

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

	2020 Actuals	2021 Adopted	2022 Proposed
Department Support			
General Fund Support	957,436	1,049,986	1,297,585
Other Funding - Operating	643,836	8,417,751	868,078
Total Operations	1,601,273	9,467,737	2,165,663
Total Appropriations	1,601,273	9,467,737	2,165,663
Full-Time Equivalents Total*	7.40	7.40	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 2022 Proposed Budget for the Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission adds two positions. The first is to carry out new work related to recent amendments to the City's Lobbying Code and to assist with an expanding body of work with the administration of campaign finance and lobbying laws, and the second is a net-zero conversion of temporary staff in the Democracy Voucher program to full time to carry out the ongoing work of candidate engagement, ensuring voucher accountability, and managing the technical operating needs of the program.

The proposed budget also removes funding for Democracy Voucher program costs like voucher payments, printing and mailing, as 2022 is on off-year in the bi-annual election cycle.

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Incremental Budget Changes

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	Dollars	FTE
2021 Adopted Budget	9,467,737	7.40
Baseline		
Baseline Adjustments for Personnel Costs	19,482	-
Citywide Adjustments for Standard Cost Changes	117,749	-
Proposed Operating		
Lobbying Administration 1.0 FTE	151,701	1.00
Democracy Voucher Program 1.0 FTE Add	-	1.00
Resident Enrollment Project - One-Time	75,000	-
Proposed Technical		
DEPT Balancing	-	-
Zero Out 2021 One Time Adjustments	(7,666,006)	-
Total Incremental Changes	\$(7,302,074)	2.00
Total 2022 Proposed Budget	\$2,165,663	9.40

Description of Incremental Budget Changes

Baseline

Baseline Adjustments for Personnel Costs

Expenditures \$19,482

This centrally administered change adjusts appropriations to restore the annual wage increase for non-represented Executives, Managers and Strategic Advisors, which was forgone in 2021 due to financial constraints.

Citywide Adjustments for Standard Cost Changes

Expenditures \$117,749

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.

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Proposed Operating

Lobbying Administration 1.0 FTE

Expenditures	\$151,701
Position Allocation	1.00

This item creates one full-time Strategic Advisor 1, Exempt position in the Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission to address new work due to recent amendments to the City's Lobbying Code, and to assist with an expanding body of work related to the administration of campaign finance and lobbying laws.

Democracy Voucher Program 1.0 FTE Add

Expenditures	-
Position Allocation	1.00

This net-zero adjustment uses temporary labor funding to add a permanent Management Systems Analyst (MSA) to the Democracy Voucher Program. The position was added in a temporary capacity in 2020 to improve candidate engagement, ensure voucher accountability and to help manage the technical operating needs of the program and it's been determined that the position will be needed in an ongoing capacity to successfully carry out program requirements.

Resident Enrollment Project - One-Time

Expenditures	\$75,000
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This one-time add funds research, testing, technology, and community input to improve the enrollment process in the Democracy Voucher Program for residents who are not registered voters (registered voters are automatically enrolled in the program).

Proposed Technical

DEPT Balancing

Revenues	\$(2,131,922)
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This is a technical item to balance revenues and expenditures for the Funds managed by this department.

Zero Out 2021 One Time Adjustments

Expenditures	\$(7,666,006)
Revenues	\$(5,417,751)

This entry zeroes out the 2021 Use of Fund Balance adjustment and the election cycle increase for voucher disbursements.

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Expenditure Overview

	2020 Actuals	2021 Adopted	2022 Proposed
Appropriations			
ETH - BO-ET-V1T00 - Ethics and Elections			
00100 - General Fund	957,436	1,049,986	1,297,585
Total for BSL: BO-ET-V1T00	957,436	1,049,986	1,297,585
ETH - BO-ET-VT123 - Election Vouchers			
12300 - Election Vouchers Fund	643,836	8,417,751	868,078
Total for BSL: BO-ET-VT123	643,836	8,417,751	868,078
Department Total	1,601,273	9,467,737	2,165,663
Department Full-Time Equivalents Total*	7.40	7.40	9.40

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Budget Summary by Fund Ethics and Elections Commission

	2020 Actuals	2021 Adopted	2022 Proposed
00100 - General Fund	957,436	1,049,986	1,297,585
12300 - Election Vouchers Fund	643,836	8,417,751	868,078
Budget Totals for ETH	1,601,273	9,467,737	2,165,663

Revenue Overview

2022 Estimated Revenues

Account Code	Account Name	2020 Actuals	2021 Adopted	2022 Proposed
311010	Real & Personal Property Taxes	2,951,676	3,000,000	3,000,000
Total Revenues for: 12300 - Election Vouchers Fund		2,951,676	3,000,000	3,000,000
400000	Use of/Contribution to Fund Balance	-	5,417,751	(2,131,922)
Total Resources for: 12300 - Election Vouchers Fund		2,951,676	8,417,751	868,078
Total ETH Resources		2,951,676	8,417,751	868,078

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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	2020 Actuals	2021 Adopted	2022 Proposed
Ethics and Elections	957,436	1,049,986	1,297,585
Total	957,436	1,049,986	1,297,585
Full-time Equivalents Total*	4.90	4.90	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	2020 Actuals	2021 Adopted	2022 Proposed
Election Vouchers	643,836	8,417,751	868,078
Total	643,836	8,417,751	868,078
Full-time Equivalents Total*	2.50	2.50	3.50

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