

Ethics and Elections Commission

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<http://www.seattle.gov/ethics/>

Department Overview

The Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission (SEEC) helps foster public confidence in the integrity of Seattle city government by providing education, training, and enforcement of the City's Ethics Code, Whistleblower Code, and lobbying regulations. It also promotes informed elections through education, training, and enforcement of the City's Elections Code and Election Pamphlet Code. With the passage of [Initiative 122](#) in November 2015, the Commission now administers and funds the Democracy Voucher Program.

The Commission's work on behalf of the City of Seattle centers around five main lines of business:

Ethics Code: The Commission conducts ethics training for all City of Seattle employees upon request and through the City's New Employee and New Supervisor Orientation programs. It also provides ethics training information for City employees via the City's intranet site. The Commission issues advisory opinions regarding interpretations of the Code of Ethics and also investigates and rules upon alleged violations of the Code. More than thirty years of formal advisory opinions, organized and searchable by topic, are available on the Commission's website.

Whistleblower Code: The Commission helps to protect an employee's right to report improper governmental action and to be free from retaliation as a result of such reporting. The Commission either investigates allegations of improper governmental actions itself or refers allegations to the appropriate agency.

Elections Code and Election Pamphlets Code: The Commission fulfills the public's mandate of full campaign disclosure by:

- training organizations required to report campaign contributions and expenditures in proper reporting procedures;
- auditing campaign reports;
- working with organizations to correct errors; and
- making all campaign finance information available to the public.

Since 1993, the Commission has made summary reports of campaign financing information available to the public, and since 1995, the Commission has published campaign financing information on its website. The Commission also produces voters' pamphlets for City elections and ballot measures. It makes these pamphlets available in several languages and produces a video voters' guide with King County.

Lobbying Regulations: The Commission is charged with administering the City's lobbying regulations. The Commission collects and posts information so that residents know who is lobbying and how much they are being paid to lobby. The Commission also enforces compliance with the lobbying regulations.

Democracy Voucher Program: The Commission administers the Democracy Voucher Program which was approved with the passage of I-122 in November 2015. The primary goal of the program is to provide \$100 in vouchers to eligible Seattle residents so that they can contribute to candidates for City office who qualify to participate in the program.

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Budget Snapshot

	2021 Actuals	2022 Adopted	2023 Adopted	2024 Endorsed
Department Support				
General Fund Support	1,092,273	1,297,585	1,276,345	1,298,509
Other Funding - Operating	4,727,240	868,078	6,735,048	882,245
Total Operations	5,819,513	2,165,663	8,011,393	2,180,754
Total Appropriations	5,819,513	2,165,663	8,011,393	2,180,754
Full-Time Equivalents Total*	7.40	9.40	9.40	9.40

* 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

Budget Overview

The 2023 Adopted and 2024 Endorsed budgets for the Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission provide funding for the bi-annual spending increase associated with the Democracy Voucher program. Otherwise, the budget maintains investments at current service levels.

City Council Changes to the Proposed Budget

The Council made no changes to the 2023-2024 Proposed Budget.

Incremental Budget Changes

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	Dollars	FTE
2022 Adopted Budget	2,165,663	9.40
Baseline		
Appropriations for 2022 Annual Wage Increase (AWI)	50,201	-
Citywide Adjustments for Standard Cost Changes	(67,374)	-
Proposed Technical		
Bi-Annual Election Year Technical Adjustment	5,862,903	-
Technical Adjustment to Annual Contribution to/Use of Fund Balance	-	-
Total Incremental Changes	\$5,845,730	-
Total 2023 Adopted Budget	\$8,011,393	9.40

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Description of Incremental Budget Changes

Baseline

Appropriations for 2022 Annual Wage Increase (AWI)

Expenditures	\$50,201
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This centrally administered change adjusts appropriations to reflect an annual wage increase in 2022, as outlined in the agreements between certain City unions, for personnel costs included in this department. These agreements were not finalized until after the 2022 budget had been adopted. This change includes ongoing cost increases to salary, FICA, Medicare, retirement, overtime and temporary labor. There is no increase assumed from 2022 to 2023.

Citywide Adjustments for Standard Cost Changes

Expenditures	\$(67,374)
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Citywide technical adjustments made in the baseline 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.

Proposed Technical

Bi-Annual Election Year Technical Adjustment

Expenditures	\$5,862,903
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This bi-annual increase funds the Democracy Voucher Program for the 2023 election cycle. It provides the funding needed for voucher payments of up to \$5.25 million, and an additional \$612,903 for voucher printing and mailing costs, and temporary staffing increases for voucher processing and outreach work. In 2023, the District City Council races, will be on the ballot. This is one-time funding for 2023 only.

Technical Adjustment to Annual Contribution to/Use of Fund Balance

Revenues	\$5,866,970
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This is a technical item to balance revenues and expenditures for the Funds managed by this department.

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Expenditure Overview

	2021 Actuals	2022 Adopted	2023 Adopted	2024 Endorsed
Appropriations				
ETH - BO-ET-V1T00 - Ethics and Elections				
00100 - General Fund	1,092,273	1,297,585	1,276,345	1,298,509
Total for BSL: BO-ET-V1T00	1,092,273	1,297,585	1,276,345	1,298,509
ETH - BO-ET-VT123 - Election Vouchers				
12300 - Election Vouchers Fund	4,727,240	868,078	6,735,048	882,245
Total for BSL: BO-ET-VT123	4,727,240	868,078	6,735,048	882,245
Department Total	5,819,513	2,165,663	8,011,393	2,180,754
Department Full-Time Equivalents Total*	7.40	9.40	9.40	9.40

** 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*

Budget Summary by Fund Ethics and Elections Commission

	2021 Actuals	2022 Adopted	2023 Adopted	2024 Endorsed
00100 - General Fund	1,092,273	1,297,585	1,276,345	1,298,509
12300 - Election Vouchers Fund	4,727,240	868,078	6,735,048	882,245
Budget Totals for ETH	5,819,513	2,165,663	8,011,393	2,180,754

Revenue Overview

2023 Estimated Revenues

Account Code	Account Name	2021 Actuals	2022 Adopted	2023 Adopted	2024 Endorsed
311010	Real & Personal Property Taxes	3,036,391	3,000,000	3,000,000	3,000,000
	Total Revenues for: 12300 - Election Vouchers Fund	3,036,391	3,000,000	3,000,000	3,000,000
400000	Use of/Contribution to Fund Balance	-	(2,131,922)	3,735,048	(2,117,755)
	Total Resources for: 12300 - Election Vouchers Fund	3,036,391	868,078	6,735,048	882,245
	Total ETH Resources	3,036,391	868,078	6,735,048	882,245

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Appropriations by Budget Summary Level and Program

ETH - BO-ET-V1T00 - Ethics and Elections

The purpose of the Ethics and Elections Budget Summary Level is to: 1) audit, investigate, and conduct hearings regarding non-compliance with, or violations of, Commission-administered ordinances; 2) advise all City officials and employees of their obligations under Commission-administered ordinances; and 3) publish and broadly distribute information about the City's ethical standards, City election campaigns, campaign financial disclosure statements, and lobbyist disclosure statements.

Program Expenditures	2021 Actuals	2022 Adopted	2023 Adopted	2024 Endorsed
Ethics and Elections	1,092,273	1,297,585	1,276,345	1,298,509
Total	1,092,273	1,297,585	1,276,345	1,298,509
Full-time Equivalents Total*	4.90	5.90	5.90	5.90

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ETH - BO-ET-VT123 - Election Vouchers

The purpose of the Election Voucher Budget Summary Level is to pay costs associated with implementing, maintaining and funding a program for providing one hundred dollars in vouchers to eligible Seattle residents that they can contribute to candidates for City office who qualify to participate in the Election Voucher program enacted by voters in November 2015.

Program Expenditures	2021 Actuals	2022 Adopted	2023 Adopted	2024 Endorsed
Election Vouchers	4,727,240	868,078	6,735,048	882,245
Total	4,727,240	868,078	6,735,048	882,245
Full-time Equivalents Total*	2.50	3.50	3.50	3.50

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