

Memo

To: Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission

From: Wayne Barnett

Date: October 7, 2026

Re: 2027 Democracy Voucher Outreach Fund

Democracy Voucher Outreach Fund.

Following the 2017 election year, the Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission (SEEC) hired BERK Consulting to conduct a review of the Program's performance. One of their findings was that voucher users more closely resembled cash donors than Seattle residents in general. From this came a recommendation to increase outreach capacity by developing contracting opportunities with local organizations.

For the 2019 cycle, the SEEC directed \$150,000 of the Democracy Voucher Program (DVP) budget towards contracting opportunities with community-based organizations (CBOs). The budget was last increased to \$300,000 for 2025. CBOs are invited to submit proposals for conducting the following activities:

- Promote civic engagement in underserved communities by educating residents about the Democracy Voucher Program.
- Provide 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 2025

Since the establishment of the Outreach Fund, voucher users have come to more closely resemble Seattle residents than cash donors.

During these years, the program budgeted \$900,000 and engaged with 22 unique organizations that serve a variety of Seattle communities. Approximations of their combined accomplishments are below.

- Engaged with 106,000 individuals and attended 970 events.
- Distributed 81,200 pieces of outreach material, including 25,500 non-English.
- Performed 470 digital outreach activities, reaching over 250,000 individuals.

Request

From 2020 to 2024, inflation suggested an increase from \$225,000 to \$275,000. With this information in hand, the commission approved the 2025 budget of \$300,000. Staff request approval for the same \$300,000 in funding for the 2027 Democracy Voucher Outreach Fund.