

# Ethics and Elections Commission

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## 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 Proposed
<b>Department Support</b>			
General Fund Support	966,253	1,094,680	1,049,986
Other Funding - Operating	3,871,421	742,213	8,417,751
<b>Total Operations</b>	<b>4,837,674</b>	<b>1,836,893</b>	<b>9,467,737</b>
<b>Total Appropriations</b>	<b>4,837,674</b>	<b>1,836,893</b>	<b>9,467,737</b>
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 Proposed 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.

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## Incremental Budget Changes

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

## 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

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budget. This includes increases to salary, FICA, Medicare, family medical leave, retirement, overtime and temporary 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 Proposed
<b>Appropriations</b>			
<b>ETH - BO-ET-V1T00 - Ethics and Elections</b>			
00100 - General Fund	966,253	1,094,680	1,049,986
<b>Total for BSL: BO-ET-V1T00</b>	<b>966,253</b>	<b>1,094,680</b>	<b>1,049,986</b>
<b>ETH - BO-ET-VT123 - Election Vouchers</b>			
12300 - Election Vouchers Fund	3,871,421	742,213	8,417,751
<b>Total for BSL: BO-ET-VT123</b>	<b>3,871,421</b>	<b>742,213</b>	<b>8,417,751</b>
<b>Department Total</b>	<b>4,837,674</b>	<b>1,836,893</b>	<b>9,467,737</b>
<b>Department Full-Time Equivalents Total*</b>	<b>5.90</b>	<b>7.40</b>	<b>7.40</b>

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## Budget Summary by Fund Ethics and Elections Commission

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

## Revenue Overview

### 2021 Estimated Revenues

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

## Ethics and Elections Commission

### 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.

<b>Program Expenditures</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>
	<b>Actuals</b>	<b>Adopted</b>	<b>Proposed</b>
Ethics and Elections	966,253	1,094,680	1,049,986
<b>Total</b>	<b>966,253</b>	<b>1,094,680</b>	<b>1,049,986</b>
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.

<b>Program Expenditures</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>
	<b>Actuals</b>	<b>Adopted</b>	<b>Proposed</b>
Election Vouchers	3,871,421	742,213	8,417,751
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,871,421</b>	<b>742,213</b>	<b>8,417,751</b>
Full-time Equivalents Total*	1.00	2.50	2.50

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