



# Memorandum

**TO:** Satpal Sidhu, County Executive

**FROM:** Champ Thomaskutty, Director

**RE:** Bellingham Police Department – Alternative Response Team (ART) Program HB 2015 Interlocal Agreement

**DATE:** MAY 7, 2026

---

Attached is an interlocal agreement between Whatcom County and Bellingham Police Department for your review and signature.

▪ **Background and Purpose**

This 25-month agreement commits funding from the Bellingham Police Department to maintain operations of the Alternative Response Team (ART) Program. These funds will be used to maintain current service levels, retain trained personnel, analyze program data and to preserve the unit's demonstrated benefit to the Bellingham community.

The ART program serves people who are in need of immediate or emergent behavioral health outreach. ART responds to low-risk, low-acuity, and non-criminal calls and aims to reduce the burden on Bellingham law enforcement by diverting lower-risk calls to a behavioral health team. These teams can reduce the burden on first responders and provide trauma-informed and culturally appropriate responses. ART provides an embedded 911 Community Connector to triage and dispatch calls to ART, providing an equitable and effective intervention. ART is deployed 10 hours/day, 5 days/week (currently Monday-Friday) within Bellingham city limits.

▪ **Funding Amount and Source**

The Bellingham Police Department will provide \$688,760 in funding to the County over this 25-month period. These funds will be included in the 2026 budget. Council authorization is required per RCW 39.34.030(2) for agreements between public agencies.

▪ **Differences between Contracts**

This is a new agreement; however, funding for these services has been provided through different funding source in previous agreements since 2022.

Please contact Malora Christensen, Response Systems Manager at 360-778-6163 ([MChriste@co.whatcom.wa.us](mailto:MChriste@co.whatcom.wa.us)) if you have any questions.