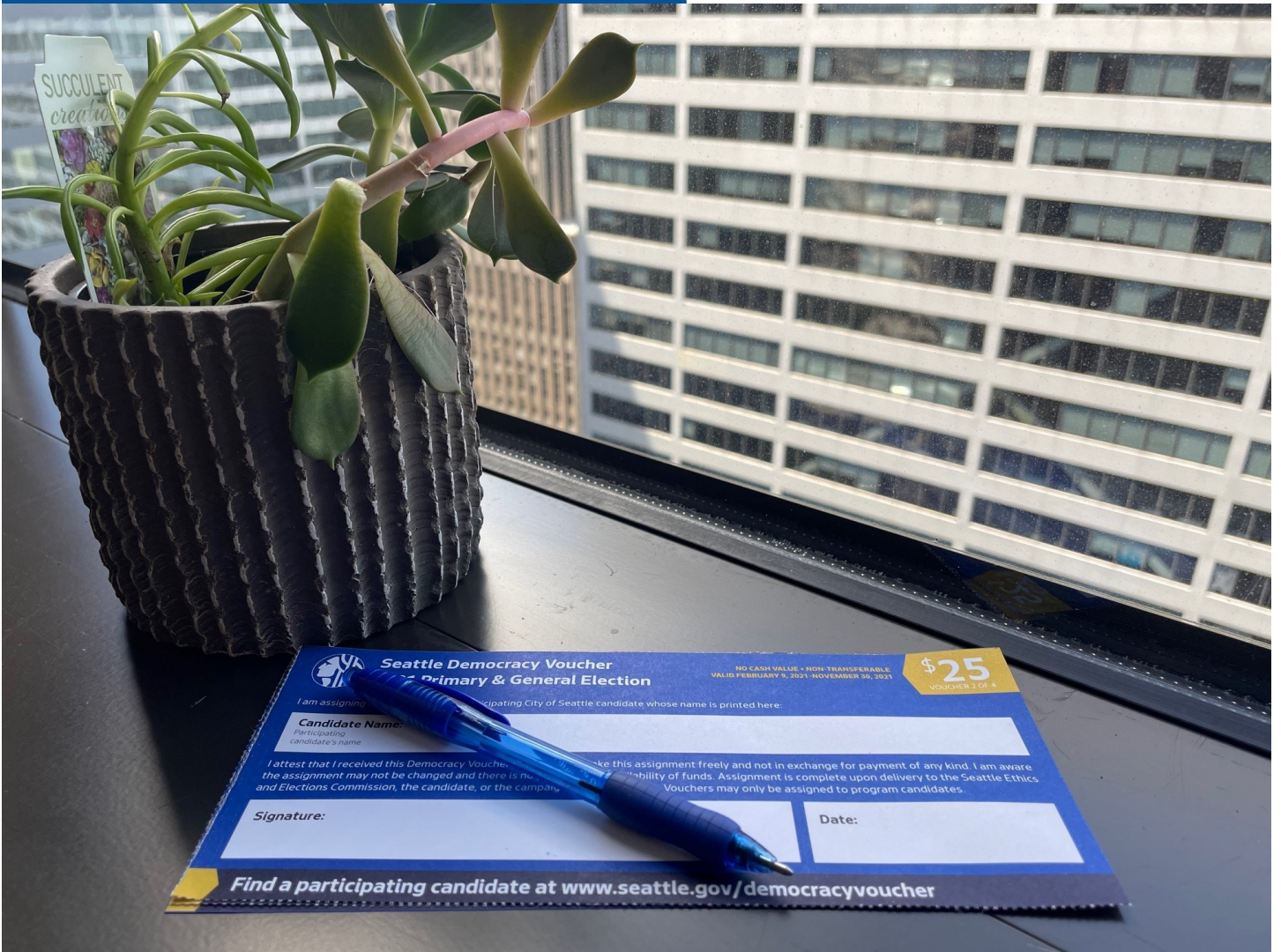




**Seattle**  
Ethics & Elections  
Commission



## Democracy Voucher Program

## 2021 Biennial Report

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# Introduction

This report summarizes the administration of the Democracy Voucher Program (DVP) in the 2021 election cycle. For additional insight into program implementation and administration, please see the 2017 and 2019 reports.

Seattle's Democracy Voucher Program remains the only public campaign financing of its kind. Residents receive four \$25 Democracy Vouchers they can use to support candidates running for local office. Candidates then collect vouchers to help fund their campaign.

In 2021, the offices eligible to use Democracy Voucher Program funding were the mayor, the two city-wide council seats, and the city attorney.

## Program Background

In November 2015, Seattle voters approved a citizen-led initiative known as "Honest Elections Seattle" (I-122).

Among the many campaign finance reforms included in I-122, one was the creation of a public campaign finance program known as the "Democracy Voucher Program." I-122 charged the Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission, an independent body within city government, to administer these reforms. The Democracy Voucher Program is funded by a 10-year property tax levy of \$3 million per year.

## Program Objectives

The program aims to increase civic engagement in two key ways.

First, the program creates a funding source to enable more Seattle residents to run for local office.

Second, the program intends to increase the number of Seattle residents who donate in local elections.



# Message from the Executive Director

It is an honor to present the 2021 Democracy Voucher Program biennial report. The Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission (SEEC) is deeply committed to upholding the spirit of the “Honest Elections Seattle” Initiative, while ensuring accountability and transparency for this unique public campaign financing program.

Even with the uncertainty of COVID-19, the SEEC has been able to pivot aspects of the Democracy Voucher Program to increase accessibility for both candidates and residents. Seattle residents continue experiencing their first contributions to a political campaign and first-time candidates are running for public office with financial assistance from Democracy Vouchers. We are thrilled to see increased civic engagement by Seattle residents and candidates, and we are grateful to our community partners who provide education and outreach.

Thank you, residents, candidates, and community partners for continuing to champion Seattle’s Democracy Voucher Program!



**Wayne Barnett**  
Executive Director

## 2021 Accomplishments



### INCREASED PARTICIPATION

- Seattle residents returned 184,747 Democracy Vouchers this election compared to the previous election with 147,128 Democracy Vouchers in 2019.
- 32 candidates pledged to participate in the program and 11 candidates completed the qualifying process.



### OUTREACH

- Staff and community-based organizations (CBOs) attended 279 outreach events and interacted with more than 40,927 residents.
- The SEEC issued \$225,000 in contracts to eight CBOs to conduct outreach in hard-to-reach communities.



### OPTIMIZED CANDIDATE TRAININGS & QUALIFYING PROCESS

- Staff created six short candidate training videos to get campaigns and candidates up to speed.
- Staff created electronic versions of the “Candidate Pledge” and “Qualifying Contribution and Qualifying Signature” forms to increase access for users.

# How the Program Works

During City of Seattle elections, the SEEC issues four \$25 Democracy Vouchers to Seattle residents.

Residents may assign their vouchers to any candidate participating in the program. Residents may give their vouchers to a single candidate or to multiple candidates.

Residents may return their vouchers by:

- Using the prepaid envelope addressed to the SEEC.
- Giving their vouchers directly to a campaign.
- Accessing the Democracy Voucher Online Portal to assign their vouchers.

Once the voucher is received by the SEEC, there are several methods to verifying the voucher.

- King County Elections verifies the signatures on paper vouchers from registered voters.
- Trulioo, a third-party verification system, verifies Online Portal users when they create an account.
- The SEEC verifies signatures from residents who apply for vouchers.

For candidates who have completed the qualifying process, the SEEC releases the sum of the verified vouchers to the candidate's campaign.

## Eligibility

Participant eligibility requirements align with the federal requirements establishing who may contribute to political campaigns. To receive vouchers, an individual must be:

- At least 18 years or older,
- A U.S. citizen, U.S. national, or lawful permanent resident, and
- A Seattle resident.



The SEEC receives participant data from two sources. Under an agreement with King County Elections, the SEEC receives the list of registered voters in Seattle. Residents who are not registered voters may apply to receive vouchers.

# 2021 Program Updates

In response to COVID-19 and efforts to provide additional resources to campaigns and community-based organizations, several changes were made ahead of the 2021 election cycle.

## Online Candidate Trainings

In addition to providing remote one-on-one trainings, the program developed six training videos available on YouTube for candidates and campaigns covering the following topics:

- 1) 2021 Candidate Training
- 2) Website Walkthrough for Candidates
- 3) Candidate Qualifying Form
- 4) Campaign Replacement Form Tutorial
- 5) Draw Signature Option for Remote Signature Gathering
- 6) Complete the Qualifying Tracker

These videos, viewed 479 times, allowed candidates and campaigns a self-paced option to learn about the program.

## Outreach Fund Toolkit

As part of the training and onboarding of community-based organizations, the program created a Democracy Voucher Outreach Fund Toolkit outlining the resources and FAQs for onboarding and training outreach staff.

## Updated Languages Served

The City of Seattle updated the list of languages in 2021, which allowed the program to expand its program materials to include Arabic and Japanese. The program now serves residents in 18 languages.

## Online Campaign Forms

With in-person gatherings limited during COVID-19, and safety concerns around traditional activities to collect vouchers, campaigns faced difficulties collecting vouchers. By request, the SEEC granted campaigns the ability to host a campaign replacement form on their website (see image below), enabling easier access for residents to assign their vouchers directly to a candidate.

**2021 Seattle Democracy Voucher - Campaign Replacement Form**

**Information for Residents**

- Democracy Vouchers are used by residents to distribute public funds to local campaigns.
- Seattle residents get a **total of four Democracy Vouchers** to assign to participating candidates.
- Vouchers may be given to one candidate or multiple candidates running for **mayor, city council, or city attorney**.
- Giving vouchers is the same as donating to a campaign and will be **public information**.

**Instructions for Residents**

1. Sign the signature line and write today's date for **each** voucher you intend to give to the candidate.
2. Complete the contact information at the bottom of this form.

I am assigning these vouchers to the participating candidate.

Candidate Name:

I attest that I received this Democracy Voucher properly and make this assignment freely and not in exchange for payment of any kind. I am aware the assignment may not be changed and there is no guarantee of availability of funds. Assignment is complete upon delivery to the Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission, the candidate, or the campaign's representative. Vouchers may only be assigned to program candidates.

<b>\$25</b> VOUCHER 1 OF 4	Signature: <input type="text"/>	Date: <input type="text"/>
<b>\$25</b> VOUCHER 2 OF 4	Signature: <input type="text"/>	Date: <input type="text"/>
<b>\$25</b> VOUCHER 3 OF 4	Signature: <input type="text"/>	Date: <input type="text"/>
<b>\$25</b> VOUCHER 4 OF 4	Signature: <input type="text"/>	Date: <input type="text"/>

**RESIDENT CONTACT INFORMATION (Complete the \*asterisked sections for your voucher assignment to be valid):**

Printed Name\*:  Date of Birth\*:

Address\*:

Candidates must collect a certain number of signatures and contributions to show community support for their program participation, also typically collected in person, campaigns were allowed to host the signature form on their websites.

Each of these online forms enabled the resident to draw their signature, which is then validated by King County Elections with the same scrutiny as signatures on paper vouchers.



# Distribution of Vouchers

## Issuing Vouchers

On February 9, 2021, the SEEC mailed 470,222 Democracy Voucher packets to Seattle residents, with subsequent mailings to newly registered voters each month for an additional 34,454 mailings.

2021 was the first year of repeat portal users. An additional 8,070 residents were emailed notices that their vouchers were accessible online.

All told, 512,746 residents received Democracy Vouchers in the 2021 election cycle.

## Replacement Vouchers

Residents who misplaced their vouchers were able to get replacements from the SEEC.

Replacements were issued if residents contacted the SEEC by phone, email, or on the SEEC website. Each request was validated through the system and either mailed or emailed via an invitation code allowing residents to access their Online Portal.

The SEEC replaced vouchers for 2,126 residents. Of those, 1,271 residents ended up submitting 3,582 of their replaced vouchers.

## Inactive Voters

Inactive registered voters were sent a postcard notifying them of an issue with their voter registration and to contact King County Elections to update their information in order to receive vouchers. In 2021, 29,000 postcards were sent.

## Campaign Replacement Forms

Campaigns, along with their registered representatives, were allowed to replace vouchers using the Campaign Replacement Form. This year, campaigns could collect paper forms and were also allowed to host the form on their websites. This new feature enabled residents to give their vouchers directly to a candidate when viewing the candidate's web page.

A total of 14,377 residents used a Campaign Replacement Form.

## Online Portal

This was the second election in which the program's online portal was available to residents. The web-based portal allows residents to validate their identity and assign their vouchers online.

In 2021, 10,175 users assigned 39,457 vouchers through the program's portal.

Democracy Vouchers | Sign In

## CITY OF SEATTLE

### Online Democracy Vouchers

**This page allows Seattle residents to access and assign their Democracy Vouchers online.**

Once an online account is created, residents will no longer receive Democracy Vouchers by mail. Democracy Vouchers for future elections will be accessed online.

Create an account | Sign in to your account

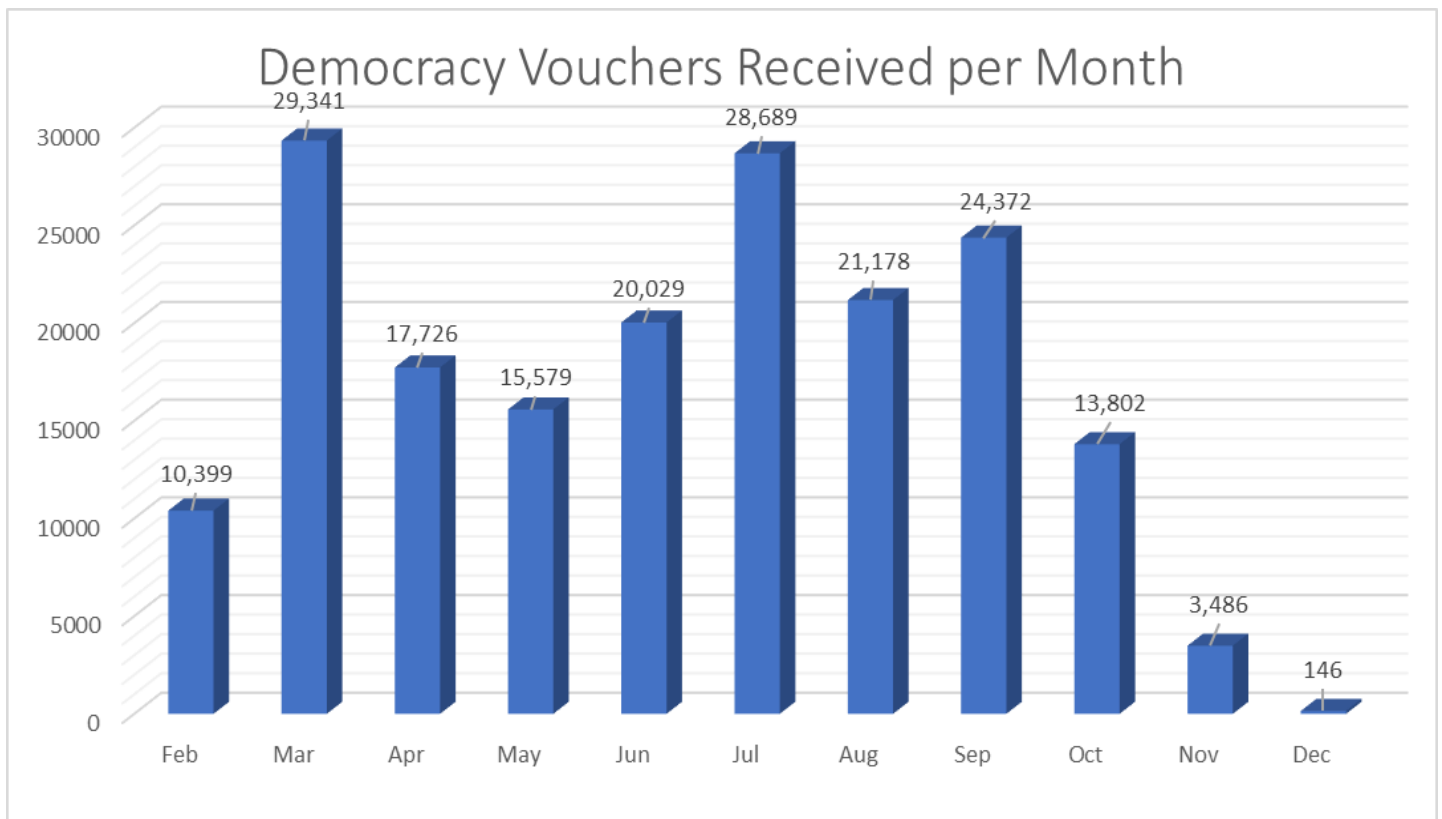
Please e-mail [democracyvoucher@seattle.gov](mailto:democracyvoucher@seattle.gov) or call 206-727-8855 for assistance.

Please note: Using your Democracy Voucher is the same as contributing to a campaign. All contributions are public information and will be published on the

# Processing Vouchers

In 2021, the SEEC hired 3 temporary workers to process physical vouchers. Received vouchers were recorded in the Democracy Voucher database.

Voucher return rates peaked in March after the initial mailing along with July, just before the August primary. In total, the SEEC office processed 184,747 vouchers from 48,071 residents.



## Validating Vouchers

Participants who assign their vouchers using the Online Portal are authenticated when they first create their user account. Participants submit their full name, date of birth, and last-four of their social security number to a third-party, identity validation provider. That information is then matched to credit bureaus and public utility records to verify the resident's identity is associated with the record in the program's database.

Participants signatures on paper vouchers were verified by King County Elections or the SEEC. Signatures on vouchers passed verification with a 97.8 percent success rate. Of the 2.2 percent that did not meet the initial verification standards, the SEEC notified those participants by mail and provided an opportunity to revise their signatures. More than 19 percent of those participants corrected their signatures.

# Democracy Vouchers by Type and Return Channel

## Vouchers by Type

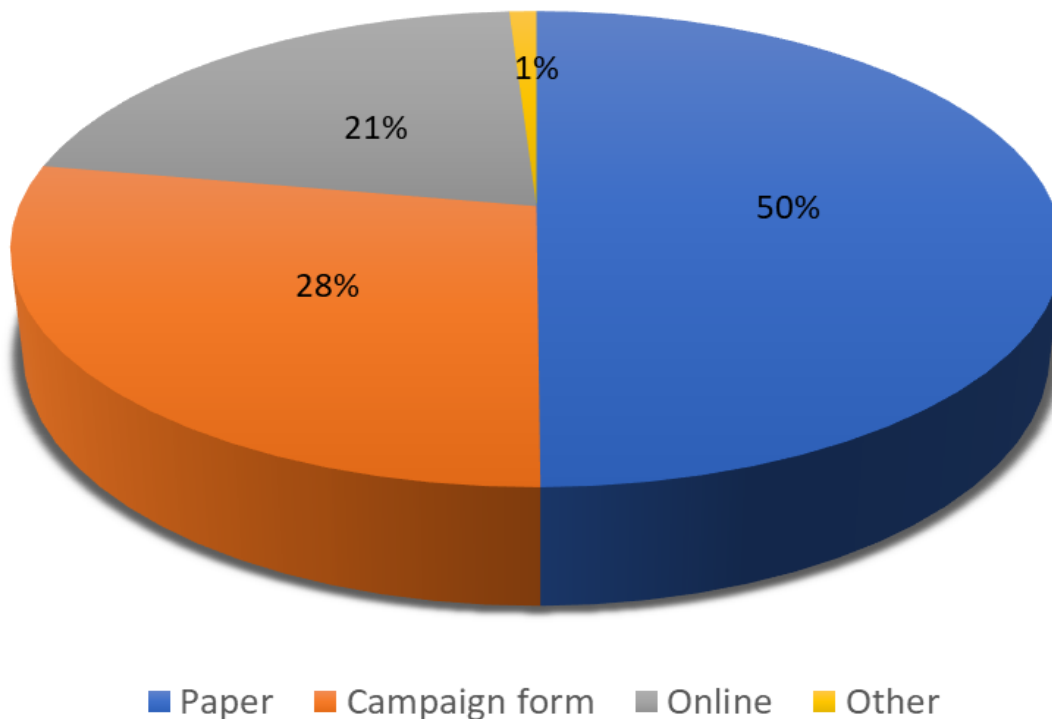
Democracy Vouchers are available to all residents in paper and online formats. Additionally, campaigns may collect vouchers by using a Campaign Replacement form.

The chart below shows the types of vouchers used during this cycle.

## Voucher Return Channel

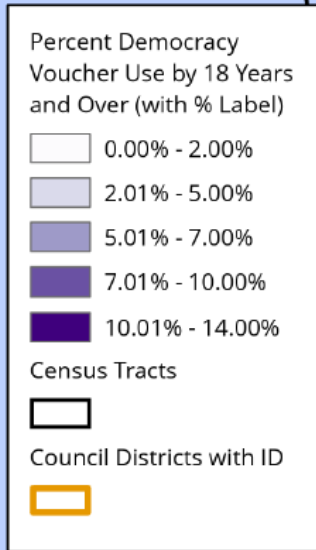
Fifty percent of vouchers were returned directly to the SEEC by mail. In addition, 28 percent of vouchers were given directly to candidates and 21 percent of vouchers were assigned through the Online Portal. Roughly one percent of vouchers were returned to King County Elections' ballot boxes, Seattle's Customer Service Centers, libraries, or through e-mail to the SEEC.

Type of Voucher Returned to SEEC



# 2021 Democracy Voucher Use with Population 18 Years and Over

## Democracy Voucher Program



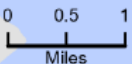
Sources: Census Tract: US Census 2020. Population Data: American Community Survey 2020. Democracy Voucher, City of Seattle 2021.

Population data is classified using a natural breaks classification method.

Democracy Voucher Percent Use (%) divides the total number of Seattle residents who submitted at least one Democracy Voucher for the 2021 election per census tract by the total number of people ages 18 and over per census tract reported by the US Census - American Community Survey in 2020.

For more information on the Democracy Voucher Program, visit <https://www.seattle.gov/democracyvoucher>

For more information on Seattle demographics, visit: <http://www.seattle.gov/opcd/population-and-demographics>



City of Seattle

# Candidates

## Pledging

Candidates signed a pledge agreeing to program rules, which included limitations on individual contribution amounts and overall campaign spending (see chart below). Candidates also agreed to attend a minimum number of public debates.

- Mayor - 600 qualifying contributions and 600 qualifying signatures.
- City Attorney - 400 qualifying contributions and 400 qualifying signatures.
- City Council positions Nos. 8 and 9 - 400 qualifying contributions and 400 qualifying signatures.

<b>Democracy Voucher Program Contribution and Expenditure Limits 2021</b>	<b>City Attorney</b>	<b>City Council At-large</b>	<b>Mayor</b>
Individual Contribution Limit*	\$300*	\$300*	\$550
Campaign Expenditure Limits Primary Election Only	\$187,500	\$187,500	\$400,000
Campaign Expenditure Limits for Primary and General Election Combined	\$375,000	\$375,000	\$800,000
<b>*These limits do not include Democracy Voucher values.</b>			

In 2021, 11 candidates completed the qualifying process.

## Campaign Disbursements

Eleven campaigns completed the qualifying process, resulting in \$3,397,050 issued to campaigns. More than 70 percent of all vouchers received were redeemed for campaign funding.

## Candidate Introductions

Candidate Introductions were first available in 2019 as a way for residents to learn more about candidates early on. Candidates provided a 200-word statement and a photo.

This optional resource is available to all candidates running. The SEEC provides translations and frequently posts updated versions on the Democracy Voucher Program web page. In 2021, 31 candidates provided their introduction material.

Once pledged, the candidate's name appeared on the website and as an option on the online portal as a voucher-eligible candidate.

Of the 36 candidates who filed for office, 21 pledged to participate in the Democracy Voucher Program.

## Qualifying

To receive funds, candidates complete a qualifying process by collecting a minimum number of contributions (minimum \$10) and signatures from Seattle residents.

# Communications and Outreach

From 2020 to 2021, nearly \$120,000 was allocated to support outreach, media, and language access.

Language access accounted for \$90,000 of that budget to produce translations and materials to support the 18 languages served by the program.

I-122 requires that key program materials are available in several languages: Amharic, Cambodian, English, Korean, Lao, Oromo, Russian, Simplified Chinese, Somali, Spanish, Tagalog, Thai, Tigrinya, Traditional Chinese, Ukrainian, and Vietnamese. In 2021, the program added Arabic and Japanese for a total of 18 supported languages.



## Candidate Outreach

Beginning in 2020, staff provided updated marketing materials informing residents on using the program to fund their campaigns and to launch a media campaign encouraging participation.

## In-person Outreach

In 2021, staff conducted primarily virtual outreach events. Staff presented at 20 outreach events and interacted with more than 1,000 Seattle residents.

Outreach events ranged from neighborhood associations, League of Women Voters, NAACP, University of Washington Ethnic Student Center; along with candidate debates at Resolution 2 End Homelessness and Lake City Collective.

**ЗРОБИ СВІЙ ГОЛОС ЗНАЧИМИМ.**

**Скористайтеся своїми демократичними ваучерами на виборах у Сієтлі у 2021 році.**



Місто Сієтл

Ukrainian



# Democracy Voucher Outreach Fund

The Democracy Voucher Program budgeted \$225,000 and established the second round of funding to 501(c)(3) community-based organizations (CBOs) to conduct outreach in Seattle’s difficult-to-reach communities.

CBOs completed outreach to fulfill the following outreach objectives:

1. Promote civic engagement in underserved communities by educating residents about the program.
2. Provide education and enrollment to lawful permanent residents.
3. Remove barriers to participation by providing in-language education and distributing translated materials.

Contracts were awarded to eight organizations who completed 259 outreach events and interacted with more than 39,858 residents.

In response to COVID-19, outreach activities included more digital opportunities including newsletters, social media campaigns, and direct emails. The eight organizations completed 123 digital communication activities and reported 132,371 impressions.



Calling all Seattle residents! Join The Vera Project for a

## Democracy Voucher Info Session

**Thursday, April 29**  
6-7pm on Google Meet  
<http://bit.ly/VeraDVPInfoApril>

Learn about your City of Seattle \$25 Democracy Vouchers and how to use them to support your favorite 2021 Mayor, City Council and City Attorney candidates!

Attend & be eligible to win a special Vera Merch bundle!

**TO-DO LIST:**

- Request vouchers
- Research candidates
- Fill & return vouchers
- Tell a friend
- Vote in primaries!

Seattle Democracy Voucher 2021 Primary & General Election

VTV & F.A.C.E. Present

## Pick Me

A Democracy Voucher Stream

2.5.2021  
7:30 PM PDT  
[bit.ly/watch\\_Veratr](http://bit.ly/watch_Veratr)

ft. EX-Florist  
BEARAXE  
Chong the Nomad  
Jeopardy with  
VERA Members

Seattle Democracy Voucher 2021 Primary & General Election

To: **Be My Representative**

From: **Your Secret Constituent**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

yes plz

# Budget Summary Report

Democracy Voucher Program Budget Summary Report	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
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Implementation						
Technology	\$263,200	\$36,000	\$17,200	\$459,497		
Office construction	\$225,000					
Informational mailer	\$127,636					
Focus group	\$45,000					
Office hardware and supplies	\$25,000					
<b>Implementation Cost Total</b>	<b>\$685,836</b>	<b>\$36,000</b>	<b>\$17,200</b>	<b>\$459,497</b>	N/A	N/A

Administration						
Voucher production and mailing		\$358,000	\$1,140	\$326,309	\$120,517	\$266,324
Outreach media and materials	\$5,000	\$85,000	\$53,099	\$39,333	\$8,680	\$18,509
Language Access	\$22,000	\$16,000	\$10,763	\$48,208	\$10,932	\$80,735
Outreach contracting and events		\$30,000		\$149,885		\$203,590
Program evaluation		\$30,000	\$43,410	\$22,541	\$52,020	
King County signature verification		\$18,500		\$34,580		\$54,706
Administration		\$84,700	\$5,077	\$91,456	\$86,281	\$118,722
Staff: Program staff	\$273,000	\$359,400	\$343,873	\$343,678	\$370,100	\$427,336
Staff: Temporary staff		\$55,000		\$103,407		\$131,508
<b>Yearly Administration Cost</b>	<b>\$300,000</b>	<b>\$1,036,600</b>	<b>\$457,362</b>	<b>\$1,159,397</b>	<b>\$648,530</b>	<b>\$1,301,430</b>

Candidates						
Primary and General Election Disbursements		\$1,140,525		\$2,454,475		\$3,397,050

<b>Total Program Costs</b>	<b>\$985,836</b>	<b>\$2,213,125</b>	<b>\$474,562</b>	<b>\$4,073,369</b>	<b>\$648,530</b>	<b>\$4,698,480</b>
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Funding						
Levy	\$3,000,000	\$3,000,000	\$3,000,000	\$3,000,000	\$3,000,000	\$3,000,000
Returned unused voucher funds		\$34,958		\$22,854		\$21,057