

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

	2019 Actuals	2020 Adopted	2021 Adopted
Department Support			
General Fund Support	966,253	1,094,680	1,049,986
Other Funding - Operating	3,871,421	742,213	8,417,751
Total Operations	4,837,674	1,836,893	9,467,737
Total Appropriations	4,837,674	1,836,893	9,467,737
 Full-Time Equivalents Total*	 5.90	 7.40	 7.40

** 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 2021 Adopted Budget for the Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission provides 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 2021 Proposed Budget.

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Incremental Budget Changes

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	Dollars	FTE
2020 Adopted Budget	1,836,893	7.40
Baseline		
Ethics and Elections Net-Zero Account Alignment	-	-
Citywide Adjustments for Standard Cost Changes	31,123	-
Baseline Adjustments for Personnel Costs	9,151	-
Proposed Operating		
Democracy Voucher Increase for the 2021 Election Cycle	7,666,006	-
10% General Fund Target Reduction	(75,436)	-
Proposed Technical		
DEPT-Balancing	-	-
Total Incremental Changes	\$7,630,844	-
Total 2021 Adopted Budget	\$9,467,737	7.40

Description of Incremental Budget Changes

Baseline

Ethics and Elections Net-Zero Account Alignment

Expenditures -

This net-zero adjustment aligns the budget with actual spending for the Ethics and Elections Commission's central rate accounts.

Citywide Adjustments for Standard Cost Changes

Expenditures \$31,123

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.

Baseline Adjustments for Personnel Costs

Expenditures \$9,151

This centrally administered change adjusts appropriations to reflect an annual wage increase, as outlined in the agreements between the City and the Coalition of Unions, for personnel costs included in this department's baseline budget. This includes increases to salary, FICA, Medicare, family medical leave, retirement, overtime and temporary

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labor. There is no increase assumed from 2021 to 2022. This does not include a 2021 salary increase for non-represented Executives, Managers and Strategic Advisors.

Proposed Operating

Democracy Voucher Increase for the 2021 Election Cycle

Expenditures \$7,666,006

This bi-annual increase funds the Democracy Voucher Program for the 2021 election cycle. It provides the funding needed for voucher payments of up to \$6.8 million, voucher printing and mailing costs, and temporary staffing increases for voucher processing and outreach work. In 2021, the Mayor, City Council positions #8 and #9 (citywide) and the City Attorney will be on the ballot. This is one-time funding for 2021 only.

10% General Fund Target Reduction

Expenditures \$(75,436)

This item reduces a significant portion of the average annual underspend in the Ethic and Elections Commission General Fund budget. There were no changes to staffing levels and this reduction will not impact department operations.

Proposed Technical

DEPT-Balancing

Revenues \$7,675,538

This is a technical item to balance revenues and expenditures for the Funds managed by this department.

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Expenditure Overview

	2019 Actuals	2020 Adopted	2021 Adopted
Appropriations			
ETH - BO-ET-V1T00 - Ethics and Elections			
00100 - General Fund	966,253	1,094,680	1,049,986
Total for BSL: BO-ET-V1T00	966,253	1,094,680	1,049,986
ETH - BO-ET-VT123 - Election Vouchers			
12300 - Election Vouchers Fund	3,871,421	742,213	8,417,751
Total for BSL: BO-ET-VT123	3,871,421	742,213	8,417,751
Department Total	4,837,674	1,836,893	9,467,737
Department Full-Time Equivalents Total*	5.90	7.40	7.40

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Budget Summary by Fund Ethics and Elections Commission

	2019 Actuals	2020 Adopted	2021 Adopted
00100 - General Fund	966,253	1,094,680	1,049,986
12300 - Election Vouchers Fund	3,871,421	742,213	8,417,751
Budget Totals for ETH	4,837,674	1,836,893	9,467,737

Revenue Overview

2021 Estimated Revenues

Account Code	Account Name	2019 Actuals	2020 Adopted	2021 Adopted
311010	Real & Personal Property Taxes	2,976,591	3,000,000	3,000,000
Total Revenues for: 12300 - Election Vouchers Fund		2,976,591	3,000,000	3,000,000
400000	Use of/Contribution to Fund Balance	-	(2,257,787)	5,417,751
Total Resources for: 12300 - Election Vouchers Fund		2,976,591	742,213	8,417,751
Total ETH Resources		2,976,591	742,213	8,417,751

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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	2019 Actuals	2020 Adopted	2021 Adopted
Ethics and Elections	966,253	1,094,680	1,049,986
Total	966,253	1,094,680	1,049,986
Full-time Equivalents Total*	4.90	4.90	4.90

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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	2019 Actuals	2020 Adopted	2021 Adopted
Election Vouchers	3,871,421	742,213	8,417,751
Total	3,871,421	742,213	8,417,751
Full-time Equivalents Total*	1.00	2.50	2.50

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