employment, income assistance, life skills, rental subsidy, etc.)





# Principles with the new Approach and Framework

# Principles



- People-centred approach:
  - This includes:
    - Those experiencing homelessness, mental health and substance use
    - Our Staff
    - The Community
  - Compassionate, preserving dignity
  - Preventing further harm
  - Prioritizing safety and well-being
  - Proactive and responsive
- From crisis management to strategic, resilient and sustained response.

# Principles

- Engage First Nations and Indigenous people in a meaningful way; commit to ongoing listening and learning.
- Day-to-day operations and response informed by policy, and supported by advocacy outcomes; each is carried out by specialized staff.
- Communicate, collaborate and coordinate with other levels of government and faith-based and non-profit organizations.
- Involve the community by raising awareness and understanding, and identify opportunities for community engagement and action.

# Principles

- Involve existing staff and build on their expertise, knowledge and organizational memory.
- Retain new staff and resources to support strategic and sustained implementation; prioritize those who are Indigenous or have lived experience.
- Be evidence-based and outcome-oriented.
- Identify indicators of progress, monitor outcomes, and celebrate and share successes.

# The Framework



1. Restructure to a more proactive, responsive and strategic organizational approach.
2. Seek Indigenous perspectives and incorporate culturally-informed practices.
3. Structure the organization to be innovative and nimble, and commit to continuous learning and adaptation.

# The Framework

## 4. Formalize 3 inter-departmental bodies:

- ***new* Crises Response Team** – observation, intelligence, coordination, response, and referral to provincial teams
- **Operations Support Team** – support the response efforts as part of core service functions
- **Policy Development and Advocacy Team** – research, analyze and develop policy; lobby senior government for funding, resources, policy and support

# The Framework

## 5. Two-year pilot project to:

- learn, practice, and evaluate effectiveness of new organizational structure
- enhance and formalize relations with Provincial bodies, and;
- advance crises response and advocacy.

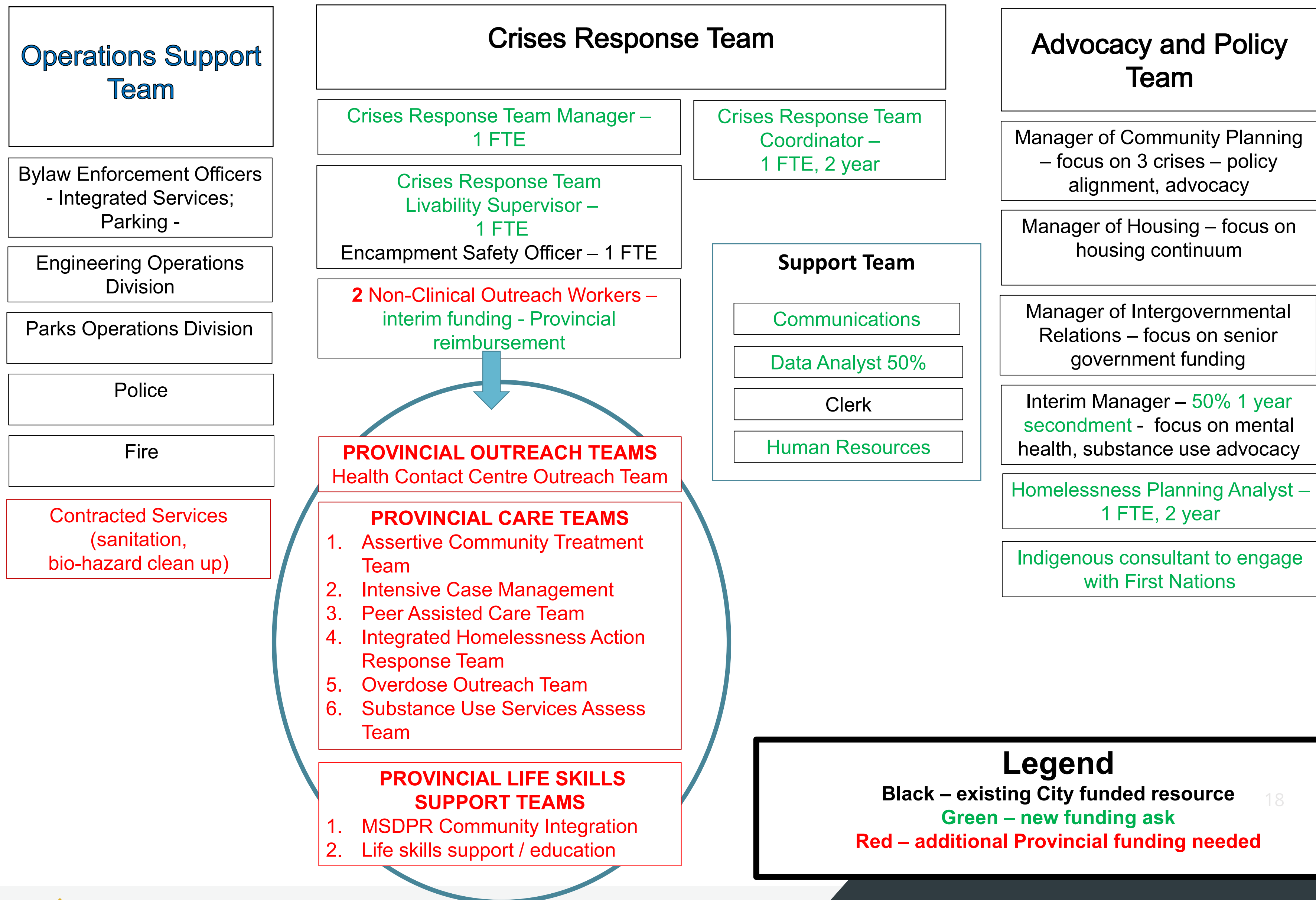
## 6. Aim to transition responsibility for funding the Crises Response Team, and responding to the three crises, to senior levels of government who have jurisdiction for them.

# Crises Response Team

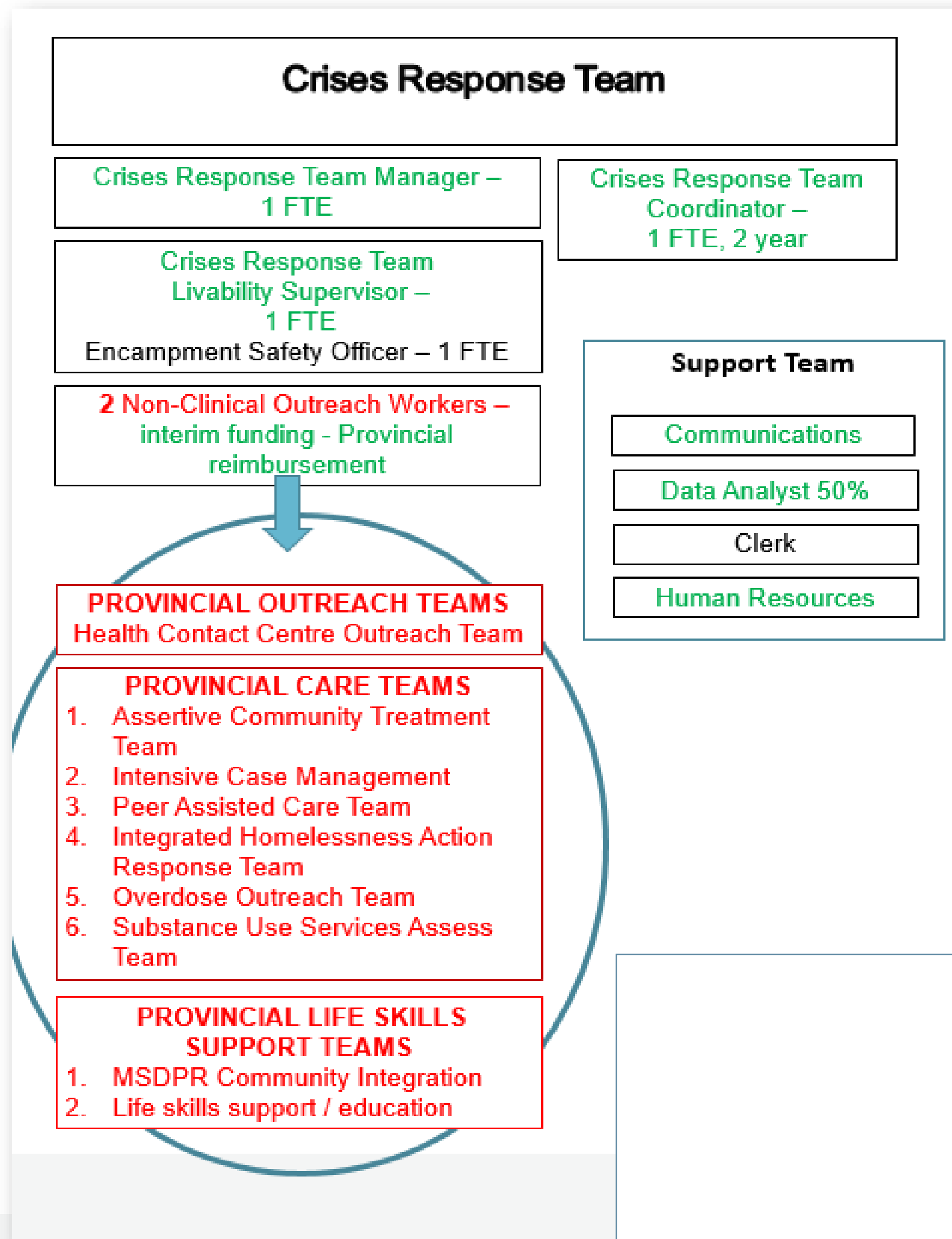
## Two-Year Pilot Project

Make the  
connection.  
Have the  
conversation.  
**Stop the  
stigma.**

---

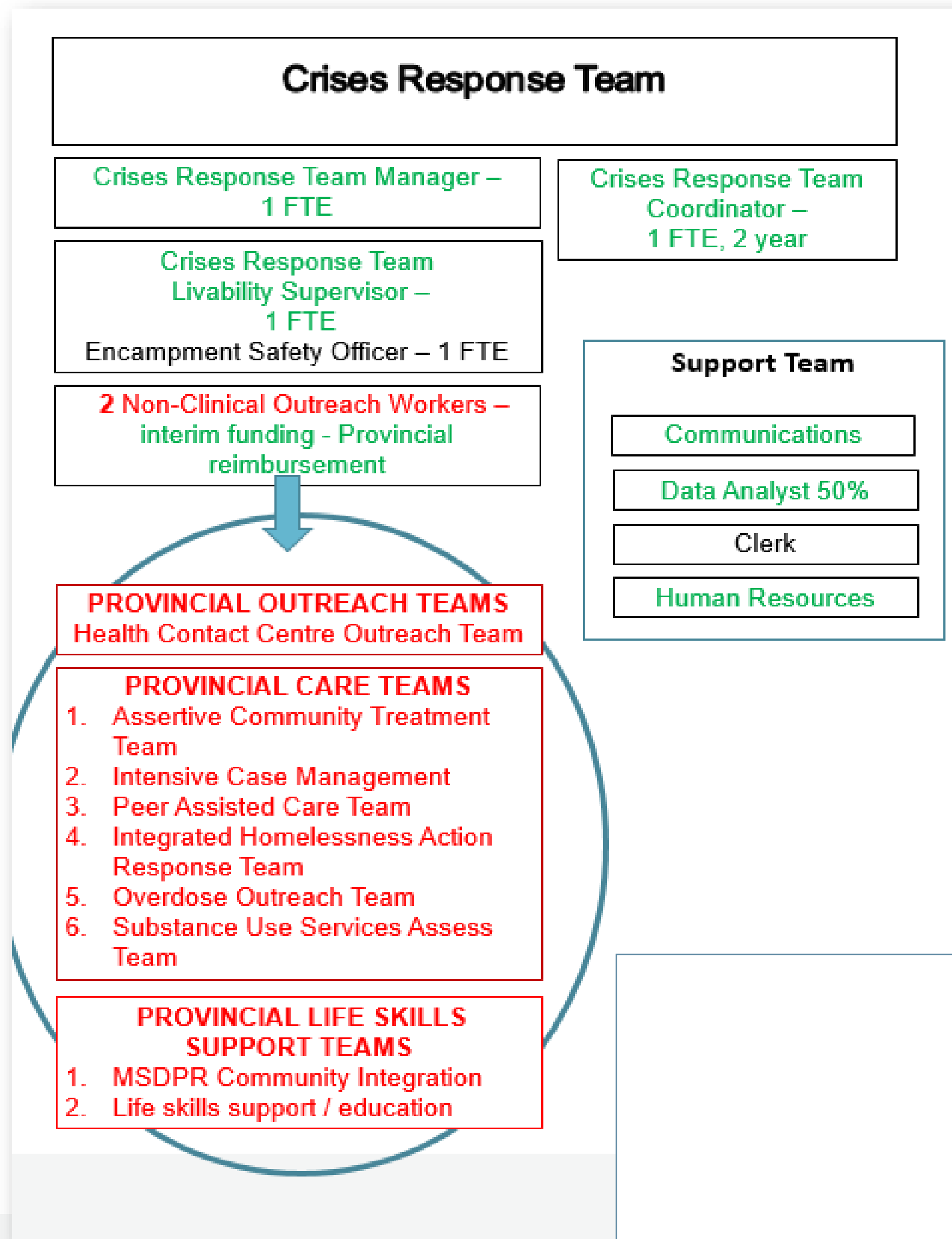


# Crises Response Team



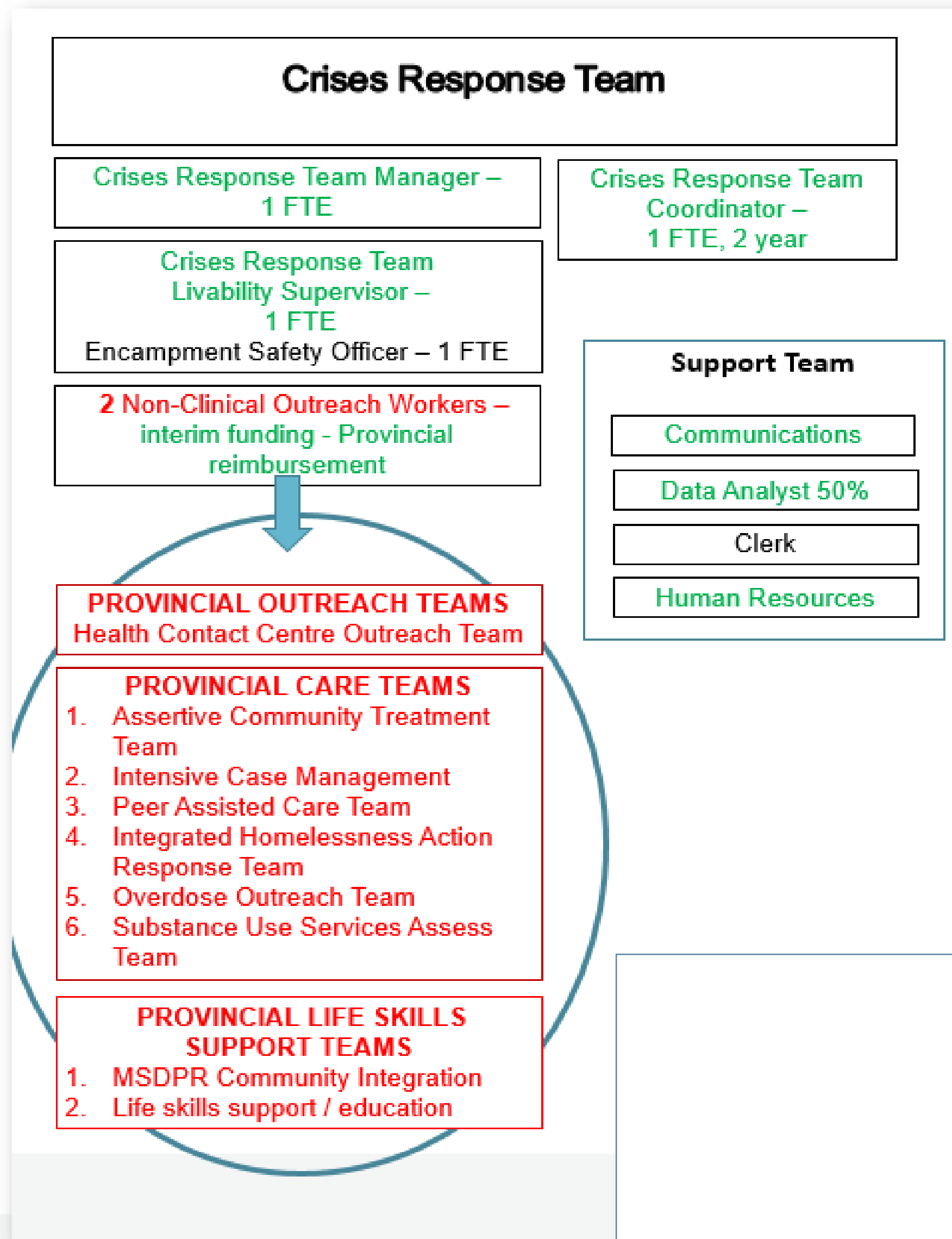
- New Team
- Mandate: to support unsheltered residents, other community members, and staff, by addressing day-to-day issues related to homelessness, mental health and substance use

# Crises Response Team



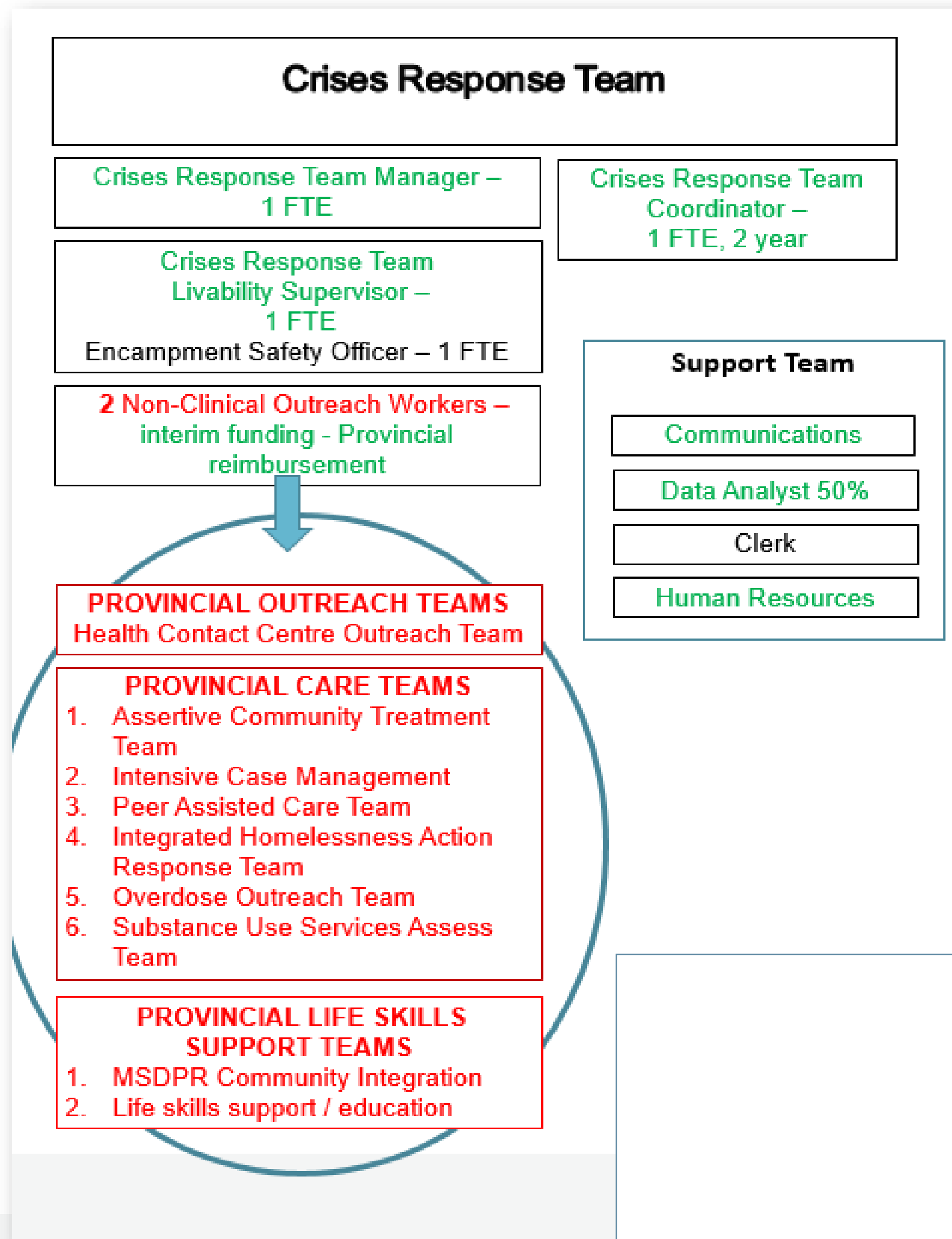
- Dedicated staff and resources:
  - Manager – oversight, program development, coord/alignment
  - “Active outreach” team – backgrounds in social work/mental health/substance use, training in de-escalation/ First Aid/Naloxone administration
  - Support team – communications, engagement (Indigenous, staff, business and general community), operational policy/practice development, data

# Crises Response Team



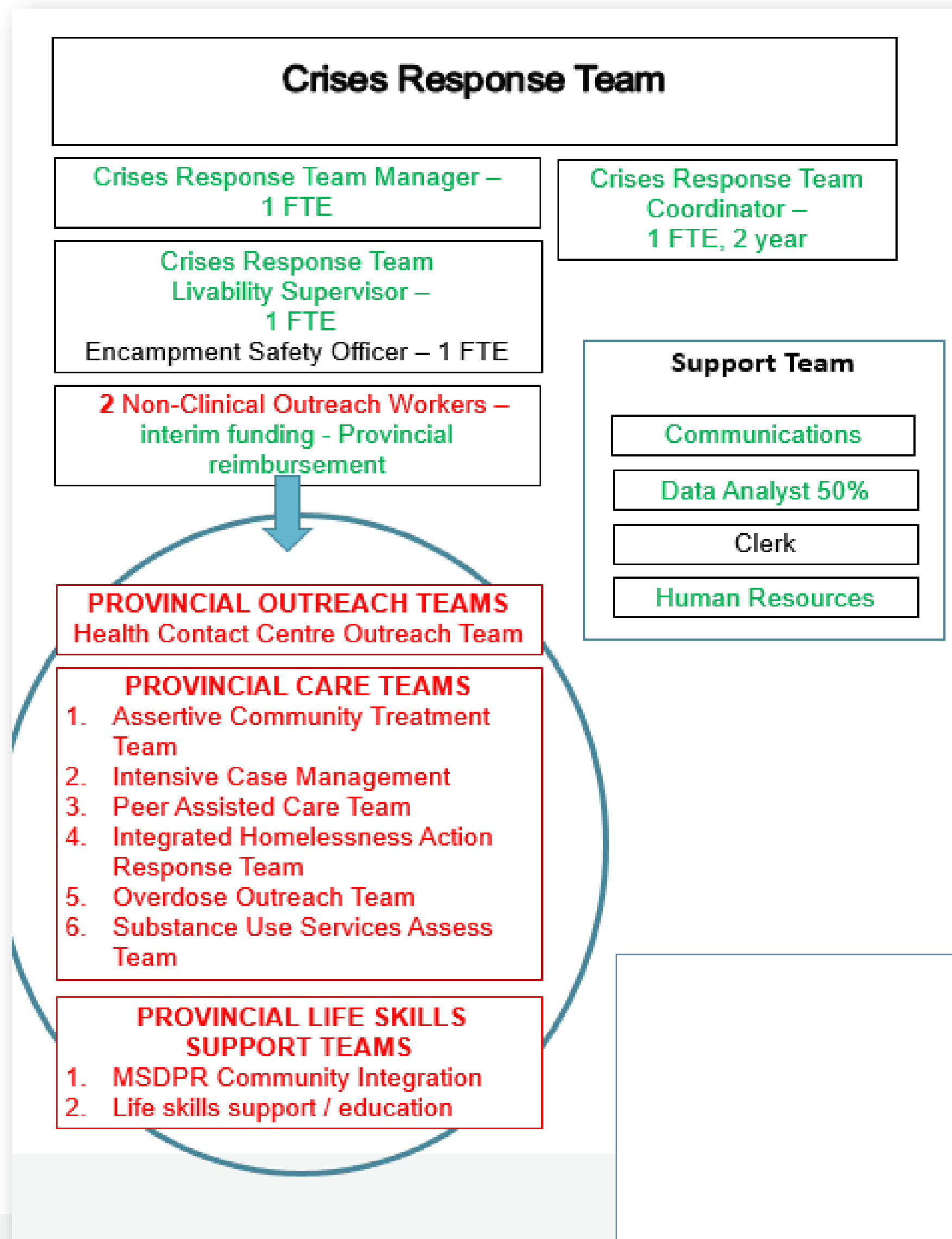
- Continues the City's compassionate approach:
  - Active, ongoing contact with unsheltered residents (also other community members, and staff)
  - Active outreach – part of building relationships and trust
  - Works to facilitate voluntary compliance while providing supports

# Crises Response Team



- Regular contact with/ making referrals to Provincial teams, including:
  - Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) Team,
  - Integrated Homelessness Action Response Team (IHART)
  - Peer Assisted Care Team (PACT)
  - Substance Use Services Assessment Team

# Crises Response Team



- Works closely with Operations Support Team and Advocacy and Policy Development Team to ensure coordination and alignment, including developing:
  - Operational Policy and Procedures
  - Staff Training
- Recruitment prioritizing having Indigenous backgrounds, and experience and knowledge working with those experiencing the three crises
- Teams will receive specialized training in trauma-informed, and culturally-appropriate interactions

# Operations Support Team

## Operations Support Team

Bylaw Enforcement Officers  
- Integrated Services;  
Parking -

Engineering Operations  
Division

Parks Operations Division

Police

Fire

Contracted Services  
(sanitation,  
bio-hazard clean up)

- Continues to perform important core services for the community
- Comprised of staff from Engineering, Fire, Human Resources, Integrated Services, Parks, and Police
- With the establishment of the Crises Response Team, these staff are able to focus on their core service duties

# Operations Support Team

## Operations Support Team

Bylaw Enforcement Officers  
- Integrated Services;  
Parking -

Engineering Operations  
Division

Parks Operations Division

Police

Fire

Contracted Services  
(sanitation,  
bio-hazard clean up)

- Clean-up and disposal of abandoned encampments and discarded belongings
- Maintaining consistently high level of cleanliness in areas experiencing encampments, or repeated sheltering
- Providing additional staff support when required
- Supporting ongoing data collecting, monitoring and reporting

# Advocacy and Policy Team

## Advocacy and Policy Team

Manager of Community Planning  
– focus on 3 crises – policy alignment, advocacy

Manager of Housing – focus on housing continuum

Manager of Intergovernmental Relations – focus on senior government funding

Interim Manager – 50% 1 year secondment - focus on mental health, substance use advocacy

Homelessness Planning Analyst – 1 FTE, 2 year

Indigenous consultant to engage with First Nations

- Provides leadership to advance near- to long-term solutions through advocacy to senior government for funding, and policy alignment
- Team from CAO's Office, CAPD, Fire and Mayor's Office
- Indigenous consultant will be retained to provide leadership and support when engaging with First Nations and Indigenous organizations

# Advocacy and Policy Team

## Advocacy and Policy Team

Manager of Community Planning  
– focus on 3 crises – policy alignment, advocacy

Manager of Housing – focus on housing continuum

Manager of Intergovernmental Relations – focus on senior government funding

Interim Manager – 50% 1 year secondment - focus on mental health, substance use advocacy

Homelessness Planning Analyst – 1 FTE, 2 year

Indigenous consultant to engage with First Nations

- Works on shelter, supportive and affordable housing initiatives
- Leads work to coordinate and integrate external agencies
- Identifies and develops measures to evaluate success
- Seeks senior government funding/cost recovery
- Leads consultation with Indigenous organizations to identify and implement culturally appropriate solutions



# Enhanced and Formalized Relationships and Engagement

# Enhanced and Formalized Relationships

- **Entering into MOUs with the Province** to support work in Crises Response and Advocacy actions for funding:
  - City and BC Housing, Fraser Health Authority, Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions, Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction
- Staff also establishing ongoing relations and engagement with First Nations and Indigenous organizations
- Needed to ensure that Two-Year Pilot Project and other interventions are culturally-appropriate and responsive.

# Implementation Working Group

- **Establishment of an Implementation Working Group**
- Broad representation to help inform the implementation of the Two-Year Pilot Project.
- Could meet five times a year, and on an as needed basis.



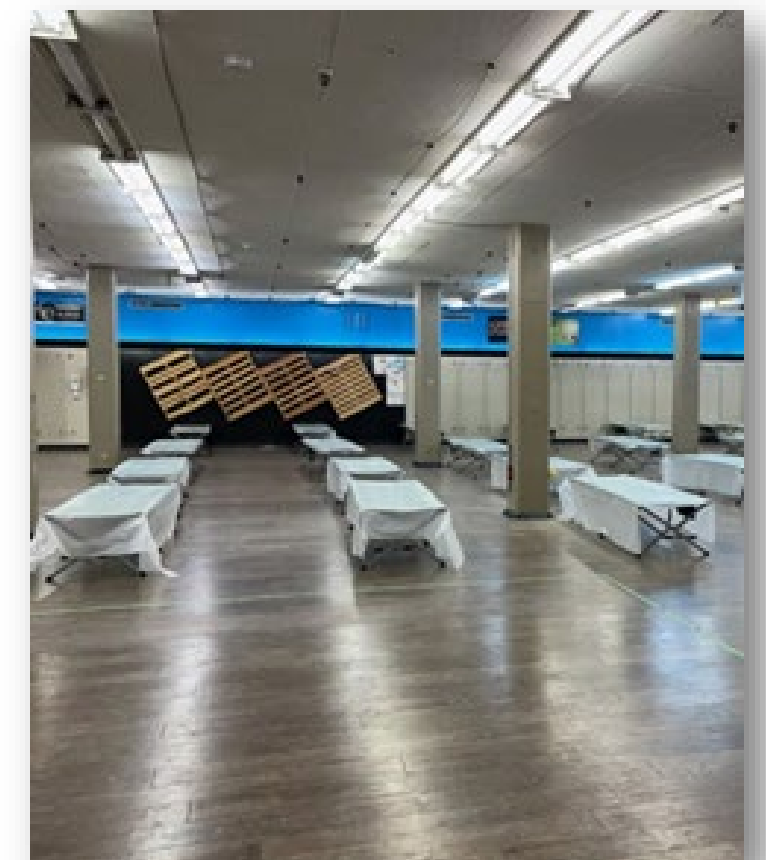
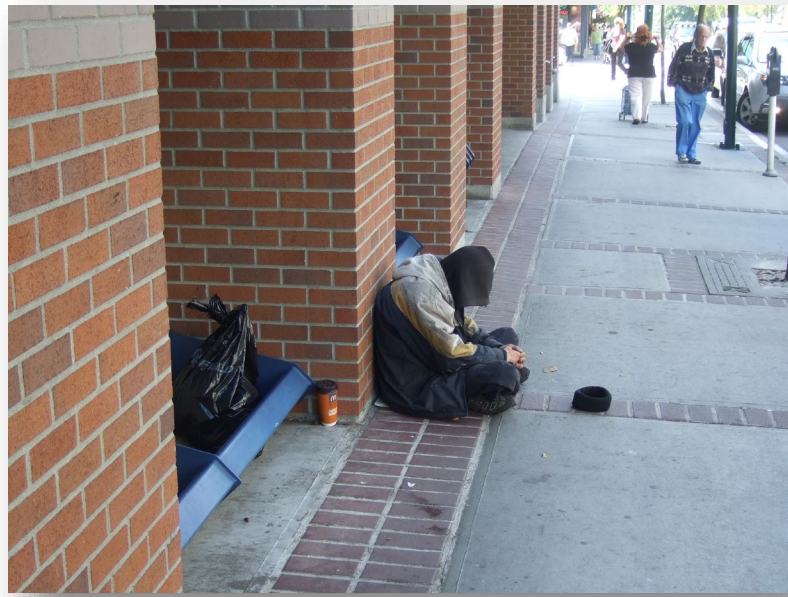
# Implementation Working Group

- Comprised of Indigenous organizations, groups and organizations addressing the three crises, people with lived and living experience, and staff from the three City Teams.
- Needed to help ensure that crises response actions are culturally-appropriate, trauma-informed and responsive to a diverse range of needs.



# Advocacy Support Working Group

- **Establishment of an Advocacy Support Working Group**
- This working group would have more focused representation including business and resident representation.
- Would assist with and support advocacy related to the three crises.
- Could meet three or four times a year, and on an as needed basis.



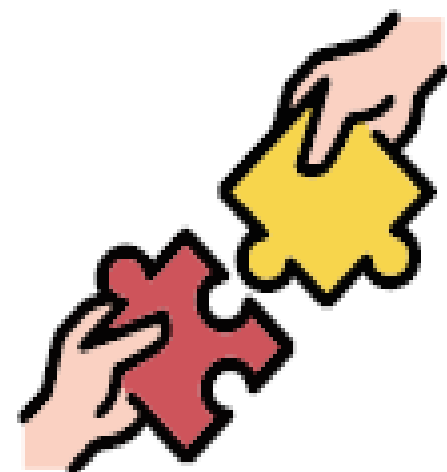
# An Evidence-Based Approach

# An Evidence Based Approach

- Develop culturally appropriate, measurable and realistic metrics that evaluate outcomes related to the three crises of homelessness, mental health and substance use.
- The process will require research, and a comprehensive engagement process with City Council, the community, subject matter experts, and those with lived experience.

# Proposed Metrics:

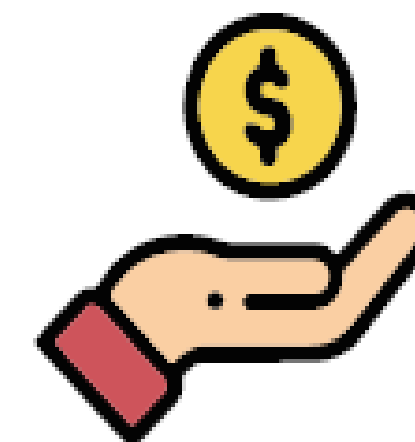
1. effectiveness of public awareness and communications activities;
2. number of Indigenous organizations engaged in the pilot project;
3. number of community and business organizations engaged in advocacy activities;
4. amount of human waste collected and the number of complaints received regarding this issue;
5. number of referrals made for support to Provincial teams;
6. number of 24/7 shelter beds and supportive housing units approved, funded or added;
7. number and functionality of services, and the number of clients supported;
8. amount of senior government funding received related to the three crises;
9. number of staff health and safety communications and engagements.



COORDINATION AND  
PARTNERSHIP



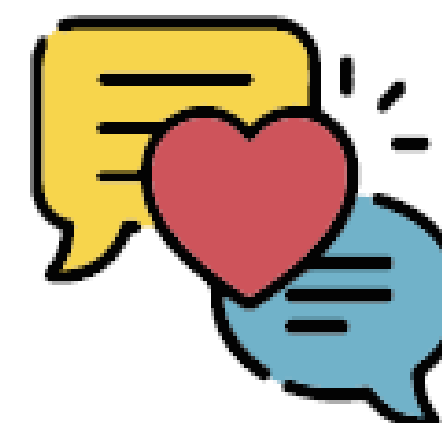
SHELTER, HOUSING  
AND TENANT SUPPORT



INCOME, EMPLOYMENT AND  
FINANCIAL LITERACY



SERVICES AND  
SUPPORTS



COMMUNICATION,  
ENGAGEMENT AND  
INVOLVEMENT

# RECOMMENDATIONS

# Operations Support Team

1. Communications Support – 0.5 FTE, two-year contact (\$30,000 per year)
2. Human Resources Support – 0.25 FTE, two-year contract (\$15,000 per year)
3. Data Analyst Support – 0.5 FTE, two-year secondment with backfill (\$35,000 per year)
4. Equipment, supplies, materials and contracted services – (\$10,000 per year)

# Crises Response Team

1. Manager of Crises Support Team – 1.0 FTE, with potential for secondment with backfill (\$100,000 per year)
2. Crises Support Team Livability Supervisor – 1.0 FTE (\$85,000 per year)
3. Encampment Safety Officer – 1.0 FTE, funded from vacant bylaw officer position (\$0)
4. Non-Clinical Outreach Workers – 2.0 FTE, two-year contract, (\$85,000 each per year for a total of \$170,000 per year)
5. Crises Support Team Coordinator (1.0 FTE, two-year contract (\$75,000 per year)
6. Equipment, supplies, materials and contracted services – (\$20,000 per year)

# Policy Development and Advocacy Team

1. Deputy Fire Chief – 0.5 FTE, one-year secondment with backfill (\$75,000)
2. Homelessness Planning Analyst 1.0 FTE, two-year contract (\$70,000 per year)
3. Indigenous consultant (\$85,000 per year)

# Next Steps

Staff has identified eight immediate next steps in the implementation of the two-year organizational pilot project:

1. The CAO and the A/Director of Finance will identify funding sources for the \$770,000 funding request and forward that enhancement request to the 2024 Budget process – November 2023.
2. City Council and staff will continue their respective advocacy efforts with the Province, and Provincial ministries and agencies – November 2023.
3. City staff will prepare a Communications Strategy designed to inform the community of the City's new organizational approach – November 2023.

# Next Steps

4. The Human Resources Department will prepare job descriptions for the new positions and commence with the recruitment process for the new contract positions – November/early-December 2023.
5. City staff will engage in the development of evidence-based and measurable metrics – November/December 2023.
6. City staff will prepare the terms of reference and commence with the recruitment for both the Implementation Working Group and Advocacy Support Working Group – mid-December 2023 to January 2024.
7. City staff will provide an update report to City Council – January 2024.
8. City staff will commence implementation of the Pilot Project – February 2024.

# Report Recommendations

**THAT** Council approve the two-year organizational pilot project and implementation strategy to address the three crises of homelessness, mental health and substance use as included in the Analysis section of this report;

**THAT** Council direct staff to forward the funding request to the 2024 Budget deliberation process; and

**THAT** Council approve the Next Steps as outlined in this staff report.





