

ITEM #:	<u>9</u>
DATE:	<u>06-24-25</u>
DEPT:	<u>POLICE</u>

COUNCIL ACTION FORM

SUBJECT: 2025 LAW ENFORCEMENT MENTAL HEALTH WELLNESS ACT GRANT PROGRAM

BACKGROUND:

The Ames Police Department recently received notice of the Law Enforcement Mental Health and Wellness Act (LEMHWA) grant program. The LEMHWA program will fund the delivery of and access to mental health and wellness services for law enforcement officers and their families through the implementation of peer support, training, family resources, suicide prevention, stress reduction, clinical support, and other promising practices for wellness programs.

This goal will be achieved by:

1. Increasing law enforcement agency capacity to provide mental health and wellness training and resources for employees of law enforcement agencies and their families.
2. Increasing law enforcement agency capacity to implement peer support networks for crisis and non-crisis circumstances.
3. Increasing law enforcement agency capacity to address and reduce the stigma associated with officer mental health and wellness by supporting the implementation of mental health education and development of resources.

The application deadline is June 30, 2025, with a two-year duration for a maximum of \$200,000 per award with no local match. The Police Department intends to apply for two programs through this grant. The total grant funding request for the two programs is \$124,000.

Crisis Response K9 Team Program:

A Crisis Response K9 Team consists of a certified Therapy Dog handled by a First Responder trained in Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM). CISM is a "first aid" approach to assisting individuals who have recently experienced a traumatic event. The dog, with the assistance of the trained handler, can provide a comforting, calming, and supportive presence for those who interact with it. Crisis Response K9 Teams may be deployed to:

- Provide peer support for other First Responders
- Assist with incident debriefings within First Responder agencies
- Respond directly to major traumatic or disaster events
- Provide support to those enduring grief, loss, or trauma
- Aid prosecutors in victim interviews and depositions
- Visit medical facilities to support staff as well as patients
- Support schools during emergency drills as well as with educational visits to raise awareness about mental wellness

The dog and handler team trains together for as long as 12-18 months to develop skills set at the highest national standards of Animal Assisted Crisis Response. Each team is then tested and certified by Master K9 trainers at the Crisis Response K9 Academy. Graduates of the Academy are then able to be deployed by their Agency to provide support to those affected by critical incidents.

The first year cost for the program is approximately \$15,000, which covers the cost of the dog, training, veterinary care, food, and equipment. Staff has identified a potential partner agency, Crisis Canines of the Midlands, which has assisted in the placement and training of dozens of crisis dogs in agencies across Iowa. The organization assists with the initial development of an agency's program, ongoing training, and assistance with raising outside funding, if necessary.

Ongoing costs for the program are minimal, including food and veterinary care up to \$4,000 per year. However, most of these costs would likely be taken care of through donations and partnerships, from our own Animal Shelter. Other agencies utilizing the program find veterinary care is often donated along with food for the K9.

An existing staff member in the Police Department has been identified as the handler, so no additional personnel will be needed to manage this program.

Tactical Longevity Training

Tactical Longevity Training goes beyond awareness level training and provides actionable strategies and practical techniques and exercises designed to prevent or significantly reduce the impact of stress and trauma on first responders.

Retention: Tactical Longevity's Anti-Fragility program enhances retention by providing those in high-stress roles and high-stakes environments with skills to transform workplace challenges into pathways for personal and professional advancement.

Team Member Engagement: The program enhances engagement through dynamic training that fosters a sense of purpose, belonging, and investment in their roles and the mission of the agency.

Under-Performance: By targeting the roots of under-performance, which often are based in how we think about what we experience, the Anti-Fragility mindset helps officers overcome obstacles and reach their full potential.

Morale: Tactical Longevity's approach improves morale by creating a supportive culture from the ground up, one that values growth through hardship, recognizes achievements in spite of constant adversity, and empowers officers to take pride in their ability to thrive in challenging times.

Community Relationships: The program strengthens community relationships by equipping professionals with the tools they need to be able to maintain empathy in the face of stress, improve communication skills and hence the ability to connect quickly with citizens, and listen to community needs so they can respond thoughtfully.

Recruitment: The program may bolster recruitment efforts by showcasing a commitment to team member development and well-being, attracting candidates eager to join a forward-thinking and supportive agency.

The Training program from Tactical Longevity consists of a two- year program as outlined below.

Year One of the training program (approximately \$36,000)

- Field Trainer Course (Live sessions) - this provides for a train-the-trainer
- Recruit Course (recorded version and proctored)
- Access to smartphone application (providing feedback and guidance)
- Email Content (providing tips, articles, training materials)

Option for Ambassador Training (4 hr live course) and 6 coaching sessions = Add \$10,000

Year Two (Approximately \$58,000)

- Field Trainer "Refresher" class - Live, 6 hrs
- Recruit Course continued (recorded and proctored)
- Access to smartphone application
- Email Content
- First Line Supervisor Course - Live
- Leadership Course- Live
- General "All Agency" Course for civilians, dispatch, other employees

Option for continued Ambassador Coaching = Add \$5,000

Key deliverables include in-person courses, continuous skill reinforcement through the Tactical Longevity app, habit tracking, and ongoing digital content engagement. The intended outcomes are to operationalize psychological resilience across the agency, reduce burnout, increase job satisfaction and retention, and strengthen public trust through a healthier, more engaged workforce.

The aim of the training program is to reduce early-career attrition, increase peer support utilization, and enhance emotional durability, ultimately leading to better community relationships and engagements. Metrics: course completion, individual qualitative feedback after completion of the course, and internal (pre and post) surveys on burnout, morale, self-awareness, self-regulation, social connectedness, and mental flexibility. Evaluation will guide ongoing improvements.

The program first targets Field Training Officers (FTOs) to provide them the tools to teach these strategies to new recruits along with a new recruit class. The program would also provide training for all members along with specific training for supervisors and leadership in year two.

The full cost of the program is up to \$109,000 for a two-year program and can be scaled based on grant award. The entire program can be modified to fit the specific grant funding. In future years, our Field Training Officers and Supervisor will perform the training for new employees.

ALTERNATIVES:

1. Authorize staff to submit an application to the Law Enforcement Mental Health and Wellness Act (LEMHWA) grant program.
2. Do not authorize staff to submit an application to the Law Enforcement Mental Health and Wellness Act (LEMHWA) grant program.

CITY MANAGER'S RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Grant funding has been used productively to provide training and equipment. This grant may provide funds to enhance training and support to the City's first responders and also provide a new service to Ames residents. Therefore, it is the recommendation of the City Manager that the City Council adopt Alternative No. 1, as described above.