

Ethics and Elections Commission

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Department Description

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. The SEEC also promotes informed elections through education, training, and enforcement of the City's Elections Code and Election Pamphlet Code.

The SEEC conducts ethics training for all City employees on 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 SEEC issues advisory opinions regarding interpretations of the Code of Ethics and also investigates and rules upon alleged violations of the Code. Thirty years of formal advisory opinions, organized and searchable by topic, are available on SEEC's website.

Through the Whistleblower Code, the SEEC helps to protect an employee's right to report improper governmental action and to be free from possible retaliation as a result of such reporting. The SEEC either investigates allegations of improper governmental actions itself or refers allegations to the appropriate agency.

The SEEC fulfills the public's mandate of full campaign disclosure by training every organization required to report contributions and expenditures in proper reporting procedures, auditing every organization that reports, working with those organizations to correct errors, and making all campaign finance information available to the public. Since 1993, the SEEC has made summary reports of campaign financing information available to the public. And, since 1995, SEEC has published campaign financing information on its web site.

In 2008, the SEEC was charged with administering the City's new lobbying regulations. The SEEC collects and posts information so that citizens know who is lobbying and how much they are being paid to lobby. The SEEC also enforces compliance with the lobbying regulations.

The SEEC 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 in odd-numbered years. The video voters' guide is funded with cable franchise fee revenue.

Policy and Program Changes

In developing the 2011 Adopted Budget, the City of Seattle's General Fund was facing a \$67 million shortfall. The 2011 Adopted Budget includes reductions for all General Fund-dependent functions. The Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission's 2011 Adopted Budget reflects reductions in order to close the General Fund gap.

The 2011 Adopted Budget identifies administrative savings and operational efficiencies to discretionary spending. This includes freezing salary levels for City employees in certain classifications, and reducing expenditures for travel and training.

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Those reductions are offset by an increase in the budget for voters' pamphlet expenses. Voters' pamphlet expenditures are expected to be higher in 2011, when the Families and Education Levy will be up for renewal and there will be five City Council races, than they were in 2010, when only two Municipal Court positions were contested. The 2012 Endorsed Budget anticipates lower voter pamphlet expenses since no City positions are expected to be on the ballot.

City Council Provisos

There are no Council provisos.

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	Summit	2009	2010	2011	2012
Appropriations	Code	Actual	Adopted	Adopted	Endorsed
Ethics and Elections Budget Control Level	V1T00	665,387	611,220	686,573	654,946
Department Total		665,387	611,220	686,573	654,946
Department Full-time Equivalents Total*		5.20	5.20	5.20	5.20

** FTE totals are provided for informational purposes only. Changes in FTEs resulting from City Council or Personnel Director actions outside of the budget process may not be detailed here.*

	2009	2010	2011	2012
Resources	Actual	Adopted	Adopted	Endorsed
General Subfund	665,387	611,220	686,573	654,946
Department Total	665,387	611,220	686,573	654,946

Ethics and Elections Budget Control Level

Purpose Statement

The purpose of the Ethics and Elections Budget Control Level is threefold: 1) to audit, investigate, and conduct hearings regarding non-compliance with, or violations of, Commission-administered ordinances; 2) to advise all City officials and employees of their obligations under Commission-administered ordinances; and 3) to publish and broadly distribute information about the City's ethical standards, City election campaigns, campaign financial disclosure statements, and lobbyist disclosure statements.

Summary

Reduce budget by \$3,000 by eliminating the budget for travel and training.

Reduce budget by \$8,000 in accordance with Executive Order 2010-01, which directed departments to withhold base salary increases for City officers and employees in certain classifications.

The Mayor and the Council worked with the Coalition of City Labor Unions to identify mechanisms for reducing labor costs in the face of the City's strained financial situation. As a result of ratified agreements with represented employees and commensurate savings for non-represented positions in 'step-in-grade' classifications, this program will achieve \$1,000 in savings.

Increase budget by \$38,000 for voters' pamphlet production and printing costs in 2011.

Increase budget by \$49,000 for citywide adjustments to labor and other operating costs due to inflation, health care, and similar changes, for a net increase from the 2010 Adopted Budget to the 2011 Adopted Budget of approximately \$75,000.

Expenditures/FTE	2009 Actual	2010 Adopted	2011 Adopted	2012 Endorsed
Ethics and Elections	665,387	611,220	686,573	654,946
Full-time Equivalents Total*	5.20	5.20	5.20	5.20

** FTE totals are provided for informational purposes only. Changes in FTEs resulting from City Council or Personnel Director actions outside of the budget process may not be detailed here.*