



City of New Westminster

Report to Council

To: New Westminster City Council
in Regular Council

Meeting Date: November 17, 2025

From: Lisa Spitale, Chief Administrative
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Report No.: 2025-329

**Re: Crises Response Pilot Project – Independent Evaluation: Round One
Update**

Staff Recommendation

THAT staff report back on the implementation of all recommendations from the Round One Independent Evaluation Report included as Attachment 2 to the report titled “Crises Response Pilot Project – Independent Evaluation: Round One Update” from the Chief Administrative Officer, Director, Engineering, and Director, Planning and Development dated November 17, 2025, including consideration of Council’s feedback provided at the meeting, as part of the next regular update report on the Crises Response Pilot Project.

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the independent evaluation of the Crises Response Pilot Project, including describing the evaluation’s reporting structure, objectives and scope; summarizing findings and recommendations from the evaluation report; and sharing the complete findings from the independent evaluation for the first observation period between September 2024 and May 2025.

Summary

The Crises Response Pilot Project is a two-year initiative that aims to address the intersecting and associated crises of homelessness, mental health and substance use in New Westminster. The pilot project is undergoing an independent evaluation, conducted by an evaluator from Douglas College, to assess progress made towards intended outcomes; evaluate efficacy in reaching intended audiences; and identify promising practices to build on for the remainder of the pilot project and beyond.

The independent evaluation is divided into two observation periods, with a report generated at the end of each period. The evaluator has assessed a wide variety of data

types and sources from the first observation period between September 2024 and May 2025, and has generated the attached Round One Independent Evaluation Report (Evaluation Report).

This report summarizes progress made within the first nine months of implementation, as per the evaluation objectives. City staff will review the findings and recommendations from the Evaluation Report and incorporate recommendations as applicable, feasible, and relevant to further refine the pilot project's model and approach.

Staff will continue to support the independent evaluation throughout the second observation period, between June 2025 and September 2026. A second evaluation report and its findings will be shared with Council and the community in fall 2026.

Background

The Crises Response Pilot Project is a two-year initiative that aims to address the intersecting and associated crises of homelessness, mental health and substance use in New Westminster. The pilot project was approved by Council in November 2023, and officially launched in September 2024. As it is grounded in an evidence-based approach, the pilot project is being independently evaluated to assess the Crises Response model as an effective approach to address homelessness, mental health and substance use at the local government level.

In October 2024, the City and Douglas College entered into a sharing agreement to undertake an independent evaluation of the pilot project. Dr. Anne Tseng, a faculty member in the Department of Sociology, is leading the evaluation for Douglas College. Through consultation with key staff working on the pilot project, Dr. Tseng developed the evaluation goals, metrics and methodology for analysis of applicable data sources. This information was presented by Dr. Tseng to Council on April 14, 2025.

The goals of the evaluation are to:

- assess the design of the pilot project to effectively meet its intended outcomes;
- measure the progress and outcomes over time;
- identify unmet needs, gaps and constraints that limit the ability of the pilot project to address the three inter-related crises;
- assess the extent to which the pilot project is reaching its intended populations;
- examine the pilot project as a means for effective advocacy and policy development.

Analysis

Evaluation Observation Periods and Reporting Structure

The evaluation is divided into two observation periods, with summary reports produced at the end of each period. This reporting structure enables the City to employ an iterative approach to the pilot project, leveraging insights, findings and recommendations from the evaluator to support project refinements as needed.

The first observation period of the evaluation includes data from the first nine months of the pilot project, between September 2024 and May 2025. In select cases, data from prior to September 2024 were included for analysis where relevant and available.

The Evaluation Report authored by Dr. Tseng for the first observation period is enclosed as Attachment 2. This report is oriented towards two objectives: 1) establishing baseline measures for subsequent evaluations; and 2) providing a snapshot of the outputs of the pilot project so far. This report describes the evaluation goals, process and limitations; summarizes outputs and describes progress made during the first nine months of the pilot project; and provides an overall assessment of the pilot project, including recommendations for next steps.

A second and final report will be produced at the end of the second observation period in fall 2026. This report will examine, analyze and summarize data collected between June 2025 and September 2026.

Data Sources and Data Types

Sources for the data were broad to account for all interest holders, including from each of the pilot projects' three teams: the Crisis Response Team, the Operations Support Team, and the Policy and Advocacy Team. Other data sources include residents, businesses, people with lived and living experience, community partners from faith-based, non-profit and provincial organizations and teams, and the point-in-time homelessness count.

Types of data that were included for analysis were varied to capture the breadth of work occurring across City departments, teams and the community, as well as a range of potential indicators. This includes both quantitative indicators such as counts and statistics, as well as qualitative indicators such as observational summaries, surveys and polls, and supplemental data from focus groups. The following data types were included for analysis:

- Daily Summary Reports from the Crises Response Team;
- Daily Summary Reports from the Community Liaison Officer Team;
- Observational data from the Implementation Working Group and Engagement and Collaboration Working Group;
- Observational data from focus groups held with residents, businesses, faith-based and non-profit organizations, and people with lived and living experience of the three crises;

- Statistics from the Bio-hazardous Waste Dashboard;
- The 2023 Point-in-Time Homeless Count;
- An online survey to capture the perspectives of the business community;
- An outreach poll to generate a demographic profile of people experiencing the three crises that interact with the Crises Response Team;
- A timeline chronicling significant milestones within the first year of the pilot project.

Data Analysis

The evaluator completed the analysis on all data provided. Data analysis methods were descriptive, and included both quantitative and qualitative methodologies as determined by the evaluator. City staff assisted in the evaluation by collecting data, preparing data for analysis by collating, cleaning and coding data as needed, and ensuring all data sources were provided to the evaluator in a timely manner within the reporting period. Where relevant, staff provided support to plan, coordinate, host and assist with evaluation activities, such as focus groups.

Key Findings and Recommendations from the Round One Evaluation Report

Overall, the Evaluation Report found that data collected during the first observation period reflects noteworthy progress made on key outputs of the pilot project, creating a solid foundation from which to build on in the second year:

“Overall, findings from the first round of evaluations point to a productive second year for the pilot project. With more experience and coordination, public-facing teams such as the CRT [Crises Response Team] and CLOs [Community Liaison Officers] are equipped to carry out their tasks more efficiently. Policy development and advocacy efforts have many successes from the first year to build upon, which should position the PAT [Policy and Advocacy Team] to strengthen partnerships and access new funding opportunities. Beyond the pilot project’s current life span, it is also important to recognize the foundations established in the first year that will be supportive of longer-term strategies to address the social problems of homelessness, substance use, and issues of mental health.”

The Evaluation Report also identifies areas for continued growth, and includes a series of recommendations to support subsequent evaluations and enable the continued development of the pilot project. Recommendations from the independent evaluator fall into two categories: data collection and future evaluation needs; and recommendations on the pilot project. These are listed and briefly summarized by staff below and detailed further in Attachment 2.

Recommendations on data collection and future evaluation needs include:

1. *Implement a systematic process for data collection and entry:* Further systematize data collection and data entry procedures across City departments to improve accuracy and support cross-analyses of data files.
2. *Develop codebooks to accompany data files:* Support increased consistency in variable tracking, measurement and definitions by developing resources that support a comprehensive understanding of key variables across departments.
3. *Improve representativeness of data through targeted recruitment:* Ensure that qualitative data that involves public opinion and perception is as representative of the community as possible through targeted communications and recruitment.
4. *Collect additional data on users and potential users:* Enhance the person-centred and trauma-informed approach of the pilot project by collecting additional data from groups that are utilizing pilot project supports, in particular those who are connected to the Crises Response Team and Community Liaison Officer Team.

Recommendations to improve the pilot project include:

1. *Continue and expand communications strategy:* Raise awareness of the resources available under the pilot project, and consider expanding the communications strategy to include general education about the three crises, with a focus on anti-stigma messaging.
2. *Expand opportunities for consultation with key groups:* Build on existing and newly developed partnerships to provide additional opportunities for consultation on areas such as resource allocation and outreach with both businesses and service providers.
3. *Expand opportunities for external collaboration:* Explore opportunities to foster external collaboration with the City, and between interest holders through solutions-focused engagement.
4. *Target advocacy and funding opportunities:* Highlight successes from year one in ongoing advocacy efforts to strengthen policy support and to encourage ongoing coordination between different levels of government in addressing the three crises, and continue to identify funding opportunities to support the pilot project.

Key staff working on the pilot project will review the findings and recommendations from the enclosed Evaluation Report, with a view to incorporate recommendations where applicable, feasible and relevant to improve the pilot project's model and approach. This review will also take into consideration additional feedback received by Council on the Evaluation Report at the November 17th Council meeting.

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications for Council's consideration.

Next Steps

As part of the next regular update to Council on the Crises Response Pilot Project, staff will report back on the implementation of the eight recommendations outlined in the Round One Independent Evaluation Report, taking into consideration additional feedback provided by Council.

Staff will continue to work with Dr. Tseng and Douglas College to support the completion of the independent evaluation by providing assistance with data collection, data collation, cleaning and coding, and other tasks, as needed. Dr. Tseng will produce another report that analyses data from the second observation period, between June 2025 and September 2026. The second evaluation report will be shared with Council and the community in fall 2026.

Interdepartmental Liaison

The pilot project is a high priority Council initiative, which involves several departments working on three inter-departmental staff teams. The independent evaluation will inform the pilot project, and thus the work plans of several City departments.

Attachments

Attachment 1 – Crises Response Pilot Project – Independent Evaluation Report to Council dated April 14, 2025

Attachment 2 – Round One Independent Evaluation Report on the Crises Response Pilot Project

Report Approval

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Agreed By

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