

Memo

To: Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission

From: René LeBeau

Date: July 31, 2024

Re: Democracy Voucher Outreach Fund

Democracy Voucher Outreach Fund – How it began.

A recommendation from the independent analysis of the program after 2017 was to increase program capacity for outreach and education by contracting with local organizations.

Beginning in 2018, the Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission (SEEC) directed \$150,000 of the Democracy Voucher Program (DVP) budget towards contracting opportunities with community-based organizations (CBOs). The budget was last increased in 2020 to \$225,000. CBOs are invited to submit proposals to conduct the following activities:

- Promote civic engagement in underserved communities by educating residents about the Democracy Voucher Program.
- Provide program education and enrollment to lawful permanent residents.
- Remove barriers to the program by providing in-language education and distributing translated program materials.
- Inform residents on how to request Democracy Vouchers in their preferred language.

Summary of Accomplishments– 2019 to 2023

Over the years, the program has budgeted \$600,000 and interacted with 18 unique organizations that serve a wide variety of Seattle resident communities. CBO outreach strategies ranged from small group interactions to text messages in multiple languages. Samples of their combined accomplishments are below.

- Engaged with 76,900 individuals and attended 622 events.
- Distributed 42,000 pieces of outreach material, including 25,000 non-English.
- Performed 400 digital outreach activities, reaching over 200,000 individuals.

Request

From 2020 to this year, the inflation rate was approximately 22%, which would increase the outreach budget from \$225,000 to \$275,000.

By increasing the budget to \$300,000, we could provide ten contracts at \$30,000 each, allowing us to continue to build institutional knowledge in the community and provide meaningful outreach.