Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission | Democracy Voucher Program

2019 ELECTION CYCLE EVALUATION

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Founded in 1988, we are an interdisciplinary strategy and analysis firm providing integrated, creative and analytically rigorous approaches to complex policy and planning decisions. Our team of strategic planners, policy and financial analysts, economists, cartographers, information designers and facilitators work together to bring new ideas, clarity, and robust frameworks to the development of analytically-based and action-oriented plans.

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Seattle Democracy Voucher Program

2019 Election Cycle Evaluation

Executive Summary

The Democracy Voucher Program (DVP) is a first-of-its-kind public campaign financing program that enables eligible Seattle residents to financially contribute to participating candidates for local public office using certificates issued by the City of Seattle. The DVP is administrated by the Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission (SEEC), which launched the program in advance of the 2017 election cycle. BERK Consulting (BERK) conducted an independent evaluation of the DVP and its administration during the 2019 election cycle. The evaluation has two primary areas of focus:

- The effectiveness with which the DVP is achieving the four goals identified in Initiative 122, which created the DVP.[1]

- The potential impacts of several program design changes under consideration.

To support this evaluation, we collected data about election outcomes and the perspectives of program participants and Seattle residents. Key data sources included:

- SEEC records about vouchers issued and returned.

- King County Elections records.

- Interviews and surveys with several city council candidates and campaign staff.

- Two different surveys of Seattle residents:

  - **Voucher User Survey:** We surveyed Seattle residents who used their Democracy Vouchers to ask about how they learned about the program, their motivations for participation, and their perspectives about program impacts.

  - **Seattle Resident Survey**: We surveyed a representative survey of the entire adult Seattle resident population, without regard to voucher use. This survey focused on awareness of the DVP, whether respondents used their vouchers, and perspectives about program impacts.

The conclusion of this report includes recommendations to the SEEC for improving the effectiveness of the DVP. It also includes recommendations to advocates for election reform in Seattle that fall outside of the purview of the SEEC.

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[1] Initiative 122, "Honest Elections Seattle", was approved by voters in November 2015 and is funded by a 10-year levy. It is administrated by the SEEC, an independent agency of the City of Seattle.

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

Achievement of Democracy Voucher Program Goals

High rates of candidate participation

We reviewed SEEC records for the 2019 election cycle to evaluate participation by candidates in the DVP. We also drew upon interviews with candidates and program staff to better understand barriers that candidates may face in their efforts to participate in the program.

- 53 out of 55 Seattle city council candidates on the primary ballot pledged to participate in the DVP. 35 candidates completed the qualifying process and accessed $2,454,475 in funding.

- Candidates and campaign staff generally found the support, resources, and informational materials from SEEC to be helpful.

- While the Democracy Voucher Program (DVP) is helpful to candidates, significant challenges remain for candidates from poor and marginalized communities. Challenges include language and cultural barriers, difficulty finding residents who can afford qualifying donations, and concerns from some residents about sharing their name with the City or having their name appear in a public database.

Democracy and accountability

We analyzed indicators of a healthy democracy over the past four local election cycles, with an emphasis on comparing similar election contests before and after the introduction of the DVP. While the DVP is not the only difference between election cycles, this analysis revealed broader democracy trends.

- Over the past four election cycles, City Council races have become more competitive, with more candidates running for city council positions, lower margins of victory, and higher voter turnout.

- While the total number of candidates increased from the 2015 election cycles to the 2019 election cycle, the percentage of candidates who are women and persons of color remained stable.

Heavy utilization of vouchers by those who have not previously donated to Seattle political campaigns

We analyzed voucher return data to understand what kinds of residents are using their Democracy Vouchers. We also analyzed interview and survey data to identify barriers to increased participation, particularly among residents who have not previously been engaged in local political campaigns.

- Over 38,000 Seattle residents returned their vouchers to support a candidate in 2019. This is an 83% increase since the previous local election cycle in 2017.

- Among surveyed voucher users, 37% indicated they had not contributed to any political campaign within the past year.

- About 8% of Seattle residents who were issued vouchers used them to support candidates. This is nearly double the response rate in 2017.

- City council districts with more candidates who participated in the DVP also had higher voucher use rates among their residents.
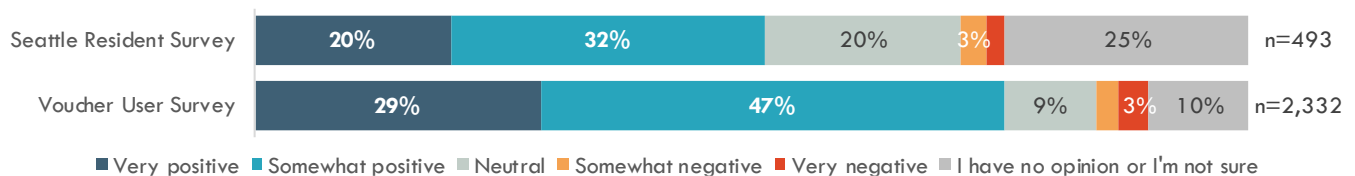
- Older residents were significantly more likely to use their vouchers than younger residents. This gap in participation by age group grew wider than it was in 2017.

- A small number of candidates and campaign staff we interviewed described significant efforts to solicit vouchers in communities who are harder to reach through traditional methods and less engaged in local politics. Those who did so indicated that this strategy required substantial additional effort due to cultural or language barriers.

High public satisfaction

To measure public satisfaction, we analyzed survey responses compared to the 2017 survey.

- Familiarity with the program has increased since 2017, with over half of respondents in the Seattle Resident Survey indicating they are "very familiar" or "somewhat familiar" with the DVP.

- Over three-quarters of Voucher User Survey respondents feel the DVP is having a positive impact on elections in Seattle. Over half of the Seattle Resident Survey respondents also share this perspective. Of both groups, 5% or less believe the program is having a negative impact, as shown in Exhibit 1.

- Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish survey respondents were significantly more likely than others to be familiar with the DVP and to believe the program is having a positive impact. This was true for both the Voucher User Survey and the Seattle Resident Survey.

Exhibit 1. Survey respondents' beliefs about the impacts of the DVP on local elections in Seattle

	Very positive	Somewhat positive	Neutral	Somewhat negative	Very negative	I have no opinion or I'm not sure	
Seattle Resident Survey	20%	32%	20%	3%		25%	n=493
Voucher User Survey	29%	47%	9%	3%		10%	n=2,332

Source: BERK, 2020.

Perspectives about Possible Program Changes

In the interviews and surveys, we asked respondents about their perspectives on four program design changes which the SEEC has considered. We include recommendations regarding these four possible changes at the conclusion of this report.

Should the voucher mailing date be moved?

- There is no clear consensus among candidates, voucher users, or Seattle residents regarding this question. The one exception is that few people believe the current mailing date is too late. Many believe the current timing works fine.

Should the total value of vouchers provided to each resident be reduced?

- This idea is not popular among Seattle residents, voucher users, or candidates and campaign staff. There is strong support among candidates, campaign staff, and voucher users for maintaining the current value, and nearly half of Seattle residents support maintaining the value, while only a quarter favor lowering it.

- Some candidates and voucher users express concern that lowering the value will appear to devalue residents' voices in elections.

Should spending limits be raised or eliminated?

- There is very little support for raising or eliminating spending limits among Seattle residents and voucher users. Perspectives were mixed among candidates and campaign staff, with about half in support of raising or eliminating limits.

- 80% of first-time candidates and campaign staff indicated they understand the release process "somewhat" or "not well". This indicates many candidates might not have a full understanding of the implications of changing the release process.

Should the SEEC continue allowing vouchers to be given to candidates outside of home district?

- Surveyed voucher users support residents' continued ability to give their vouchers to any candidate, regardless of district. Two Voucher User Survey respondents expressed the issues at stake quite clearly:

  - "Our council ultimately decides policy and outcomes that have a collective impact on our entire city, so it should be appropriate for all of us to have the power to invest in candidates we are unable to vote for but who may need resources to power their campaigns."

  - "My demographic is more represented in certain other districts than in my own. I would like to support candidates who represent me, even if they aren't candidates directly elected by my neighbors."

Contents

Introduction

The Democracy Voucher Program (DVP) is a first-of-its-kind public campaign financing program that enables eligible Seattle residents to contribute to participating candidates for local public office using vouchers issued by the City of Seattle. The DVP is administered by the Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission (SEEC), which launched the program in advance of the 2017 election cycle. The 2019 election cycle was the second opportunity for eligible Seattle residents to use Democracy Vouchers.

The SEEC asked BERK Consulting (BERK) to conduct an independent evaluation of the DVP and its administration during the 2019 election cycle. This report summarizes the findings of our analysis. In it we evaluate the effectiveness with which the DVP is achieving the four goals identified in Initiative 122:[2]

- High rates of candidate participation

- Democracy and accountability

- Heavy utilization of vouchers by those who have not previously donated to Seattle political campaigns

- High public satisfaction

To support this evaluation, we analyzed outcomes based on program records and election data. We also collected data about the perspectives of candidates and campaign staff, voucher users, and a representative sample of Seattle residents. This included their perspectives about four possible changes to the DVP that have been considered for improving effectiveness of the program in achieving its goals. These changes are:

- Modifying the voucher mailing date

- Adjusting the number or value of vouchers provided to eligible Seattle residents

- Revising or removing campaign spending limits for candidates participating in the DVP

- Whether to continue to allow contributing vouchers to candidates running outside of the resident's home district

This report concludes with our recommendations for each of these program design questions as well as other actions to improve the efficacy of the DVP at meeting its goals.

DATA SOURCES

We reviewed and analyzed data from several sources for this evaluation. Each is discussed below.

Democracy Voucher Program Records

The SEEC maintains records of all Democracy Vouchers returned by Seattle residents as contributions for local campaigns. These records include the resident's home address, mailing address, the date the voucher was issued, received date, assigned date, redeemed date, invoiced date, the method of return, the candidate's name, and the participant's language preference. By linking this data to the Washington

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[2] The DVP was created through Initiative 122, "Honest Elections Seattle", which was approved by voters in November 2015 and is funded by a 10-year levy. It is administered by the SEEC, an independent agency of the City of Seattle.

State Voter Registration Database, we determined the residents age and gender.

U.S. Census American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year Estimates, 2014-2018

We used ACS data for population estimates and to summarize the neighborhood characteristics of voucher users, including demographics and income levels.

Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission Election Reports

SEEC posts annual reports after every City of Seattle election. These reports summarize contributions, contributors, expenditures, and other election financing data. We used these summaries for elections taking place from 2013-19.

King County Elections Results Datasets

King County Elections posts results after each local election in the county. We downloaded and summarized data for each year there was Seattle primary and general election results from 2013-2019.

Interviews with Candidates and Campaign Staff

SEEC staff shared contact information for nearly all candidates for City Council positions in the 2019 election cycle as well as many campaign managers and treasurers. We (BERK) invited each contact to participate in an interview and/or share their perspectives in an anonymous online survey. The invitations were sent during the months of November and December 2019. 22 individuals responded to our request and granted an approximately 30-minute phone interview. This included 19 candidates, one campaign manager, and two treasurers. Since some of the campaign staff represented multiple candidates, 24 campaigns in total were represented. Eight of these campaigns were for candidates who advanced to the general election, while 16 were candidates who did not advance to the general election. The interview questions focused on their experiences with the DVP, perspectives on its effectiveness, and ideas for improvement. More information about the candidate interview and findings are provided below starting on page 15.

Survey of Candidates and Campaign Staff

We invited all city council candidates and campaign staff to participate in an anonymous online survey. The survey covered different topics than the interviews, with an emphasis on training and resources provided by SEEC as well as perspectives on the achievement of program goals. There were 19 responses in total, comprised of 12 candidates and seven campaign staff. At least one candidate or campaign staffer from each council district participated in the survey. Nine of 12 candidate respondents had campaign experience prior to the 2019 election cycle, and all but one of the campaign staff respondents had prior experience. All 16 survey respondents who provided information about their participation in the DVP indicated that they participated. Three survey respondents skipped this question.

Due to the survey being anonymous, we don't know how many of the respondents were also interview subjects. Several interviewees did volunteer (unprompted), that they also filled out the survey.

Voucher User Survey

BERK developed an online survey for Seattle residents who used their Democracy Vouchers during the 2019 election cycle. The survey was designed to answer questions about their motivations for participation, use of informational resources, perspectives on the effectiveness of the program, and opinions about proposed changes. Details about the survey design and findings are provided below starting on page 31.

Seattle Resident Survey

The third online survey was designed to measure public awareness of the DVP, perspectives about the effectiveness of the program, and opinions about proposed changes. Many of the questions in this survey were identical to questions asked in a 2018 survey conducted for BERK's evaluation of the DVP 2017 election cycle. BERK worked with Precision Sample to invite Seattle residents from their large panel of survey participants. This resulted in 493 validated survey respondents selected to be roughly representative of all adult Seattle residents based on income, race, and ethnicity.

Summary of Survey Respondents by Race and/or Ethnicity

Each of the surveys asked respondents to provide optional information about their race and/or ethnicity. Respondents could select one or more options. Exhibit 2 provides a summary of respondents from each survey and a comparison to Seattle's population. Percentages do not total 100% because some respondents selected multiple options.

Exhibit 2. Survey respondents by race/ethnicity with comparison to Seattle population

Race and/or Ethnicity	Voucher User Survey		Seattle Resident Survey		Seattle Population
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Percent
White	1,808	83%	337	73%	67%
Black or African American	36	2%	29	6%	7%
American Indian or Alaska Native	3	0.1%	13	3%	1%
Asian	148	7%	60	13%	16%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	3	0.1%	6	1%	0.2%
Middle Eastern or North African	6	0.3%	4	1%	Category not included in Census
Other	2	1%	1	0.2%	3%
Two or More Races	145	7%	10	2%	7%
Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish (any race)	92	4%	24	5%	7%

When we disaggregated responses by race and/or ethnicity as in Exhibit 3, we often found the number of survey respondents too small to present statistically valid survey results for that group. Therefore, when we present survey responses with breakdowns by race and/or ethnicity, we use the definitions outlined in Exhibit 3.

Exhibit 3. Race and ethnicity definitions used when summarizing survey responses

Race and/or Ethnicity	Definition
Asian	Respondents who selected "Asian" and no other race.
Black or African American	Respondents who selected "Black or African American" and no other race.
Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish	Respondents who selected "Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish," regardless of other race categories selected.
People of Color	Respondents who selected a race or ethnicity other than "White," including those who select Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish and those who selected two or more races.
White	Respondents who selected "White" and no other race.

The sample size for all groups other than White and People of Color is generally too small for statistical validity. However, in select possible cases we present response breakdowns by the categories in Exhibit 3 to show how perspectives can vary significantly from group to group.

Summary of Survey Respondents by Income Level

Each of the surveys asked respondents to provide information about their level of income. Exhibit 4 provides a summary of respondents from each survey and a comparison to Seattle's population.

Exhibit 4. Survey respondents by income with comparison to Seattle population

Annual Income	Voucher User Survey		Seattle Resident Survey		Seattle Population
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Percent
0 to $49,999	358	17%	175	35%	28%
$50,000 to $99,999	577	27%	142	29%	24%
$100,000 to $149,999	465	21%	89	18%	18%
$150,000 or greater	767	35%	87	18%	30%

Evaluation Findings

CHANGES IN SEATTLE ELECTIONS SINCE THE DVP LAUNCHED IN 2017

The Democracy Voucher Program has had a tremendous influence on campaign fundraising in Seattle during the past two election cycles. In 2017, over $1.1 million was distributed to eight candidates for city council and one city attorney candidate. In 2019, nearly $2.5 million was distributed to 35 different candidates for city council. This represents a significant amount of funds that were not available to candidates running in previous election cycles. Interviews with candidates and campaign staff indicate that the DVP has had a major impact on many candidates' decision to run for office and on their campaign and fundraising strategies.

In this section we explore how elections for local office have changed in recent years, with an emphasis on comparing similar election contests before and after the introduction of the DVP in 2017. We focus on three different themes related to the DVP goal of promoting "democracy and accountability" in Seattle elections:

- Size and composition of the candidate pool

- Level of competitiveness in election results

- Voter engagement

The DVP is not the only change that Seattle has experienced during the past decade, and therefore not the only potential explanation for changes in local elections. The city has experienced rapid job and population growth, bringing with it new people and new ideas from across the country and around the globe. This growth has contributed to increased concerns about the impacts of new development, the rising cost of housing, displacement of historic communities, and the rising number of people and families struggling with homelessness. The rising prominence of these issues has undoubtedly affected the politics of local elections and the candidates who choose to run for local office. Likewise, advancements in technology and social media have impacted how candidates can identify and reach out to prospective voters. This has enabled styles of campaigning that were far less common five to ten years ago. It is important to keep these changes in mind when evaluating the impact that the DVP may be having on local elections.

Size and composition of the candidate pool

There were 55 candidates on the primary ballot in 2019, or an average of about eight candidates per district position. Exhibit 5 compares 2019 to the prior three election cycles. It shows a marked increase in the average number of city council candidates per position on the ballot, particularly in the last two election cycles which featured the DVP (as indicated in blue). One explanation for this change is a reduction in the number of races that included incumbent candidates. In 2013, both races featured incumbents. Since then the percentage of races that featured incumbents declined: 67% in 2015, 50% in 2017, and 43% in 2019. "Open" races with no incumbents typically attract more candidates. However, as shown in Exhibit 5, even after filtering to include only races with incumbents, the average number of candidates per race is still higher in the two most recent cycles.

Exhibit 5. Average number of candidates per city council position on primary election ballot

All City Council Races

Races with Incumbent
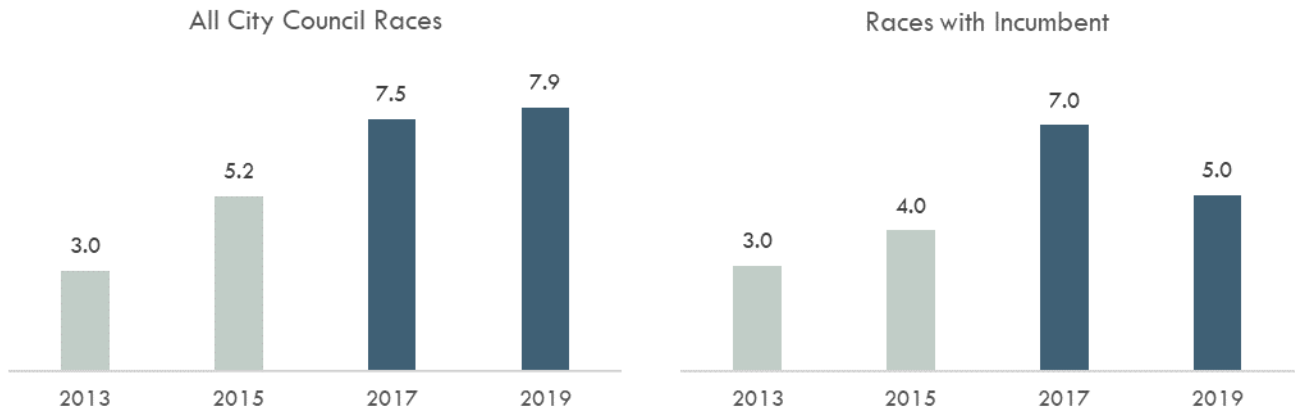
Note: Election cycles in blue indicate that the DVP was available to candidates.
Source: SEEC, 2020; BERK, 2020.

Diversity of candidates

One goal often expressed by supporters of the DVP is that it can support a more diverse candidate pool by providing more candidates who are not white men the opportunity to run viable campaigns. Diversifying the candidate pool helps to ensure those running for local office reflect the full diversity of the Seattle population.

To measure diversity in the candidate pool we collected information about candidates running for City Council in 2019 and compared it to candidates who ran in 2015, before the DVP was in place. Both election cycles featured seven district-positions, and 2015 also included two at-large positions. We collected this information from candidate statements and from information provided in news stories published in outlets like The Seattle Times and The Stranger.

Exhibit 6 and Exhibit 7 show the results of this analysis. There were more women candidates and more candidates that identified as people of color in 2019, despite the fact that there were two fewer election contests. However, as a proportion of the total candidate pool, these groups did not change significantly.

Exhibit 6. Gender of candidates for city council, 2015 and 2019

Gender*	2015 CAMPAIGN CYCLE (9 ELECTION CONTESTS)		2019 CAMPAIGN CYCLE (7 ELECTION CONTESTS)	
	Count	Percent of total	Count	Percent of total
Men	21	57%	30	55%
Women	14	38%	19	35%
Nonbinary/Other	0	0%	0	0%
[Unknown]	2	5%	6	11%

*Note: *Gender identified by candidate self-identification or by pronouns used by reputable news outlets.*

Source: BERK, 2020.

Exhibit 7. Whether city council candidates identify as a Person of Color, 2015 and 2019

Identification as person of color*	2015 CAMPAIGN CYCLE (9 ELECTION CONTESTS)		2019 CAMPAIGN CYCLE (7 ELECTION CONTESTS)	
	Count	Percent of total	Count	Percent of Total
Person of color*	6	16%	11	20%
Not identified as person of color**	31	84%	44	80%

Notes: *Person of Color includes people who have self-identified or have been identified in reputable news outlets as being of a race other than white alone or of Hispanic/Latino ethnicity.

** Includes anyone whose race is identified as white non-Hispanic/Latino or not identified in candidate statements and reputable news sources.

Source: BERK, 2020.

Level of competitiveness in election results

The ability for more candidates to access enough funding to run a viable election campaign should, in theory, result in more competitive election campaigns. By this logic, we would expect to see a smaller margin of victory in election cycles following the DVP launch than in previous cycles. Exhibit 8 shows the average margin of victory in city council elections, or the difference between the percentage of votes cast for the winning candidate and the percentage of votes cast for the second-place challenger. The charts show the smallest margins of victory occurred during the 2019 election cycle. However, this comparison doesn't show an obvious trend.

Exhibit 8. Average margin of victory in city council races
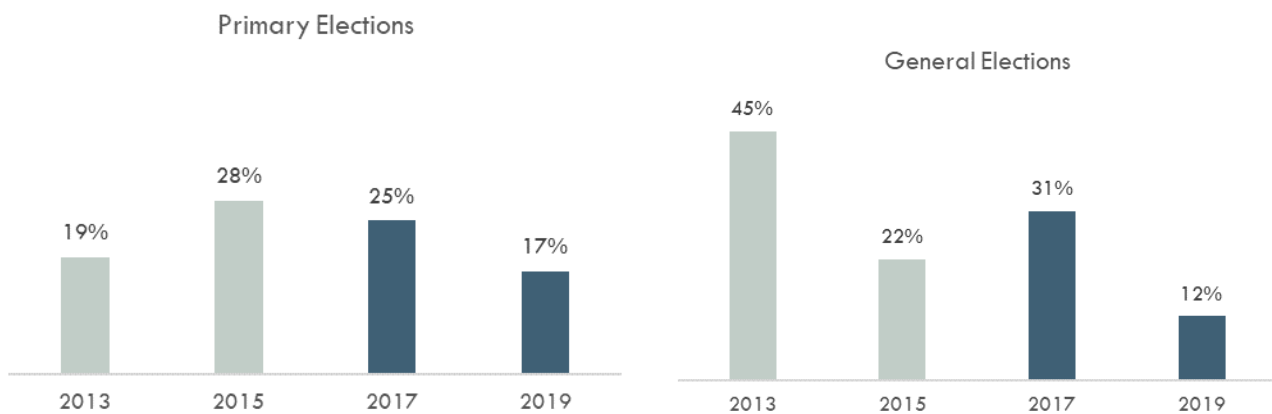
Note: Margin of victory is percentage share of votes cast for the winning candidate minus those cast for second-place finisher.
Source: SEEC, 2020; BERK, 2020.

Voter engagement

A goal of the DVP is to promote democracy. One good measure of the strength of democracy in Seattle elections is voter turnout. More people casting their ballots in local elections is one of the clearest

indicators that more residents are engaged in local politics.[3]

The percentage of Seattle registered voters who cast ballots for city council has increased since the DVP was launched in 2017. Exhibit 9 shows voter turnout during each of the last four local election cycles. The most notable difference is among the primary elections. 2017 and 2019 show an approximately 10% increase in voter participation compared to the previous two election cycles before the DVP launched. For general elections, the two most recent cycles also have higher turnout than the previous two cycles. The difference is most significant in 2019 when an average of 54% of registered voters cast ballots in city council elections, compared to 43% and 45% in 2013 and 2015.

Exhibit 9. Average percentage of registered voters who cast a ballot in city council races

Primary Elections

31%	30%	40%	42%
2013	2015	2017	2019

General Elections

43%	45%	49%	54%
2013	2015	2017	2019
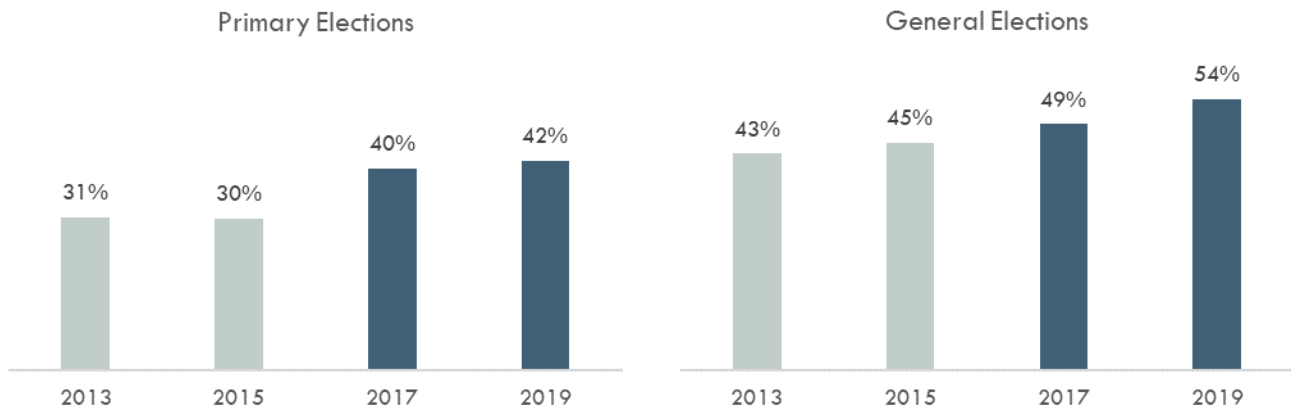
Source: SEEC, 2020; BERK, 2020.

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[3] The four elections compared in this analysis all occurred after Washington State switched to vote-by-mail elections in 2011.

CANDIDATE PERSPECTIVES ON THE DVP

This section summarizes feedback on the DVP from candidates and campaign staff, which we collected through interviews and an online survey (see Data Sources on page 7 for information about respondents). We note differences in perspectives based on campaign role (candidates or campaign staff/volunteers) or prior campaign experience. A full list of lightly edited comments from the survey are provided in Appendix A.

SEEC support and resources for campaigns

We asked about the quality and usefulness of candidate trainings as well as written and electronic resources provided for campaigns.

Candidates and campaign staff find SEEC staff to be helpful. About 79% of survey respondents found their interactions with SEEC to be very helpful, and nearly all remaining respondents found their interactions to be somewhat helpful. Interviewees spoke positively about SEEC staff and appreciated their availability for consultation and interest in supporting candidates.

SEEC staff provide timely information. All survey respondents found that SEEC provided timely information. While interviewees mostly agreed that SEEC responded to direct questions in a timely manner, some expressed concern that SEEC did not always proactively distribute clarified program interpretations and information throughout the campaign cycle. Most survey respondents were successfully able to accurately anticipate disbursement of funds, though a few struggled with delays, especially later in the election season.

Candidates and campaign staff feel sufficiently informed. All survey respondents felt they had enough information to run a city council campaign: 61% felt very well informed about running for office, and 39% felt somewhat informed. Unsurprisingly, respondents with prior campaign experience felt more informed than those without. Of survey respondents, 87% expressed that they received adequate SEEC training on compliance with campaign finance laws. Two survey respondents (out of 19), both of whom were candidates, indicated that they received no SEEC training on campaign finance compliance.[4] Further, most survey respondents indicated they understood DVP qualification requirements very well.

SEEC resources are helpful but could be improved. All but one survey respondent reviewed SEEC resources before or during their 2019 campaign, and all respondents found these resources helpful, as shown in Exhibit 10. However, survey respondents were more likely to find all resources only somewhat helpful instead of very helpful, except for Candidate Introductions.

Regardless of whether they had prior campaign experience, survey respondents had similar rates of usage and opinions on all resources except the Candidate and Political Committee Guide. All respondents with prior campaign experience used this resource, whereas over half of respondents without prior campaign experience did not use this resource.

Survey respondents provided several ideas for how SEEC's campaign resources could be improved and augmented, including:

- Additional clarity and earlier issuance to help candidates and campaign staff avoid mistakes.

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[4] All candidates running for office in Seattle are offered training. The trainings are optional.

- Consistent distribution of materials to all campaigns. One respondent and several interviewees noted that clarifications of ambiguous rules were occasionally determined following questions from campaigns, and that these clarifications were not proactively published for all campaigns.

- More information about the middle and end of the campaign cycle, including additional clarity and concrete examples of how the donation limits and spending limits changed as candidates met the cap for their primary fundraising.

Exhibit 10. Helpfulness of resources provided by SEEC (All survey respondents)

Question: "How helpful were these resources provided by SEEC for candidates?"

Resource	Very helpful	Somewhat helpful	N/A - did not use this resource
Candidate Introductions (available in multiple languages)	8	7	
Candidate Guide to Qualifying	5	10	
Candidate Toolkit	5	9	1
Candidate and Political Committee Guide	4	6	5
Campaign FAQs	3	8	4

Legend:
- Very helpful
- Somewhat helpful
- Not very helpful
- N/A - did not use this resource
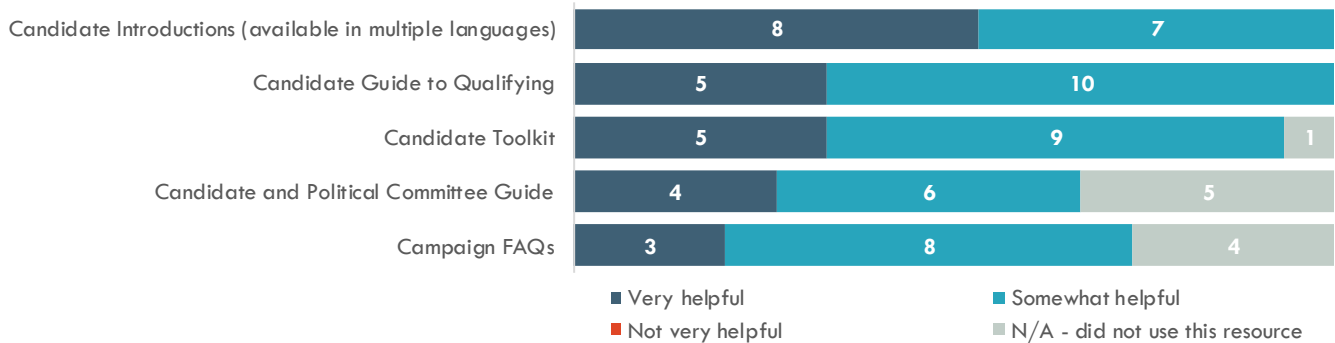
Source: BERK, 2020.

Candidates and campaign staff take advantage of the full diversity of SEEC platforms. Survey respondents indicated the frequency with which they engaged with various SEEC platforms, as shown in Exhibit 11 and Exhibit 12. The exhibits illustrate that while campaign staff reported that they frequently used most platforms, candidates had more varied and inconsistent use. This makes sense given the typical division of labor in many campaigns, where staff have primary responsibility for compliance with SEEC requirements and tracking campaign finances. The one platform neither group used much was SEEC social media. Additionally (not shown in these exhibits), respondents without prior campaign experience were slightly less likely to know about the DVP Data Dashboards.

When asked to provide more details on the usefulness of these platforms, many survey respondents simply indicated that they were pleased with the state of the resources. A few substantive comments and suggestions include:

- "It was always easier to just call."

- "I wish I had been made aware of the Data Dashboards. I never saw it until just now."

- "The download for the vouchers did not include amounts. While I understand the ORCA filing software does not allow you to import contribution amounts, other software does. Having that option would have been helpful."

- "The website is a little old, but 2019 changes are fairly easy to navigate."

Exhibit 11. Frequency of use of SEEC platforms or tools (Candidates only)

Question: "How much did you use or engage with the following platforms or tools?"

Platform/Tool	A lot	Somewhat	A little	Not at all / did not know about resource
SEEC website (via computer)	4	4	1	1
DVP Data Dashboards	4		2	4
DVP Online Portal	2	4	1	2
SEEC social media		1	3	6
SEEC website (via mobile)		3	4	3

■ A lot ■ Somewhat ■ A little ■ Not at all / did not know about resource
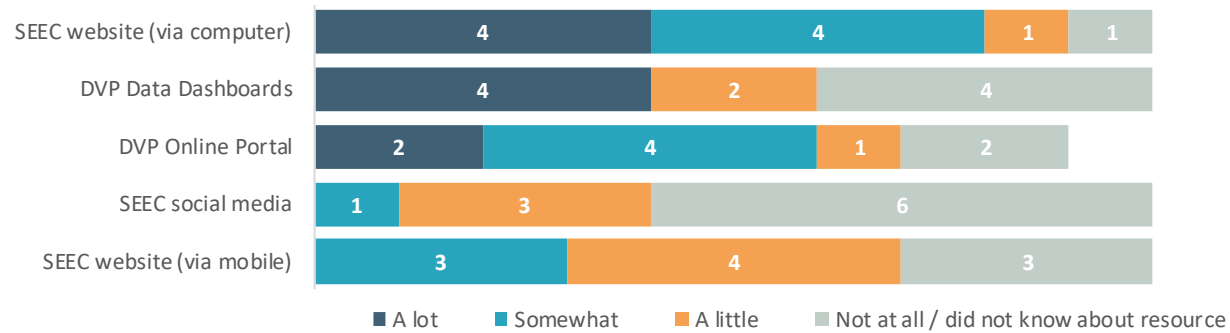
Source: BERK, 2020.

Exhibit 12. Frequency of use of SEEC platforms or tools (Campaign staff only)

Question: "How much did you use or engage with the following platforms or tools?"

Platform/Tool	A lot	Somewhat	A little	Not at all / did not know about resource
DVP Online Portal	3	1		1
SEEC website (via mobile)	3	1		1
SEEC website (via computer)	3	1		1
DVP Data Dashboards	2		1	2
SEEC social media	1			4

■ A lot ■ Somewhat ■ A little ■ Not at all / did not know about resource
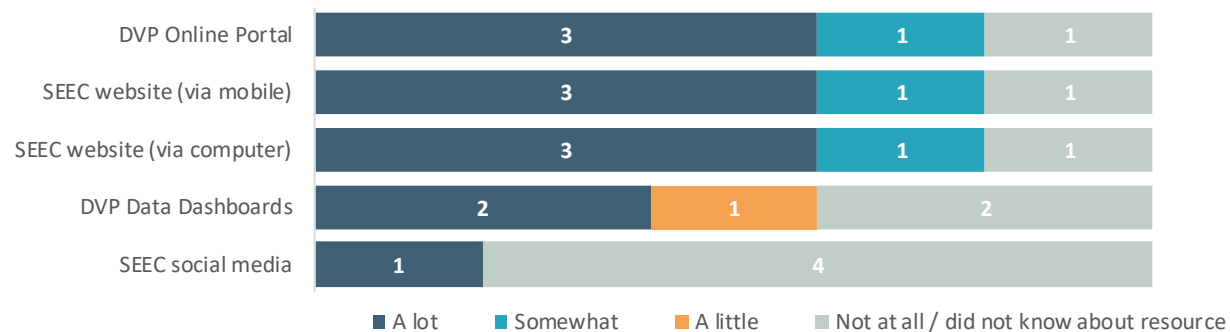
Source: BERK, 2020.

Respondents expressed concerns about the consistency of guidance from SEEC. One common area that candidates and staff experienced challenges with SEEC was in obtaining technical information and guidance that was consistent over time and across campaigns. Four interviewees and four survey respondents noted that they sometimes received conflicting information from different SEEC staff, that different campaigns received different guidance from SEEC, and that SEEC changed rule interpretations during the campaign cycle, impacting their campaign strategies.

Feedback on the qualifying process

The survey asked respondents to indicate if their campaign experienced significant challenges meeting requirements for participation in the DVP. Nearly half of survey respondents skipped this question, which might indicate they did not experience major challenges, but we can't be certain. Of the 11 who responded to this question, eight had challenges with the number of qualifying contributions. Overall, respondents did not struggle with the other potential challenges, including submitting contributions; registering and filing forms; and meeting campaign contribution and spending limits.

Several candidates indicated that the qualifying process places too great a barrier for candidates whose strategy is to reach out to communities of low-income residents who cannot provide donations. One suggestion is to raise the number of signatures required for qualification, and to remove the donations

requirement. However, other candidates felt the qualification process is reasonable. One candidate explained, "Do not weaken the qualification requirements. Both the donations and signatures are reasonable and limit participants to those committed candidates."

All campaign staff understood the qualifying form very well, although candidates experienced more confusion. Of the 11 candidates who responded, six understood the form very well, four only somewhat well, and one not at all. One respondent suggested clarification around the wording of the requirement for "unique" signatures suggesting "Candidates must collect 100 donations of at least $10. Another respondent explained, "I wish I had been made more clearly aware of the form allowing me to collect Democracy Vouchers while doorbelling. I had been doorbelling for more than two months before I realized I could have been raising DV funds at the same time."

Several interviewees identified inconsistencies between online and print qualification information. Interviewees reported a lack of clarity around signatures and donations. There were also comments suggesting that the digital platforms, such as the Online Portal, could be more robust and the primary way of collecting vouchers and signatures.

One survey respondent suggested limiting the qualification window to winnow the number of candidates who can participate. This respondent explained, "Sounds harsh, but raising money is important to a campaign. If you can't get it done right at the front end of the campaign, you might as well not run. I learned that."

Interviewees and survey respondents suggested several options for simplifying the qualification process, including:

- Require candidates to collect a minimum number of vouchers before receiving City funds.

- Allow qualification via signature collection in place of donation collection. This would support qualification of candidates with ties to lower-income communities.

Perception of DVP success in meeting its goals

We asked candidates to share their perspectives about whether the DVP is achieving its four goals. As shown in Exhibit 13, most survey respondents feel the DVP is either "definitely" or "somewhat" achieving each of the goals.

Exhibit 13. Survey respondents' opinions on whether the DVP is achieving its four goals

Question: Do you feel the DVP is achieving each of these goals?

	Yes, definitely	Somewhat	Not at all
High rates of candidate participation	13	1	1
Heavy utilization of vouchers by those who have not previously donated to Seattle political campaigns	10	3	2
High public satisfaction	7	5	3
Democracy and accountability	4	7	4
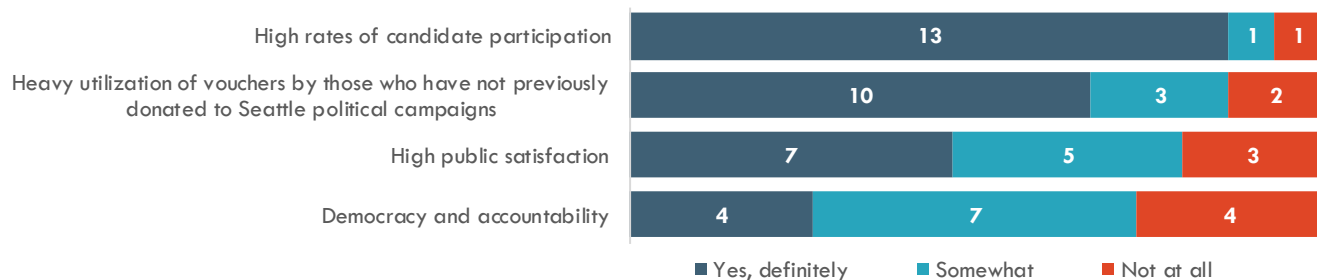
Source: BERK, 2020.

High rates of candidate participation

Almost all survey respondents expressed that the DVP has "definitely" garnered high rates of candidate participation. Only two respondents responded "somewhat" or "not at all". During interviews, several candidates and campaign staff expressed that participation in the DVP is an easy choice due to the program's popularity. Moreover, not participating could be seen as a political liability.

Over half of the candidates interviewed indicated that the DVP influenced their decision to run in the first place. As shown in Exhibit 14, first-time candidates were more likely to have this perspective when compared to candidates with prior campaign experience. Nearly half of first-time candidates indicated that they would not have run if the program didn't exist.

Exhibit 14. Role of the DVP in survey respondents' decision to run for office, based on respondents' prior campaign experience

Question: How did the DVP affect your (or your candidate's) decision to run for elected office in 2019?

- ■ I (or my candidate) would not have run for elected office if the DVP did not exist.
- ■ The availability of potential campaign funding through vouchers contributed to our decision to run for office.
- ■ It had no effect on our decision to run for elected office.
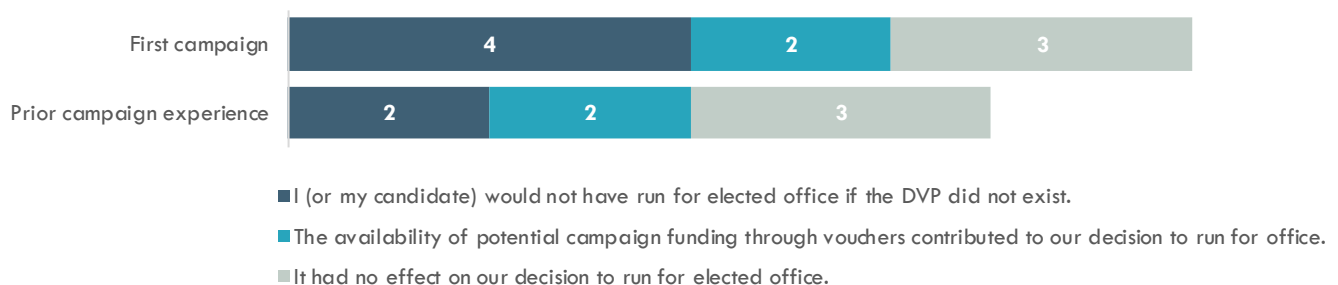
Source: BERK, 2020.

As noted above, several candidates who had not previously run for office expressed concerns about the qualifying process that result in unnecessary barriers to candidate participation in the DVP. Specifically, they argue that achieving the minimum number of qualifying donations is a significant challenge for potentially viable candidates running in areas where many community members do not have the resources for even small donations and/or are uncomfortable sharing their name in the public record (as required for campaign donations). These candidates wondered whether requiring only signatures (perhaps at a higher threshold) might solve this problem while still providing some assurance to taxpayers that DVP funding is only going to committed and potentially viable candidates.

High public satisfaction

A strong majority of survey respondents indicated that the DVP was achieving the goal of high public satisfaction, with about half indicating "yes, definitely". Exhibit 15 shows how responses to this question differed based on prior campaign experience. Respondents without prior campaign experience were significantly more likely to feel that the DVP is "definitely" achieving its goal of high public satisfaction, while those with prior experience were more likely to respond the DVP is only "somewhat" achieving this goal.

Exhibit 15. Survey respondents' opinions on whether the DVP is achieving its goal of high public satisfaction, based on respondents' prior campaign experience

Question: Do you feel the DVP is achieving "High public satisfaction"?
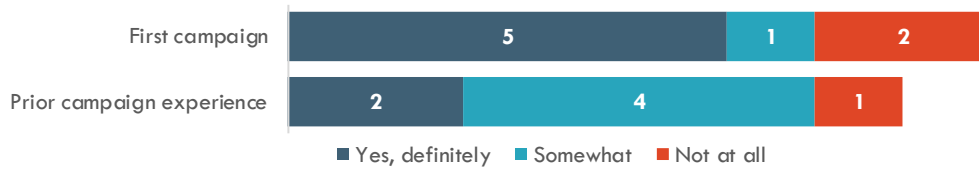
Source: BERK, 2020.

Heavy utilization of vouchers by those who have not previously donated to Seattle political campaigns

Nearly 70% of survey respondents indicated that the DVP is "definitely" achieving heavy utilization of vouchers by those who have not previously donated to Seattle political campaigns. This perspective may be informed by the time spent by candidates reaching out to potential voters. During interviews, most candidates described the many hours they spent walking door to door to meet potential voters and, in most cases, ask if the voter would be willing to donate their Democracy Vouchers. Candidates and experienced campaign staff alike noted how candidates now spend more time doorbelling than on traditional fundraising as was typical prior to the DVP. However, only a small minority of campaigns we interviewed described significant efforts to directly engage communities who are harder to reach and less engaged in local politics. Those who did engage indicated that this strategy required substantial effort and put their campaigns at a disadvantage compared to their competitors.

For example, candidates who sought to engage residents within immigrant communities faced not only language barriers, but also residents' fearfulness about the implications of signing their name to a form and sharing it with the City. Engagement often involved communicating complex concepts across significant cultural divides. As a result, gaining enough trust to convince a resident to donate their Democracy Vouchers typically took significantly more time and multiple touches when compared with canvassing in neighborhoods where voter turnout is highest. These challenges can discourage candidates from taking the time to engage communities who are traditionally left out of the political process and encourage engagement with residents who are more likely to already be engaged.

Democracy and accountability

Survey respondents' perspectives were mixed about whether the DVP is achieving "Democracy and accountability". It received the fewest responses of "Yes, definitely" and over a quarter responded, "Not at all". In interviews, this sentiment was most often related to concerns about the large and growing role of independent expenditures in local election contests as a force that is overwhelming the ability of candidates relying solely on the DVP to effectively compete. Many interview respondents indicated support for some regulation of independent expenditures as the best way for Seattle to make progress towards this goal.

Other candidates expressed concerns that the greatest beneficiaries of the DVP are more established candidates with name recognition and the ability to hit the ground running with paid staff to canvass neighborhoods. Some representative comments here include:

- "The program just made the already rich candidates richer."

- "As it stands now, it's really just a transfer of public money to already well funded candidates."

- "The reality is that the already well-funded with party machine backing were able to flood the zone early and get vouchers, while new unaffiliated candidates were met with 'I support you, but I already gave my vouchers away.'" This respondent suggested that program funds instead be diverted to hosting public forums, voter outreach, and candidate events to help raise awareness of the diversity of candidates running for office.

Perspectives about changes under consideration by the SEEC

We asked candidates and campaign staff to share their perspectives about the potential impacts of three changes to the DVP under consideration by the SEEC.

Should the voucher mailing date be moved?

Interview respondents were provided with the following prompts to provide context for this discussion:

> Currently, Democracy Vouchers are mailed to residents in mid-February. Some people have expressed concerns that this is too early, and before residents are tuned in to political campaigns. So, the SEEC has considered delaying the mailing date until later (such as March or April).
>
> - Do you have any concerns about the current mailing date? Was it compatible with your campaign needs?
>
> - What do you think would be the impact of delaying the mailing date for candidates seeking to run viable campaigns? What would be the impacts of making it earlier?
>
> - How would you feel about delaying the mailing date? How would you feel about an earlier mailing date?

Interviewees had mixed opinions on the voucher's mailing date, with a plurality favoring maintaining the current date. Nearly as many interviewees preferred a later mailing date, and only two interviewees favored moving the date earlier. However, interviewees that favored the current mailing date shared similar reasoning to those that favor moving the date earlier, as shown in Exhibit 16.

Exhibit 16. Candidate and campaign staff perspectives on voucher mailing date

Arguments for maintaining the current mailing date or moving it earlier	Arguments for postponing the mailing date
▪ It takes time to ramp up a campaign, and campaigns need funds early. The early date supports an early start in soliciting vouchers, which would be more challenging if the date was later. (6*) ▪ While an argument against the early mail date suggests that people lose their vouchers, this will likely occur regardless of the mail date, rendering the mailing date relatively insignificant. (3) ▪ Vouchers help pay for staff until fundraising dollars start coming in. (1)	▪ Residents are not engaged in the campaign so early in the cycle, so they aren't ready to use the vouchers when they arrive and thus lose the vouchers. (5) ▪ The mailing date should occur once most candidates are announced, typically around April. This would help shorten the campaign season. It would also help attract media coverage of the mailing date and voucher program that would help raise public awareness and increase voucher use. (4)

Note: Numbers following each bullet indicate a count of the number of interview respondents that brought up this topic. An Asterix (*) indicates it also came up in the anonymous survey comments.

Source: BERK, 2020.

Interviewees and survey respondents also suggested some potential modifications to the mailing date system, including:

- SEEC could activate and publicize the electronic voucher system early in the campaign cycle, then mail paper vouchers to remaining households later when the election is on people's minds.

- SEEC could facilitate additional media coverage of the voucher mailing date to raise awareness and create buzz.

Should the total value of vouchers provided to each resident be reduced?

Interview respondents were provided with the following prompt to provide context for this discussion:

> One of the goals of the DVP is to increase the number of Seattle residents who are able to make donations to candidates for local office. In 2019, 37,721 Seattle residents returned their democracy vouchers. However only 67% of these vouchers were redeemed by candidates. This is because nearly all primary candidates, and all general candidates reached their maximum voucher funding limit. It's likely that many more Seattle residents did not bother to return their vouchers after learning that their preferred candidates could no longer receive voucher funding.

> The SEEC is considering options to increase the number of residents who can successfully donate to candidates using Democracy Vouchers. One option is to reduce the value of vouchers distributed to each Seattle residents. For example, if each adult resident only received $50 in Democracy Vouchers in 2019, then twice as many residents would have been able to successfully donate to political campaigns using their vouchers.

> The SEEC is interested to learn more about how this kind of change could impact future candidates and campaigns for local office. We'd like to hear your own perspectives on this issue.

> Imagine that Seattle residents only received $50 in Democracy Vouchers during the 2019 election cycle. How might this have changed your campaign?

Most interviewees favor maintaining the current voucher value. Only one-fifth of those who shared their opinion on this matter supported lowering the value. Exhibit 17 shows interviewees' reasoning in favor of maintaining and lowering the value of vouchers.

Exhibit 17. Arguments for maintaining and lowering the value of vouchers

Arguments for maintaining the value	Arguments for lowering the value
Lowering the value would impact candidates with lower name recognition at the beginning of their campaigns, who might struggle to collect enough vouchers and get their campaigns off the ground. Well-known candidates and incumbents would have no problem collecting enough vouchers. (8) Raising the spending limit would be a better way to increase the number of residents who can participate. (3) Lowering the value too much (e.g., to $25) would reduce the incentive for candidates to participate. (2) $100 is an "emotionally significant" amount of money that residents take seriously. Lowering value would lower participation. (2) Candidates struggle to find and pay for qualified campaign consultants. Lowering the value would make it even harder to run viable campaigns. (2) If a resident's candidate has already received the maximum of their voucher contributions, then the resident's interest has already been served, regardless of whether the resident's individual voucher was redeemed. (1) Residents accustomed to receiving $100 in vouchers might negatively perceive a decrease in voucher value. (1)	Lowering the value would further motivate candidates to canvas and talk to residents. (3) Lowering the value would increase the number of people who can use their vouchers, increasing participation and democracy. (2) *Many more than two interviewees conceded this point but did not think it was enough reason to lower voucher value.* Lowering the value could increase participation by reducing residents' perceived need to retain their vouchers as objects of high value. (1)

Note: Numbers following each bullet indicate a count of the number of interview respondents that brought up this topic. An Asterix (*) indicates it also came up in the anonymous survey comments.

Source: BERK, 2020.

Should spending limits be raised or eliminated?

Interview respondents were provided with the following prompt to provide context for this discussion:

> Candidates who participate in the DVP must agree to fundraising and spending limits for the primary and general election. However, candidates can also petition to be released from these limits if a rival campaign has combined campaign spending and independent expenditures in excess of campaign spending limits.

> The SEEC has considered making changes to campaign fundraising and spending limits. This could include raising or removing the limits for candidates who participate in the DVP.

Interviewees were evenly split over whether spending limits should be increased or maintained. Many candidates for whom the 2019 election was their first campaign favored maintaining the limits and many experienced candidates favored raising or eliminating limits.

Exhibit 18. Arguments for maintaining and increasing spending limits

Arguments for maintaining the spending limits	Arguments for raising or eliminating the spending limits
SEEC staff predictably and efficiently address petitions to be released from spending limits, so this change isn't necessary. (2)	The spending limit of $75K during the primary is artificially low. Campaigns cost more than this, particularly with the Independent Expenditures being so high. (1)
Although the release process is routine in some races, the limits affect how candidates fundraise and are an important principle for candidates to agree to when participating in the DVP. (1)	Campaigns cannot hire staff at Seattle's minimum wage and give staff benefits without hitting the expenditure ceiling. Many campaign consultants have already decided not to work in local campaigns because there isn't enough money to make the business model viable, particularly compared to state and federal elections. (1)
Increasing limits would not be in the spirit of the voucher program. (1)	
Spending limits give candidates more incentive to canvass to solicit vouchers. (1)	
Newer candidates less easily raise cash donations than incumbents. The limits help to even the playing field and improve the competitiveness of races. (1)	

Note: Numbers following each bullet indicate a count of the number of interview respondents that brought up this topic. An Asterix (*) indicates it also came up in the anonymous survey comments.

Source: BERK, 2020.

Some interviewees expressed concerns that spending limits risk preventing DVP candidates from competing effectively with candidates who benefit from independent expenditures. A similar concern was also raised by candidates who were supported by significant independent expenditures. From their perspective, the limits on campaign fundraising and spending that come with participating in the DVP reduced their ability to control their own campaign messages and strategy. They felt drowned out by the mailers and other advertising that came from independent political action committees.

As Exhibit 19 shows, survey respondents with prior campaign experience generally found the release process understandable, whereas those without prior campaign experience had more trouble understanding this process. Many interviewees expressed that the process to be released from spending limits was clear, predictable, and fairly applied by the SEEC. However, a few shared concerns that the rules were up for debate by the Commission, and that information and metrics about when a campaign may be released were inconsistent and unclear.

Exhibit 19. Survey feedback on the petition to release campaigns from spending limits

Question: "How well did you understand how campaigns can petition to be released from spending limits?"*

	Very well	Somewhat	Not well
First campaign	6	1	1
Prior campaign experience	5	1	1
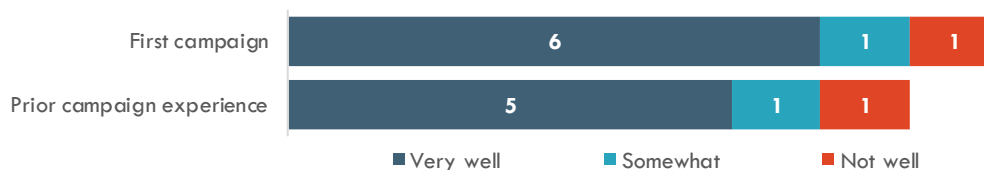
"Completely did not understand the release process" was an option that nobody selected.
Source: BERK, 2020.

Interviewees and survey respondents suggested that SEEC should take the following actions to improve

the release process:

- Post online and distribute rule clarifications to all campaigns, even when clarifications are only given informally to a single campaign. This would support a common understanding of issues.

- Provide additional information about the middle and end of the campaign stages to help campaigns understand how the release process functions fairly and predictably.

- Clarify whether the rules for being released are up for debate in Commission meetings.

- Provide more information in the guides and online about the release process.

- Provide clear metrics for determining when a campaign can be released and make them transparent to the public.

Other suggested changes to improve the DVP

Help raise awareness of candidates who participate in the DVP. In crowded races, lesser known candidates indicated they had difficulty gaining the attention of the news media and voters. A few candidates suggest that SEEC could help by hosting and widely publicizing events such as meet-and-greets in each district for potential first-time candidates and public forums or debates with interested candidates.[5]

Conduct additional public education. Most survey respondents were aware that SEEC offers educational materials about vouchers that candidates and campaigns could distribute to residents. However, many interviewees noted that they nonetheless had to conduct substantial public education about the DVP while canvassing for vouchers. Interviewees noted that a key area of confusion was the sequence of opportunities for a member of the public to support a campaign: (1) the resident can sign a petition for the candidate and donate at least $10 to help the candidate qualify for the DVP; (2) the resident can donate their voucher to the candidate; and (3) the resident can vote for the candidate. SEEC could do more to promote the program, vouchers, and mailing date.

Streamline administrative requirements. Some interviewees and survey respondents noted that the program is a challenge for inexperienced campaigns, and suggested the following changes:

- Streamline how online and in-person donations are counted in the qualifying process., such as automation to avoid requiring a separately submitted form to count online donations towards qualification.

- Remove the requirement for campaigns to look up voter identification numbers.

- Eliminate the requirement for campaigns to report duplicate campaign finance information both to the SEEC and the Washington State Public Disclosure Commission.

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[5] Seattle Municipal Code 2.04.630 B requires qualified DVP candidates to participate in three debates or similar public events.

PARTICIPATION IN THE DVP BY SEATTLE RESIDENTS

In this section we analyze SEEC data records to explore which Seattle residents used their vouchers to support a candidate for city council, when and how those vouchers were returned to the SEEC, and whether residents used those vouchers to support candidates in their own district.

Who used their vouchers?

Democracy Vouchers were issued to nearly 476,000 Settle residents during the 2019 election cycle. Over 38,000 Seattle residents returned at least one voucher to the SEEC to support a candidate.[6] This amounts to about 8% of all residents who received a voucher. During the previous local election cycle (2017), only 4% of residents who received their vouchers returned them to the SEEC to support a campaign. While the general level of awareness about the DVP was higher in 2019,[7] the biggest difference between the two election cycles was the number of candidates seeking voucher funding. In 2017 only five candidates participated in the DVP and qualified to receive voucher funding.[8] In 2019 this number rose to 35.

Exhibit 20 presents voucher user rates by City Council district as well as the number of qualified candidates running in each district in 2019. It shows that voucher user rates were typically higher in districts with more candidates who qualified for the DVP, and that rates increased dramatically in districts that had the most candidates who qualified for the DVP (Districts 4 and 6).

Exhibit 20. Voucher response rates by City Council district, 2017 and 2019

Percentage of issued vouchers returned to SEEC by District

District	2019	2017	# of 2019 qualified candidates
District 1	6%	3%	3
District 2	7%	4%	4
District 3	8%	5%	5
District 4	9%	4%	7
District 5	5%	3%	2
District 6	9%	4%	9
District 7	7%	3%	5

Sources: SEEC, 2020; BERK, 2020.

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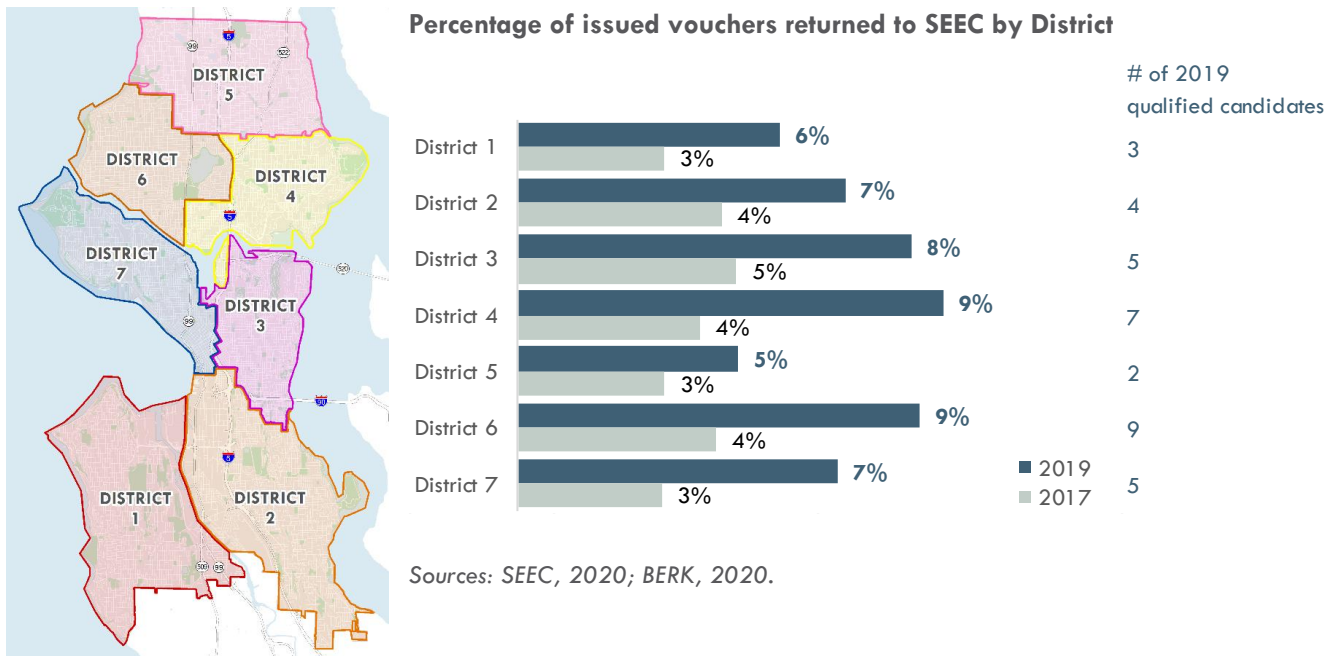
[6] 93% of voucher users submitted all four of their vouchers.
[7] In a 2018 survey, 63% of respondents were familiar with the DVP compared to 73% in a 2020 survey.
[8] This included four City Council candidates and one City Attorney candidate.

Exhibit 21 compares voucher usage rates in 2017 to 2019 by age group.[9] In both cycles, rates increase with age. This mirrors the longstanding nationwide pattern where older residents are more likely to vote. However, the differences in voucher usage rates in 2019 are quite significant, with residents age 65+ being four times more likely to return their vouchers than residents age 18 to 24. This gap between the usage rates of older and younger residents has increased between 2017 and 2018. The youngest age groups saw the smallest gains in usage rates, while the largest gain was among those age 65+.

Exhibit 21. Voucher use rates by age group, 2017 and 2019

Age group	2019	2017
18 to 24	3%	2%
25 to 34	4%	3%
35 to 44	6%	3%
45 to 54	7%	4%
55 to 64	9%	5%
65 and older	12%	6%
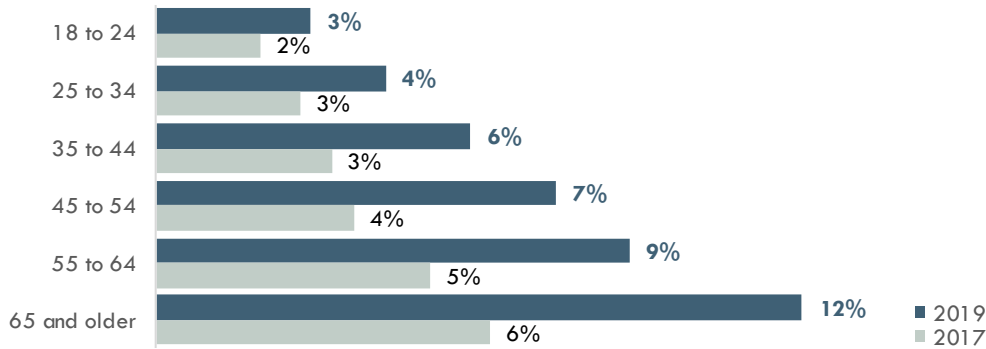
Sources: SEEC, 2020; BERK, 2020.

Reliable data about the race, ethnicity, or income level of individual voucher users is not available. However, we do know where each voucher user lives. As with the findings in our 2017 study, voucher users were more likely to be living in higher income neighborhoods as well as neighborhoods with a higher percentage of white residents. This too mirrors broader patterns of voter engagement and voter registration.

When and how were vouchers returned to the SEEC?

95% of vouchers were mailed to Seattle residents on February 12. Exhibit 22 shows the total number of vouchers returned each month. 71% of vouchers were received and assigned[10] before the primary election. By comparison, in 2017, only a third of accepted vouchers were received before the primary election. As a result, more candidates in 2019 had funding available early on in their campaigns to support them during the primary contest.

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[9] Nearly all vouchers are issued to registered voters. We used date of birth from the voter registration database to determine age of each voucher users.
[10] A voucher is assigned when it is processed by the SEEC and assigned to a candidate so that campaigns can track how much voucher funds may be available to their campaign.

Exhibit 22. Total vouchers received by month, 2019

147,129 Vouchers Returned
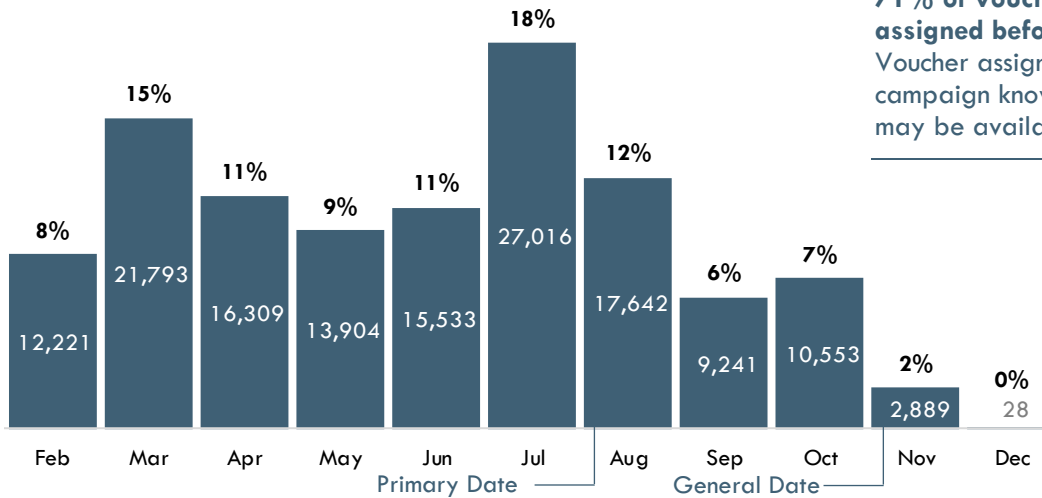
> **71% of vouchers were received and assigned before the primary election.** Voucher assignment represents when a campaign knows what voucher funds may be available to their campaign.

Chart values by month:
- Feb: 8% — 12,221
- Mar: 15% — 21,793
- Apr: 11% — 16,309
- May: 9% — 13,904
- Jun: 11% — 15,533
- Jul: 18% — 27,016
- Aug: 12% — 17,642
- Sep: 6% — 9,241
- Oct: 7% — 10,553
- Nov: 2% — 2,889
- Dec: 0% — 28

Primary Date | General Date

Sources: SEEC, 2020; BERK Consulting, 2020.

Exhibit 23 compares the 2017 and 2019 election cycles to show the percentage of total vouchers received over time. It shows that in 2017 the bulk of vouchers were received during the last few months, following the primary contest.

Exhibit 23. Percentage of total voucher returns by month, 2017 and 2019
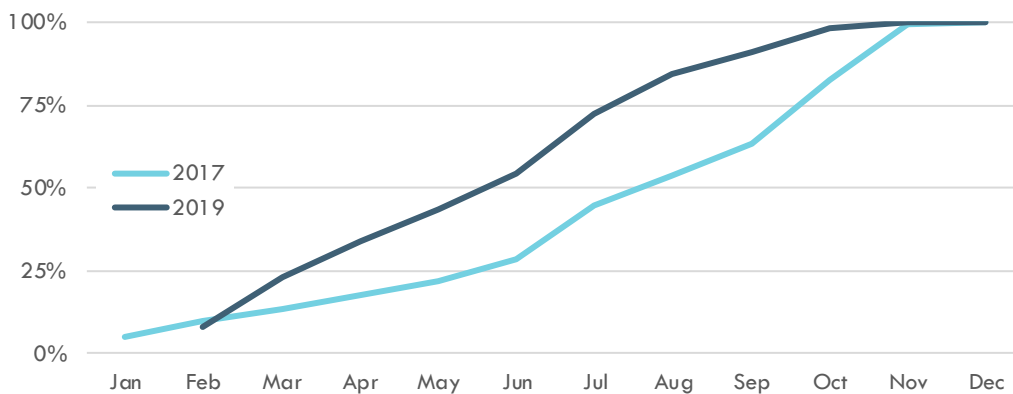
Sources: SEEC, 2020; BERK Consulting, 2020

There are several ways in which a resident can return their vouchers to the SEEC. Exhibit 24 shows the "channel" of voucher return by month. In February, the month most vouchers were issued, most residents mailed their paper vouchers back to the SEEC. Then, during the spring, an increasing percentage of vouchers were collected from residents by candidates and returned to the SEEC.[11] This activity peaked in July when many campaigns maxed out the number of vouchers they could redeem in the primary or general election. During the spring many residents also started using the Online Portal to return vouchers, with its use generally growing over time.

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[11] Many of the vouchers in this channel were from residents who filled out the Campaign Form with a campaign representative.

Exhibit 24. Voucher return channel by month, 2019

Vouchers Returned 147,129

Month	Mail	To Candidate	Online Portal	Total
Feb	98%			12,221
Mar	73%	12%	14%	21,793
Apr	56%	27%	17%	16,309
May	51%	36%	14%	13,904
Jun	49%	35%	17%	15,533
Jul	56%	25%	19%	27,016
Aug	72%	8%	20%	17,642
Sep	65%	7%	28%	9,241
Oct	63%	14%	23%	10,553
Nov	84%		16%	2,889
Dec	100%			28

■ Mail   ■ To Candidate   ■ Online Portal

Of all vouchers returned:
64% were returned through mail
19% were given to candidates for return
17% were returned by online portal
0.1% came through other channels*

* "Other channels" includes King County Elections ballot boxes, Seattle Customer Service Centers, Libraries, and e-mails to SEEC.

Sources: SEEC, 2020; BERK Consulting, 2020

Variation in voucher return channel by neighborhood characteristics

We also analyzed the voucher return channel by neighborhood characteristics, including median household income as well as those with a majority of residents who are people of color. There were no significant differences in any of these groups.

Variation in voucher return channel by age, gender, and language preference

The following exhibits break down voucher users by age, gender, and expressed language preference to see if there are any significant differences between different groups with regards to how they returned their vouchers.[12] It shows that young adults age 18-24 were significantly more likely to give their vouchers directly to a campaign representative. This may be due to targeted engagement with university students by campaigns. It also shows Online Portal usage was most popular among those age 25-44, and more popular with men than women. Finally, voucher users with a language preference other than English were much less likely to give their vouchers to a campaign or use the Online Portal.

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[12] Note that these charts summarize voucher users based on the return channel of the first voucher they returned. In cases where residents split up their vouchers among different return channels, this would not be reflected in our data.

Exhibit 25. Voucher return channel by age group

Age group	Mail	To Candidate	Online Portal	Total
18 to 24	53%	36%	11%	1,241
25 to 34	51%	20%	28%	5,992
35 to 44	56%	19%	25%	6,048
45 to 54	62%	21%	17%	5,775
55 to 64	70%	18%	11%	6,358
65 and older	75%	18%	6%	10,273

■ Mail ■ To Candidate ■ Online Portal
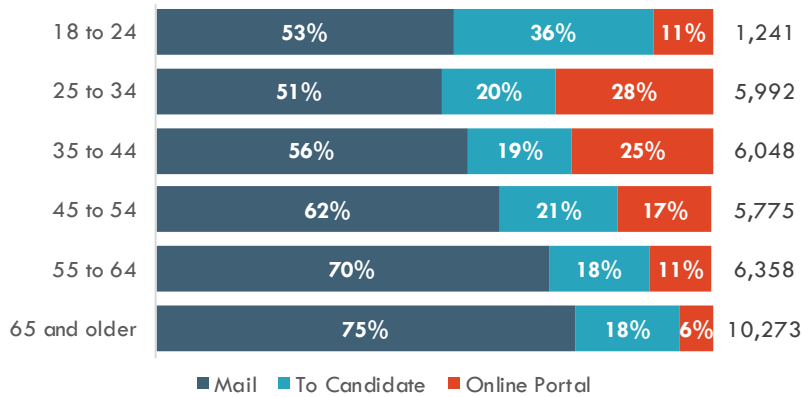
Sources: SEEC, 2020; BERK, 2020

Exhibit 26. Voucher return channel by gender

Gender	Mail	To Candidate	Online	Total
Female	66%	21%	13%	19,249
Male	61%	19%	19%	17,952

■ Mail ■ To Candidate ■ Online
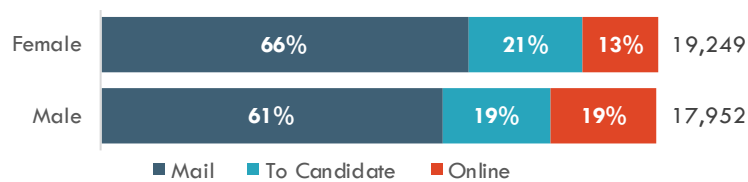
Sources: SEEC, 2020; BERK, 2020

Exhibit 27. Voucher return channel by language preference

Language	Mail	To Candidate	Online Portal	Total
English	63%	20%	16%	38,010
Non-english	90%	8%	3%	77

■ Mail ■ To Candidate ■ Online Portal
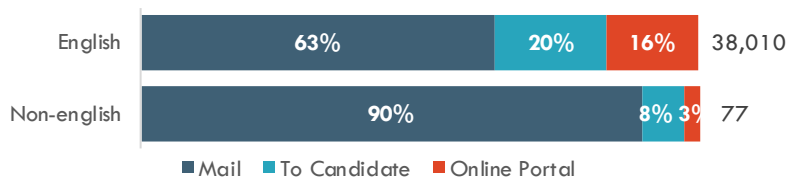
Sources: SEEC, 2020; BERK, 2020

Did residents assign their vouchers to candidates from their own districts?

Over 60% vouchers were given to in-district candidates. 62% of Seattle residents who returned Democracy Vouchers assigned all of their vouchers to candidates from their own home council district. Some residents split their vouchers among multiple candidates. In total about 65% of all vouchers returned were assigned to candidates running in the same council district as the resident who returned the voucher.

Over a quarter of voucher users assigned none of their vouchers to an in-district candidate. 27% of Seattle residents who returned vouchers did not assign any vouchers to a candidate running in the same district in which they lived. An additional 11% of voucher users assigned some but not all of their vouchers to an in-district candidate.

VOUCHER USER SURVEY FINDINGS

The Voucher User Survey was an online survey developed by BERK to gather perspectives from Seattle residents who used their Democracy Vouchers during the 2019 election cycle. The survey was designed to answer questions about motivations for participation, use of informational resources, perspectives on the effectiveness of the program, and opinions about proposed changes. Invitations were sent in two different formats: an email to all residents that signed up to use the Online Portal, and a postcard in the mail to a sample of residents who submitted their vouchers via a different channel. (SEEC only had email addresses on file for Online Portal registrants.)

For the postcard invitation group, we used a sampling strategy that emphasized voucher users who have been less engaged in local elections based on their voting history. The purpose of this strategy was to increase the chance that we would receive input from residents who may have been newly engaged in the local political process as a result of the DVP. More specifically, we selected:

▪ All voucher users who are not registered to vote

▪ All voucher users with no history of voting in local elections

▪ A stratified sample of the remaining voucher users that gave additional weight to those with limited voting history in local elections.

We assumed that we would receive a better response rate from the email survey invitation, due in part to the ease of clicking a link. We also assumed voucher users who are less engaged in local elections would be much less likely to respond to a postcard in the mail asking for their input on the DVP. Therefore, as an additional incentive to participate, postcard invitations highlighted a chance to win a $100 gift card at the vendor of their choice. At least one peer-reviewed study indicates that this kind of incentive can positively impact participation by low-income individuals without significantly impacting response quality.[13] And numerous studies show that lower income residents are less likely to vote than higher income residents.

Voucher User Survey respondent characteristics

As shown in Exhibit 28, a total of 2,579 vouchers users responded to the survey with an overall response rate of 19%. The response rate was much higher for Online Portal users who received an email, presumably due to the ease of clicking a link to complete the online survey.

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[13] See Zhang, Lonn, and Tesasley, 2016. Understanding the Impact of Lottery Incentives on Web Survey Participation and Response Quality: A Leverage-salience Theory Perspective.

Exhibit 28. Voucher user survey invitations & responses

Invitation Format	Invited	Responded	Response Rate
Email	6,537	1,976	30%
Postcard	6,700	603	9%
Total	**13,237**	**2,579**	**19%**

Source: BERK, 2020.

Given the large response from Online Portal registrants who received the invitation over email, it is not surprising that the total survey respondent population differs significantly from the total population of voucher users with regards to method of voucher return. Exhibit 29 provides a comparison. A far greater percentage of survey respondents used the Online Portal and smaller percentage mailed their paper vouchers or gave them directly to a campaign.

Exhibit 29. Comparison of how Voucher User Survey respondents and all voucher users returned their vouchers

Method of returning voucher	Voucher User Survey respondents	All voucher users
Submitted electronically using the Online Portal	61%	17%
Signed and mailed original paper vouchers using the envelope provided	28%	64%
Gave directly to a candidate or campaign representative	5%	19%

Source: BERK, 2020.

Demographic and income characteristics

The following exhibits show the demographic and income characteristics of all voucher user survey respondents, with breakdowns by those invited by email or postcard. These questions were optional, and not all respondents chose to disclose this information. For some survey questions, we disaggregate responses by these attributes. We note when responses differ notably by race or ethnicity or by income bracket, and do not discuss these attributes when responses were similar across the board.

Exhibit 30. Race and ethnicity of Voucher User Survey respondents

Race/Ethnicity	Email Group	Postcard Group	All Respondents	Percentage
White	1,404	404	1,808	83%
Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish	78	14	92	4%
Black	18	18	36	2%
Asian	102	46	148	7%
Other/bi-racial	138	40	178	8%

Source: BERK, 2020.

Exhibit 31. Age of Voucher User Survey respondents

Age	Email Group	Postcard Group	All Respondents	Percentage
18-24	49	26	75	3%
25-34	505	106	611	27%
35-44	452	81	533	23%
45-54	279	66	345	15%
55-64	225	87	312	14%
65+	261	164	425	18%

Source: BERK, 2020.

Exhibit 32. Gender of Voucher User Survey respondents

Gender	Email Group	Postcard Group	All Respondents	Percentage
Female	691	253	944	42%
Male	983	245	1228	55%
Non-binary/prefer to self-identify	37	17	54	2%

Source: BERK, 2020.

Exhibit 33. Household income of Voucher User Survey respondents

Household Income	Email Group	Postcard Group	All Respondents	Percentage
0 to $49,999	215	143	358	17%
$50,000 to $99,999	447	130	577	27%
$100,000 to $149,999	364	101	465	21%
$150,000 or greater	647	120	767	35%

Source: BERK, 2020.

How voucher users learned about the DVP

We asked survey respondents to check all the ways in which they have learned about the DVP. The results, with breakdowns by race and ethnicity, are shown in Exhibit 34. By far, the most common source of information for all groups was the mailer that included paper democracy vouchers. This is followed by news stories and candidates or campaign volunteers.

Exhibit 34. How Voucher Users Survey respondents learned about the DVP, by race or ethnicity

Question: How have you learned about Democracy Vouchers? Check all that apply.

Response	All (n=2,435)	White (n=1,950)	Black or African American (n=51)	Asian (n=195)	Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish (n=92)
I read the materials that arrived with my Democracy Vouchers in the mail	83%	85%	80%	79%	82%
News story (newspaper, news website, radio, television, etc.)	52%	54%	43%	47%	60%
Candidate or campaign volunteer	24%	24%	35%	21%	27%
City of Seattle website	19%	20%	16%	16%	26%
Community blog or social media	18%	18%	12%	18%	24%
Friends or family	18%	17%	20%	21%	23%
Honest Elections Seattle Campaign in 2015	11%	12%	16%	9%	13%
Community organization	7%	7%	12%	10%	9%
Poster or advertisement	5%	5%	8%	4%	13%
City of Seattle representative	3%	3%	6%	6%	12%
None of the above	0%	0%	2%	1%	0%

Source: BERK, 2020.

There were some variations by race or ethnicity:

- **Asian respondents** were least likely to hear about the DVP from a candidate or campaign volunteer, from a poster or advertisement, or from the Honest Elections Seattle Campaign in 2015.

- **Black or African American respondents** were more likely than all respondents to hear about the DVP from a candidate or campaign volunteer, and slightly less likely to hear about the DVP through a news story, community blog, or social media.

- **Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish respondents** were slightly more likely than all respondents to have heard about the DVP through almost all channels.

- **White respondents** were the least likely group to hear about the DVP from a City of Seattle

representative, community organizations, and friends or family.

Income also impacted how respondents learned about the DVP. As a respondent's income increases, they are more likely to hear about the DVP via news stories, community blogs, or social media. The opposite is true for hearing about the DVP from a City of Seattle representative or from friends or family. See Appendix B for full breakdowns.

Voucher user's awareness and use of information resources from SEEC

Exhibit 35 shows Voucher User Survey respondents' level of awareness about resources available on the DVP website, in decreasing order of use.

- **Nearly three-quarters of respondents** used the website's **list of candidates eligible to receive vouchers.** This was respondents most commonly used SEEC resource.

- **40% of respondents** used the website's **information about which candidates had already received the maximum amount of DVP public funding**, the second most commonly used resource.

- Over half of respondents were aware that the website included information about how to request replacement vouchers.

A significant proportion of Voucher User Survey respondents were unaware of many resources available on the DVP website.

- **Over half** were unaware they could track the status of vouchers submitted.

- **Nearly half** were unaware of information about which candidates had already received the maximum amount of public funding available through the DVP.

Exhibit 35. Voucher users' awareness and use of available DVP resources

Question: The SEEC provides information and resources to support Seattle residents who may wish to use their Democracy Vouchers. Please indicate your level of awareness about these resources on the Democracy Voucher Program website: (n=2,321)

Resource	I have used this resource	I was aware of this resource, but I didn't use it	I was not aware of this resource
A list of candidates who are eligible to receive Democracy Vouchers	73%	10%	17%
Information about which candidates have already received the maximum amount of public funding through the DVP	40%	13%	47%
Candidate introductions in 15 different languages	33%	28%	39%
A form to sign up to receive your vouchers electronically	25%	12%	63%
The ability to track the status of the voucher you submitted	18%	26%	56%
Instructions for how to request replacement vouchers	12%	55%	33%

Source: BERK, 2020.

Voucher users' perspectives about the impacts of the DVP

Overall, over three-quarters of Voucher User Survey respondents believe that the DVP is having a "very positive" or "somewhat positive" impact on local elections in Seattle, as shown in Exhibit 36. Only about 5% believe it is having a negative impact. The break down by race, ethnicity, and household income shows little variation between groups, with the exception of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish respondents and those with annual incomes below $50,000 who were significantly more likely to believe the program is having a "very positive" impact.

Exhibit 36. Voucher users' perspectives about the impacts of the DVP on local elections, by race/ethnicity

Question: Overall, what impact do you think Democracy Vouchers are having on local elections in Seattle?

Group	Very positive	Somewhat positive	Neither a positive nor negative	Somewhat negative	Very negative	I'm not sure or no opinion	n
All Respondents	29%	47%	9%	3%		10%	n=2,332
White	28%	47%	10%		2%	10%	n=1,808
People of Color	34%	47%	6%	4%		8%	n=395
Black or African American	31%	39%	17%			14%	n=36
Asian	33%	49%	3%	3%		10%	n=148
Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish	46%	41%	3%	3%		4%	n=92

■ Very positive ■ Somewhat positive ■ Neither a positive nor negative ■ Somewhat negative ■ Very negative ■ I'm not sure or no opinion
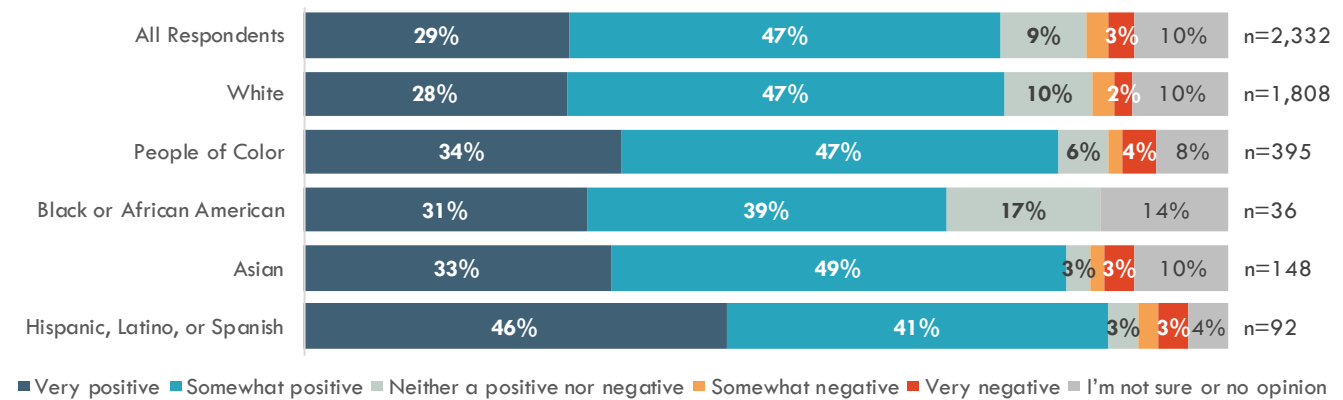
Source: BERK, 2020.

Exhibit 37. Voucher users' perspectives about the impacts of the DVP on local elections, by income

Group	Very positive	Somewhat positive	Neither a positive nor negative	Somewhat negative	Very negative	I'm not sure or no opinion	n
All Respondents	29%	47%	9%	3%		10%	n=2,332
$0 - $24,999	36%	44%	5%	2%		11%	n=130
$25,000 - $49,999	37%	44%	7%	0%		11%	n=228
$50,000 - $74,999	33%	47%	6%	0%		13%	n=276
$75,000 - $99,999	31%	48%	9%		2%	9%	n=301
$100,000 - $149,999	30%	47%	7%	2%		11%	n=465
$150,000 - $199,999	23%	50%	11%	4%		10%	n=336
$200,000 or greater	26%	47%	13%	4%		6%	n=431

■ Very positive ■ Somewhat positive ■ Neither a positive nor negative ■ Somewhat negative ■ Very negative ■ I'm not sure or no opinion

Source: BERK, 2020.

Survey respondents were also asked how much they agree or disagree with several statements about the potential impacts of the DVP. The results are shown in Exhibit 38. A majority of respondents agreed to each of the four statements, with some statements receiving much more agreement than others.

Exhibit 38. Voucher users' level of agreement with statements about DVP impacts

Question: How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the Democracy Voucher Program?

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neutral	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	I don't know or I'm not sure	
Democracy Vouchers encourage Seattle residents to engage with campaigns for local office.	39%	39%	10%	3%	5%	4%	n=2,317
Democracy Vouchers enable a more diverse/representative group of candidates to run for office.	35%	35%	11%	4%	5%	9%	n=2,322
Democracy Vouchers make candidates less reliant on private campaign contributions	31%	38%	11%	8%	7%	5%	n=2,320
Democracy Vouchers encourage more candidates to run for elected office.	27%	35%	17%	4%	4%	12%	n=2,320
Democracy Vouchers make candidates more accountable to Seattle residents.	23%	29%	23%	10%	8%	7%	n=2,317

■Strongly agree ■Somewhat agree ■Neutral ■Somewhat disagree ■Strongly disagree ■I don't know or I'm not sure

Source: BERK, 2020.

Appendix B includes charts breaking down responses for each of these statements by the voucher users' race/ethnicity and by level of income. In general, people of color and lower income voucher users are somewhat more likely to agree with these statements than white and upper income voucher users. However, the differences are not dramatic.

Comments provided by persons of color revealed a range of perspectives, including skepticism about the impacts of the DVP. Many of these comments focused on concerns about "outside", "corporate", and "PAC" spending. As one respondent explained: "They don't yet represent a significant enough amount of money to make a difference when certain candidates accept hundreds of thousands of dollars from PACs. It won't matter until this is the only form of supporting candidates and until all campaign spending is limited for every candidate." For respondents with incomes under $50,000, comments were largely positive and expressed that the DVP supported these respondents' involvement in the process and allowed them to support in ways they couldn't previously.

Voucher users' perspectives on program design changes under consideration

Should the voucher mailing date be moved?

As shown in Exhibit 39 there is no clear consensus among Voucher User Survey respondents with regards to this question, except that very few believe that the current mailing date is too late.

Exhibit 39. Voucher users' views on the Democracy Voucher mailing date

Question: The majority of Democracy Vouchers were mailed in February 2019. In your opinion, how was the timing of mailing vouchers?

| Voucher User Survey | 34% | 38% | 1% | 13% | 14% | n=2,332 |

■ Too early   ■ About right   ■ Too late   ■ I'm not sure   ■ I have no opinion

Source: BERK, 2020.

Should the total value of vouchers provided to residents be reduced?

There is strong support for maintaining the current $100 voucher among all Voucher User Survey respondents, as shown in Exhibit 40. Only 16% believe the value should be lowered, while 20% are unsure or have no opinion. Moreover, 63% of respondents feel very strongly or somewhat strongly about their opinion. Support for maintaining the current value is even higher among people of color and respondents with household incomes below $50,000.

Exhibit 40. Voucher users' views on the total value of vouchers provided

Question: Do you think Seattle residents should continue receiving $100 in vouchers each local election cycle? Or, do you think the SEEC should lower the amount of vouchers it distributes to each resident to, for example, $75 or $50 in total value.

All Respondents	64%	16%	14%	6%	n=2,332
White	64%	16%	15%	6%	n=1,808
People of Color	72%	12%	10%	6%	n=395

■ Keep the current amount ($100)   ■ Lower the current amount   ■ I'm not sure   ■ I have no opinion
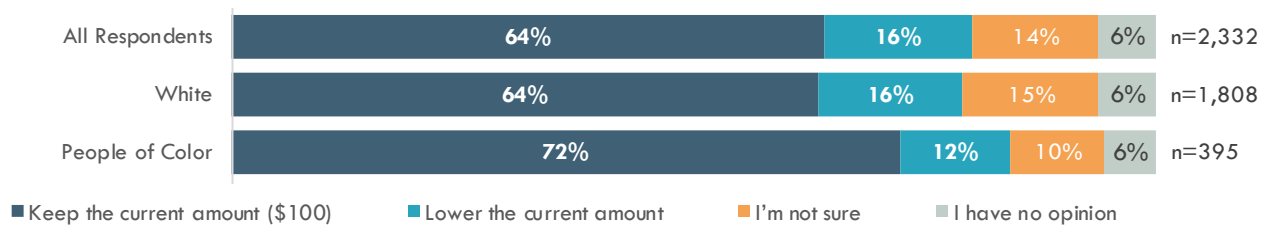
Source: BERK, 2020.

Should spending limits be raised or eliminated?

For this question, Voucher User Survey respondents were presented with a short argument for raising or eliminating the spending limits that DVP participants pledge to adhere by. They were also presented with a short argument for maintaining the current limits. Among all respondents, 44% believe current limits should be maintained, while 34% believe they should be increased or eliminated. Most of these respondents also indicated they feel very strongly or somewhat strongly about their opinion.

Exhibit 41. Voucher users' views on campaign spending limits

Question: Candidates who choose to participate in the Democracy Voucher Program must agree to campaign spending limits. Some people believe these spending limits put participating candidates at a disadvantage because candidates who do not participate can spend an unlimited amount of money.

Other people believe that spending limits are important because they represent a commitment by candidates to limit their campaign spending. Furthermore, candidates can be released from spending limits if there is excessive spending by their opponent or by an independent political action committee (PAC).

After reading these opposing arguments, how do you feel about campaign spending limits in Seattle? Raising the spending limits would not impact the total amount of public funding that candidates can receive from Democracy Vouchers.

Voucher User Survey	44%	23%	11%	19%	3%	n=2,332

■ Current spending limits should be maintained   ■ The spending limits should be increased
■ The spending limits should be eliminated   ■ I'm not sure
■ I have no opinion
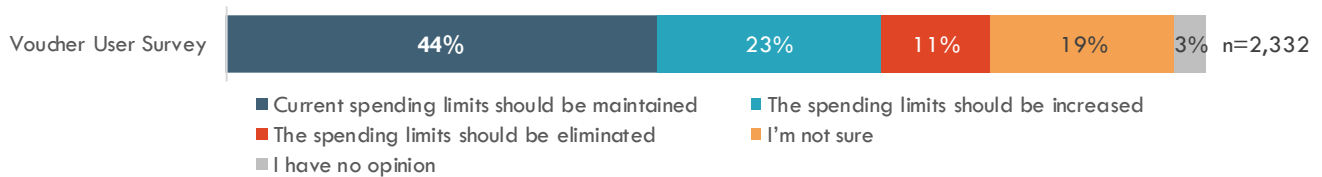
Source: BERK, 2020.

Should the SEEC continue allowing vouchers to be given to candidates outside of home district?

Nearly three-fourths of Voucher User Survey respondents agree that residents should be able to give vouchers to candidates running in any district. Only 18% of respondents disagree, as shown in Exhibit 42.

Exhibit 42. Voucher users' perspectives about giving vouchers to candidates outside of home district

Question: Do you agree that people should be able to give their vouchers to candidates running in any district, whether they live in that candidate's district or not?

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	I'm not sure	I have no opinion	
All Respondents	47%	25%	9%	9%	8%	2%	n=2,324
White	48%	25%	9%	8%	8%	2%	n=1,802
People of Color	48%	22%	8%	9%	10%	3%	n=395
Black or African American	58%	11%	3%	14%	8%	6%	n=36
Asian	43%	25%	7%	11%	11%	3%	n=148
Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish	49%	15%	15%	11%	9%	1%	n=92

■ Strongly agree   ■ Somewhat agree   ■ Somewhat disagree   ■ Strongly disagree   ■ I'm not sure   ■ I have no opinion

Source: BERK, 2020.

By race or ethnicity: Black and Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish respondents were most likely to strongly agree with this statement. All but one commenter supported voucher donations across districts. As one representative commenter wrote, "Our council ultimately decides policy and outcomes that have a collective impact on our entire city, so it should be appropriate for all of us to have the power to invest in candidates we are unable to vote for but who may need resources to power their campaigns."

By Income: There was very little variation in likelihood of agreement or disagreement among

respondents at different income levels. Most respondents with incomes under $50,000 commented in support of donating vouchers across district lines. One representative commenter wrote: "My district (7) includes mostly very wealthy neighborhoods, but I am a working-class individual earning close to the minimum wage, supporting another adult. My demographic is more represented in certain other districts than in my own. I would like to support candidates who represent me, even if they aren't candidates directly elected by my neighbors."

SEATTLE RESIDENT SURVEY FINDINGS

The Seattle Resident Survey included 493 respondents selected to be roughly representative of the adult population of Seattle based on both race, ethnicity, and household income. This section reports on survey responses, including breakdowns by race/ethnicity and household income. For some racial and ethnic groups, the sample size is quite small. This is particularly true for Black or African American, and Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish. Responses for these groups are less likely to be representative of the population as a whole. Survey takers were not informed about the topic of the survey until after they were screened for participation.

Some of the questions in this survey are identical to questions asked in a 2018 survey of Seattle residents that used an identical sampling approach. The discussion below includes a comparison to the results of the 2018 survey when relevant. Both surveys were conducted about four to five months following a local election in Seattle when Democracy Vouchers were solicited by candidates.

Where do residents get their information about local campaigns?

Nearly half of Seattle Resident Survey respondents consult the Voters' Pamphlet provided in the mail when learning about candidates to support for local office. Newspapers, TV news, family and friends, and social media were also common sources of information, as shown in Exhibit 43. Nearly one in five indicated that they learn by meeting candidates or campaign representatives.

Exhibit 43. How do residents typically learn about local candidates to support?

Question: Which of the following sources of information do you typically consult when selecting a candidate to support for local elected office?

Source	Percent	Count
The Voters' Pamphlet	49%	243
Local TV news	45%	221
Local newspapers	44%	219
Friends or family	44%	216
Social media	43%	214
An endorsement from a community organization I trust	30%	149
Paper mailers that advocate for or against a candidate	22%	108
Community blogs	22%	106
Local radio news	20%	100
Meeting candidates or campaign representatives	19%	96
Direct emails that advocate for or against a candidate	11%	52
None, I don't consult any information	7%	33

Source: BERK, 2020.

Proponents of the Democracy Voucher Program hope that it encourages more candidates to engage directly with potential voters. Several candidates we interviewed also indicated that the voucher program provides a strong incentive to spend more time directly interacting with Seattle residents in their district. To measure this outcome, we asked survey respondents about the types of contact they had with a local campaign. The results are in Exhibit 44.

11% of Seattle Resident Survey respondents had a candidate knock on their door. This is a remarkably high percentage given that the population is over 700,000, many residents live in apartments buildings that are harder for candidates to access, and often residents aren't home to answer the door when candidates visit. Furthermore, **nearly a quarter of respondents in all surveys combined recall a campaign representative knocking on their door.**

Exhibit 44. What contact did surveyed residents have with local campaigns?

Question: During the last election cycle in 2019, do you recall having any contact with a local campaign? Select all that apply.

I received information in the mail from a campaign	47%	231
A campaign representative knocked on my door	22%	108
I received a phone call from a candidate or campaign representative	22%	108
A candidate was at a public meeting or community event I attended	16%	81
A candidate knocked on my door	11%	55
A candidate was at a political or campaign event I attended	10%	48
I don't recall having any contact with a local campaign	30%	146

Source: BERK, 2020.

Exhibit 45 presents Seattle Resident Survey respondents' feeling about the level of contact they received from local campaigns. 61% indicated it was about the right amount or too much, compared to only 21% who indicated it was too little.

Exhibit 45. How do residents feel about their level of contact with local campaigns?

Question: How much contact do you feel you received from local campaigns that wanted your support?

17%	44%	21%	10%	16%
■ Too much	■ About the right amount	■ Too little	■ I'm not sure	■ I have no opinion

Source: BERK, 2020.

Seattle residents' familiarity with the DVP

At the beginning of the Seattle Resident Survey, we asked respondents about their familiarity with the DVP. About half of all respondents (49%) indicated they are either "very familiar" or "somewhat familiar" with the program. This is up significantly from 2018, when 40% of respondents indicated familiarity, as shown in Exhibit 46. The percentage of people who responded "Never heard of it" went down significantly indicating that the general level of awareness of the DVP is growing.

Exhibit 46. Seattle residents' familiarity with the DVP, 2018 compared to 2020

	Very familiar	Somewhat familiar	Not very familiar	Never heard of it
2018	15%	25%	23%	37%
2020	18%	31%	22%	29%
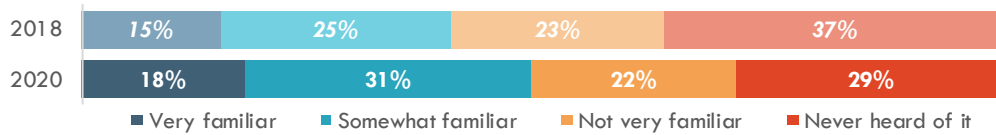
Source: BERK, 2020.

Exhibit 47 breaks down responses by race/ethnicity. Black and Asian respondents were much less likely to say they are "very familiar" with the DVP, while Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish respondents were much more likely to be "very familiar" with the DVP. Asians had the lowest familiarity overall.

Exhibit 47. Seattle residents' familiarity with the DVP with breakdown by race/ethnicity, 2020

	Very familiar	Somewhat familiar	Not very familiar	Never heard of it	
All Respondents	18%	31%	22%	29%	n=493
White	22%	33%	19%	26%	n=337
People of Color	10%	23%	28%	40%	n=124
Black or African American	3%	38%	17%	41%	n=29
Asian	5%	25%	32%	38%	n=60
Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish	25%	25%	25%	25%	n=24
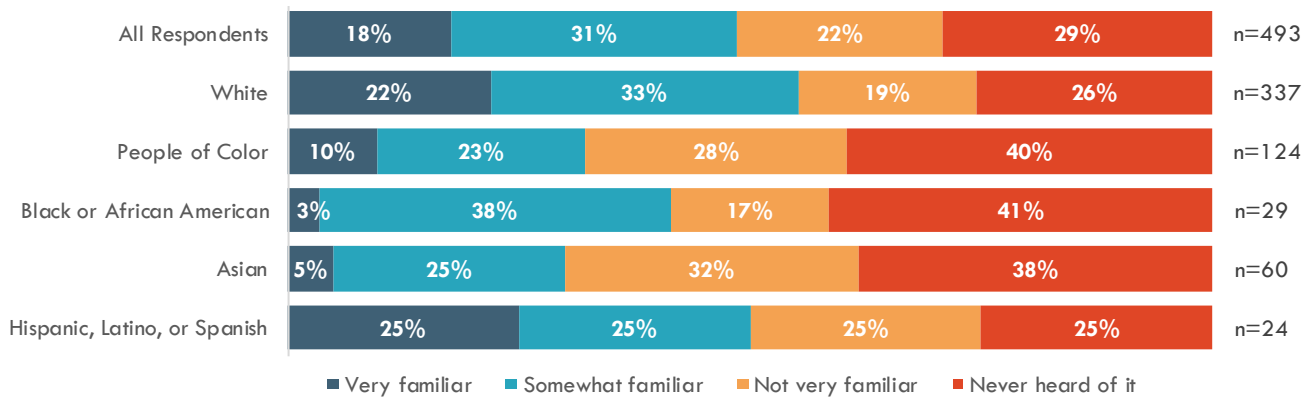
Source: BERK, 2020.

Exhibit 48 breaks down responses by household income. Familiarity generally increases with income level, with the exception of the highest income bracket.

Exhibit 48. Seattle residents' familiarity with the DVP with breakdown by household income, 2020

	Very familiar	Somewhat familiar	Not very familiar	Never heard of it	
All Respondents	18%	31%	22%	29%	n=493
$0 - $24,999	5%	24%	24%	47%	n=93
$25,000 - $49,999	13%	29%	26%	32%	n=82
$50,000 - $74,999	12%	37%	24%	27%	n=78
$75,000 - $99,999	19%	34%	27%	20%	n=64
$100,000 - $149,999	26%	24%	26%	25%	n=89
$150,000 - $199,999	37%	44%	2%	17%	n=41
$200,000 or greater	26%	37%	13%	24%	n=46
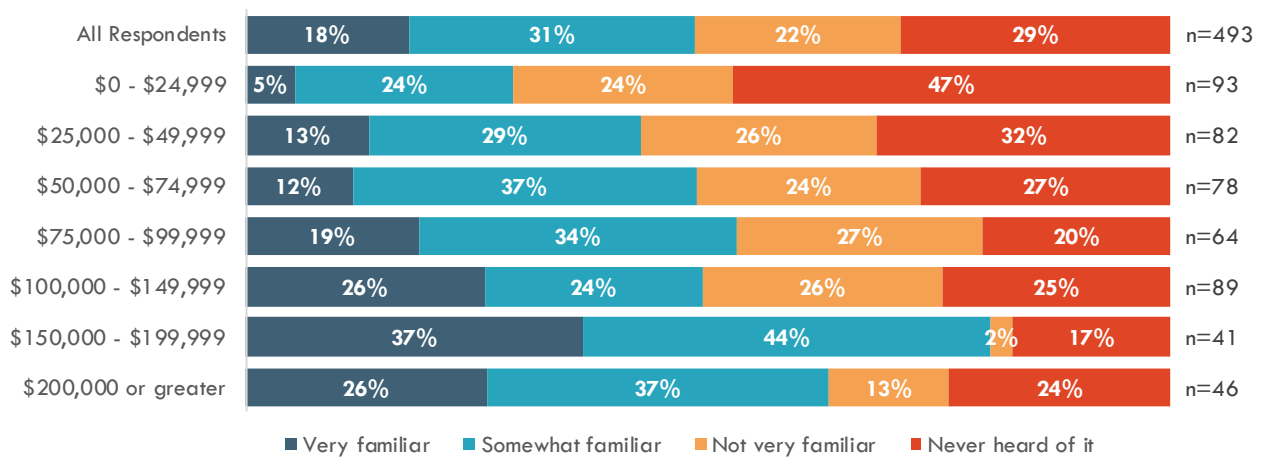
Source: BERK, 2020.

How Seattle residents learned about the DVP

Exhibit 49 shows how Seattle Resident Survey respondents said they learned about the DVP. As with the Voucher User Survey respondents, the most common response was reading the materials that came with the vouchers in the mail. Over half of Seattle Resident Survey respondents who had heard about the DVP selected this option. No other source was selected by more than 20% of respondents.

Exhibit 49. How Seattle residents learned about the DVP (check all that apply, n=349*)

Source	Count	Percent
I read the materials that arrived with my Vouchers in the mail	193	55%
Local newspapers	67	19%
Friends or family	65	19%
Local TV news	64	18%
Social media	61	17%
Honest Elections Seattle Campaign in 2015	52	15%
City of Seattle website	43	12%
City of Seattle representative	40	11%
Candidate or campaign volunteer	39	11%
Local radio news	32	9%
Community organization	31	9%
Poster or advertisement	30	9%
Community blogs	26	7%
None of the above	42	12%

*Note: This chart filters out responses of survey takers who responded in a prior question that they have never heard of the DVP.
Source: BERK, 2020.

Seattle residents' perspectives about the impacts of the DVP

Over half of Seattle Resident Survey respondents feel the DVP is having a very positive or somewhat positive impact on local elections in Seattle, as shown in Exhibit 50. Very few respondents in any group believe it is having a negative impact. Nearly a quarter are not sure or have no opinion, which makes sense given that 29% of respondents indicated they had never heard of the DVP.

Belief that the impact of the DVP is positive generally increases with income level. This likely reflects higher familiarity with the program (see Exhibit 48 above). Indeed, the percentage of people who choose "Neither a positive or negative" or "I'm not sure or no opinion" generally shrinks as income rises, as shown in Exhibit 51.

Exhibit 50. Voucher users' views on the DVP's impact on local elections, by race/ethnicity

Question: Overall, what impact do you think Democracy Vouchers are having on local elections in Seattle?

	Very positive	Somewhat positive	Neither a positive nor negative	Somewhat negative	Very negative	I'm not sure or no opinion	
All Respondents	20%	32%	20%	2%		25%	n=493
White	22%	33%	17%	2%		24%	n=337
People of Color	15%	29%	23%	2%		26%	n=124
Black or African American	17%	17%	24%	0%		31%	n=29
Asian	12%	38%	25%	0%		22%	n=60
Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish	21%	17%	25%	4%		25%	n=24

■ Very positive ■ Somewhat positive ■ Neither a positive nor negative ■ Somewhat negative ■ Very negative ■ I'm not sure or no opinion
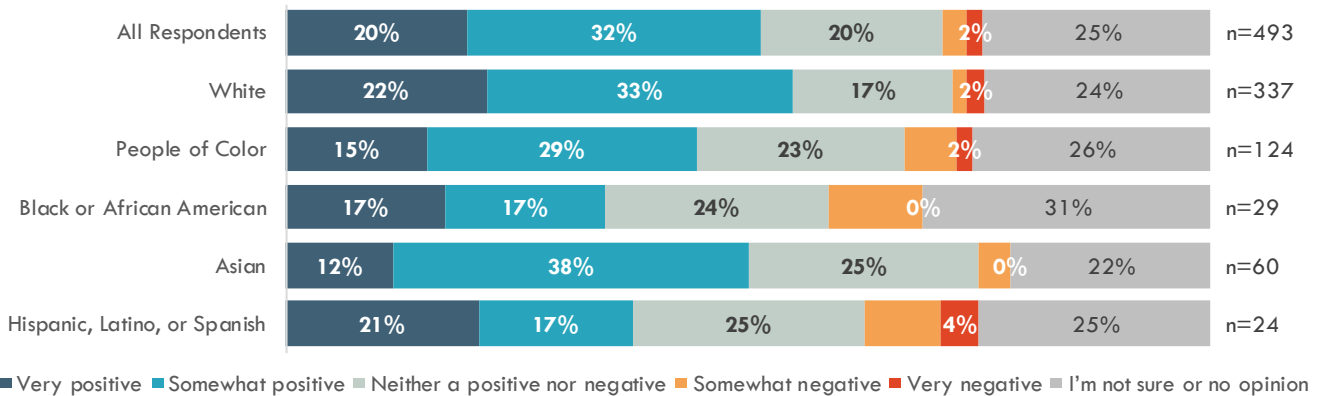
Source: BERK, 2020.

Exhibit 51. Voucher users' views on the DVP's impact on local elections, by income

	Very positive	Somewhat positive	Neither a positive nor negative	Somewhat negative	Very negative	I'm not sure or no opinion	
All Respondents	20%	32%	20%	2%		25%	n=493
$0 - $24,999	12%	27%	13%	3%		43%	n=93
$25,000 - $49,999	18%	26%	23%	2%		28%	n=82
$50,000 - $74,999	13%	33%	31%	1%		19%	n=78
$75,000 - $99,999	19%	28%	27%	0%		20%	n=64
$100,000 - $149,999	24%	43%	11%	0%		21%	n=89
$150,000 - $199,999	34%	39%	12%	2%		10%	n=41
$200,000 or greater	30%	26%	22%	4%		15%	n=46

■ Very positive ■ Somewhat positive ■ Neither a positive nor negative ■ Somewhat negative ■ Very negative ■ I'm not sure or no opinion

Source: BERK, 2020.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this evaluation, we offer the following recommendations in three categories. First, we address the four possible program changes that have been considered by the SEEC. Next, we offer additional ideas for consideration by the SEEC to improve the effectiveness of the DVP. Finally, we offer a recommendation that that falls outside of the purview of the SEEC. This last recommendation is intended for advocates of the DVP and election reform.

PROGRAM CHANGES UNDER CONSIDERATION BY THE SEEC

Should the voucher mailing date be moved?

No. Aspiring candidates need ample to time to solicit vouchers and raise enough funds to develop a serious candidacy. This is particularly true for candidates who are seeking to engage residents that have not previously contributed to political campaigns or voted in local elections.

Should the total value of vouchers provided to each resident be reduced?

No. There is very little support for this change. More importantly, it would risk the perception that SEEC is devaluing the potential voice that Seattle residents can have in local elections.

Should spending limits be raised or eliminated?

No. This idea was not popular among either vouchers users or Seattle residents, although candidates and campaign staff were split on this question. However, the findings of this study indicate that the SEEC should conduct a targeted evaluation of the process for releasing candidates from spending limits. This evaluation should explore how the process could be more transparent and understandable to candidates and the public.

The SEEC could consider improving transparency by expanding its elections dashboard with charts of voucher returns, spending data for campaigns, and independent expenditures by council position. Such charts could illustrate spending limits and events that trigger the release of those limits. This type of visual presentation could help raise public understanding of how campaign financing regulations in Seattle and the limited options available to the SEEC for controlling the role of independent expenditures.

Should the SEEC continue allowing vouchers to be given to candidates outside of home district?

Yes. There is strong support for the SEEC to continue allowing residents to give vouchers to any candidate participating in the DVP. Many residents expressed that candidates running outside of their home districts represent their perspectives more closely than candidates running in their own district. Additionally, a residents' ability to impact elections through the DVP can be limited if their local candidate has received the maximum amount of public funding allowed through the DVP. Allowing residents to give vouchers to out-of-district candidates provides residents more options to effectively participate in elections.

OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE SEEC

Conduct a usability assessment of the DVP from the candidate perspective

Candidates who were new to running for local office described several different challenges to qualifying

for the DVP and mounting a competitive campaign. These challenges were magnified among candidates from communities of color and those who lacked the resources to hire experienced campaign consultants. While most candidates commend the efforts of SEEC staff to provide helpful training and answer questions, many also described a steep learning curve and misunderstandings about rules and procedures. These barriers undermined some candidates' ability to mount the most competitive campaign possible using DVP funding.

The SEEC should consider conducting a usability assessment of the DVP from a new candidate's perspective. The assessment could focus on clarifying the needs of prospective candidates, with an emphasis on people of color and those from underrepresented communities. Next it could conduct a holistic review of the DVP, including information resources, trainings, the SEEC website, procedures for gathering and submitting qualifying signatures and donations, redeeming vouchers, and how candidates are released from spending limits. The review could identify opportunities to more effectively align the DVP and its resources with the needs of prospective candidates. It could also consider potential scenarios such as the need for the SEEC to issue a clarification of rules during an election contest.

Conduct a usability assessment of the DVP from the resident perspective

The findings of this evaluation show that voucher users vary considerably in their understanding of the DVP, available informational resources, and the steps between submitting a voucher and candidate receipt of funding from the SEEC. The findings also indicate that some immigrant communities perceive the DVP differently based on their own cultural perspectives. And these perceptions can create barriers to participation. The SEEC is already engaging with community-based organizations to raise awareness of the DVP through outreach to immigrant communities that is culturally-sensitive and in their native languages. We recommend the SEEC build on this work by conducting a usability assessment of the program as a whole, with special attention to the perspectives of immigrant communities, communities of color, and others who are not highly engaged in local politics.

This assessment could be structured similarly to the usability assessment process described in the prior recommendation. It could examine the entire ecosystem of information available to residents, including SEEC marketing and website materials, Democracy Voucher mailers, community-based organization outreach, and candidate engagement of Seattle residents to address cultural and language differences that influence how residents understand and participate in the program. For example, how can the SEEC more clearly communicate the need to collect personal information about voucher users and how that information is used? The goal of this assessment would be to promote more equitable engagement in the DVP by Seattle residents by providing a user experience which is informed by and anticipates the wide diversity of needs and backgrounds that Seattle residents bring with them to the program.

Increase marketing of Democracy Voucher mailing day

By a wide margin, the most common way voucher users learn about the DVP is from receiving the vouchers in the mail. The SEEC can magnify the impact of that mailer through a coordinated marketing campaign, outreach through community-based organizations, and seeking earned stories in local news media. This kind of campaign could help raise awareness of the program, alert residents to keep an eye out for the mailer, and increase chances that residents would hold on to the vouchers and look into opportunities to use them. The campaign could include information about candidates who have pledged to participate in the DVP and are soliciting vouchers. The campaigns, in turn, would have the opportunity to coordinate their own outreach to residents to leverage the increased awareness of the program.

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATION FOR ADVOCATES OF ELECTION REFORM

The following recommendation addresses issues identified during this evaluation that fall outside of the purview of the SEEC, yet still relate to the ability of the DVP to achieve its four goals. We therefore put it forward for advocates of local electoral reform in Seattle to consider.

Introduce Ranked Choice Voting to Seattle primary elections

The availability of funding through the DVP has greatly increased the number of competitive candidates for local office. In crowded primaries there is a strong incentive for residents and endorsers to try to guess at which candidates are most electable. As a result, candidates with similar values can be pitted against each other or split the vote so that none succeed in moving on to the general election. As one survey respondent explained:

> "It is telling that every candidate who made it through to the general was endorsed by either The Seattle Times or The Stranger. This is a testament to how poorly informed voters were leading up to the primary election. With 10 or more candidates to choose from, voters looked to these papers for guidance. The DVP has made it much easier for people to run for office. In crowded races, endorsements matter much more. So, the DVP has increased the political power of endorsing organizations like The Seattle Times and The Stranger. I'm not sure this was the desired result."

To address this unintended consequence of the DVP, we suggest that advocates of election reforms in Seattle explore the concept of introducing a ranked-choice voting system for primaries in local elections. A ranked-choice voting system would allow voters in the primary election to rank candidates by order of preference. When tabulating votes, candidates in last place are eliminated one by one until there are only two candidates left. If a voter's first choice candidate is eliminated, their vote instantly goes to their second choice. This system would help ensure that the top two winners are broadly acceptable. It could also discourage negative campaigning and reduce the possibility of candidates with similar values splitting their votes and failing to advance. Most importantly, when voters have the opportunity to vote for several candidates in ranked order, they have incentive to consider the merits of a broader range of candidates instead of just the ones that traditional endorsing organizations have blessed. This includes candidates who come from less traditional backgrounds for local politics in Seattle, including those from communities of color.

Enacting this kind of change would require new legislation by the City Council or a voter initiative. As a first step, advocates could explore the potential impacts of this kind of change, including opportunities to make local elections more equitable for candidates and voters alike.

Appendix A: Candidate/Campaign Survey Comments

The text comments associated with the survey questions are included below. They are mostly verbatim with some light editing to support confidentiality.

Question 4: Please share any comments about your experience interacting with SEEC staff.

"Very helpful" comments

- Friendly, professional, and supportive!

- They are absolutely amazing!

- Polly Grow is exceptional. Such a delight to work with.

"Somewhat helpful" comments

- I felt that they were all very nice and professional. However, when it came to technical questions regarding the Financial reporting software, the state PDC seemed to be more helpful and knowledgeable.

- Staff members are quite helpful, but there's a lack of notice about new interpretations and updates to published materials

"Not so helpful" comments

- After the primary, we were given incorrect information which meant we missed out on thousands of dollars worth of vouchers for several weeks.

Question 10: How could these resources be improved? What additional materials would have been helpful to you during the campaign?

- I would have liked something that gave more specific examples of how the donation limits and spending limits changed towards the end of the primary when candidates were maxing out their primary fundraising, through the primary to the start of the general election when limits reset and then when those limits get raised [again].

- My biggest wish was for an errata/FAQ that was for candidates and updated with candidate questions during the campaign. I recall on a few occasions that clarifications of ambiguous rules were determined by candidate questions, and it would have been great to have those published for everyone.

- Not sure. I worked with a political consultant and treasurer, who provided much of this support.

- The resources were fine. I most benefited from direct interactions with Polly Grow, including an initial orientation and follow up e-mail exchanges.

- I found the DV instructions confusing and therefore made some significant mistakes. Also, they need to be issued much sooner.

- There's a lot of material about the beginning of a campaign. There's less about the middle and the end.

Question 11: If you used the Candidate Toolkit, what was most helpful? What did you have most questions about?

- I used the candidate toolkit, but don't recall what was most helpful at this point.

- It's a good first stop, but it might be more helpful as a webpage they can update instead of a static PDF.

Question 13: Did you find these resources easy to use? If not, please provide feedback on how to make these resources more useful.

- It was always easier to just call.

- I wish I had been made aware of the Data Dashboards. I never saw it until just now.

- The download for the vouchers did not include amounts. While I understand the ORCA filing software does not allow you to import contribution amounts, other software does. Having that option would have been helpful.

- The website is a little old, but 2019 changes are fairly easy to navigate.

Question 15: How did the DVP affect you (or your candidate's) decision to run for elected office in 2019?

- For some candidates, it was a main reason for running; for others, it was kind of required to be seen as progressive.

Question 18: How well did you understand the DVP qualification requirements?

- It's REALLY hard to explain in a concise way to voters why they need to contribute money just to get started. I understand there should be at least this minimum and seemingly easy threshold to qualify, but it really set us back a month.

- Don't differentiate between signatures and $10 donations. Just make it all signatures and raise the number, or make it all signatures with donations; but, don't allow signatures without accompanying contributions.

- Streamline them so they are easier for voters to understand.

- The requirements were too vague. As a candidate it felt as if we were using an untested beta version of the DVP with kinks still left to work out.

- A simpler explanation that says you need "150 donations, and 150 signatures". The details can be explained after that.

- Maybe if DVP coaches could check in with the candidates or come out in the community to support candidates any mistakes could be nipped in the bud.

- I thought I understood them, but it truly seemed that rules could/would change fairly easily.

- Making it more clear that the qualifying signatures and the contributions have to come from the same person.

Question 19: How well did you understand how to use the qualifying form?

- The whole "unique" signatures wording needs to go in my opinion. Could say "Candidates must collect 100 donations of at least $10. Those donations must be accompanied by signed statements saying that the donation is given to help the candidate qualify for the DV program."

Question 20: Were you able to accurately anticipate future disbursement of voucher funding to support campaign financial planning?

- Our first check was sent to our campaign with my name misspelled and it delayed our bank making funds available.

- Got a little off track post-primary, but it was usually once every two weeks.

Question 23: How can we improve the training and/or communication around the release process?

- Training and communication was excellent, but the program has problems.

- Focus on better explaining the qualification requirements.

- I wish I had been made more clearly aware of the form allowing me to collect Democracy Vouchers while doorbelling. I had been doorbelling for more than two months before I realized I could have been raising DV funds at the same time.

- We could just make independent expenditure committees subject to the same per person / per couple max.

- Again, the rules for being released by IE spending seemed to be up for debate in commission meetings.

- Need more info in the guides and online about the release process; need better and more public metrics for determining when a campaign can be released; need to follow the SEEC Rules when figuring out the release process.

Question 25: What changes to the DVP would you recommend to support achieving these goals?

- If you give vouchers to a candidate that doesn't qualify or file, you should get to give your vouchers to someone else, as long as the funds were never collected by the original candidate. Don't send them out so early.

- Recommend city ordinance to implement Ranked-Choice Voting in the primary. Vouchers cause there to be a LOT of candidates, and without RCV, that causes spoilers and tactical voting, which is undemocratic.

- Allow voters to re-assign their vouchers if a candidate does not qualify.

- The biggest issue is beyond your control: the role of independent expenditures in City Council races.

- They need to be issued sooner. Campaigns should be collecting those 100 donations and signatures very much earlier.

- I would recommend having an alternative to reaching the required number of donations. The program as it is now only encourages candidates to run if they know quite a lot of people willing

to give them money. If the goal is actual democracy and accountability, then I would provide an alternative of getting the required number of signatures to get on the ballot as a way to qualify instead of getting the donations. This would ensure that the candidate was serious, and not limit it to candidates that know a bunch of rich voters.

▪ Let voucher donors know when their vouchers can't be redeemed (candidate unqualified, candidate lost, candidate at max).

▪ I would drop the program altogether. Spend that money on public forums outreach and candidate events instead. The reality is that the already well-funded with party machine backing were able to flood the zone early and get vouchers, while new unaffiliated candidates were met with "I support you, but I already gave my vouchers away".

Question 26: What changes to the DVP do you think would enable more residents to run viable campaigns for public office?

▪ The SEEC should then host meet and greets in each district for potential first time candidates. I don't think the voucher program has any impact on getting new people to consider being a candidate.

▪ Yes! But we need RCV (Ranked Choice Voting) to go with it, otherwise, the only candidates that will be able to stand out in a 10-15 person primary are the ones endorsed by the major newspapers or business groups.

▪ Make the qualification process simpler. The simplest process I can imagine would be that a candidate needs to obtain vouchers from a specific amount of voters before he can redeem them. For example, instead of dealing with signatures and cash, candidates can just accept vouchers from the 150/400 people. This way, candidates are able to demonstrate the requisite degree of support from the community before they receive City funds without having to slog through a cumbersome administrative process that leaves some voters with the wrong impression as to what is going on.

▪ Not requiring a separately submitted form to count online donations towards qualifying for DVs.

▪ Perhaps limit the qualification window to winnow the candidates who can participate? Sounds harsh, but raising money is important to a campaign. If you can't get it done right at the front end of the campaign, you might as well not run. I learned that.

▪ I would eliminate the requirement to report campaign finance reporting to the SEEC. It seems like unnecessary duplication that you already have to report to the state PDC. Also as I said in my answer to the previous question, allow people to collect voters signatures to qualify for the democracy voucher program in place of getting the required donations. I would also remove the requirement that candidates' campaigns have to look up voter id numbers. It seems like that could more effectively be handled by a government entity similar to verification of signatures to get an initiative on the ballot.

▪ Spend the money on public forums, public outreach and candidate events. Open to all the candidates. As it stands now, it's really just a transfer of public money to already well funded candidates.

- There were almost 60 candidates for seven open positions. Are you sure you want to make it easier for more people to run?

Question 27: Do you have any additional comments to help inform this study? Please share them here.

- It needs to be simpler.

- Do not weaken the qualification requirements. Both the donations and signatures are reasonable and limit participants to those committed candidates.

- This program, I'm sure with good intentions, is difficult to administer and understand from a committee perspective. Campaigns cannot reasonably hire staff at Seattle's minimum wage and give staff benefits without hitting the expenditure ceiling. There was confusion from SEEC regarding the disbursement of vouchers after the primary, and from the commission regarding the release of candidates due to IE spending.

- It is telling that every candidate who made it through to the general was endorsed by either the Seattle Times or the Stranger. This is a testament to how poorly informed voters were leading up to the primary election. With 10 or more candidates to choose from, voters looked to these papers for guidance. The DVP has made it much easier for people to run for office. In crowded races, endorsements matter much more. So, the DVP has increased the political power of endorsing organizations like the Seattle Times and the Stranger. I'm not sure this was the desired result.

Appendix B: Selected Voucher User Survey Responses

Exhibit 52. How Voucher Users Surveyed Learned about the DVP, Disaggregated by Household Income

Question: How have you learned about Democracy Vouchers? Check all that apply.

Response	All (n=2,435)	$0 - $24,999 (n=131)	$25,000 - $49,999 (n=228)	$50,000 - $74,999 (n=275)	$75,000 - $99,999 (n=301)	$100,000 or greater (n=1,231)
I read the materials that arrived with my Democracy Vouchers in the mail	83%	81%	85%	87%	85%	84%
News story (newspaper, news website, radio, television, etc.)	52%	40%	46%	48%	53%	55%
Candidate or campaign volunteer	24%	24%	27%	25%	24%	24%
City of Seattle website	19%	18%	19%	19%	20%	20%
Community blog or social media	18%	13%	16%	16%	16%	20%
Friends or family	18%	26%	24%	19%	19%	15%
Honest Elections Seattle Campaign in 2015	11%	11%	13%	12%	15%	11%
Community organization	7%	8%	11%	7%	9%	5%
Poster or advertisement	5%	7%	8%	5%	5%	4%
City of Seattle representative	3%	8%	6%	3%	3%	3%
None of the above	0%	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Source: BERK, 2020.

Perspectives about the impacts of the DVP from people of color and lower income residents

Exhibit 53 below shows voucher users' level of agreement with several statements about the impacts of the DVP, with breakdowns by race/ethnicity and household income.

Variation by income: Respondents across all income brackets shared similar beliefs about the DVP's positive impact on local elections in Seattle.

For respondents with incomes under $50,000, comments focused on concerns around outside contributions. Additional comments included questions around the DVP rollout, the ease of understanding the program, and a need for more information about the program's effectiveness. Two comments reflect these beliefs:

- "Democracy Vouchers did absolutely nothing to prevent corporate money from influencing the

elections."

- "I hope the above is true but would appreciate studies or evidence to support it."

Variation by race or ethnicity: Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish respondents had the highest belief that the DVP is having a positive impact, at 87%. Asian respondents had the next highest rate of belief in the DVP's positive impact, at 83%. Comments from people of color included the following themes:

- Support for the program and expanding it beyond City Council elections. One commenter said, "I LOVE IT".

- Concern that the DVP cannot compete with PACs and major private donors, and an interest in modifying the program to change this. One commenter wrote: "I wish there wasn't a cap for how much money from Democracy Vouchers a candidate can use, unless the city also decides to eliminate private funding of campaigns (which I would be very in support of)."

- Interest in receiving more education about the program and having more data about the program's effectiveness before providing an opinion on its impact.

- Priority for funding other causes instead of the DVP program.

Exhibit 53. Question: How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the Democracy Voucher Program?

Democracy Vouchers encourage more candidates to run for elected office.

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neutral	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	I don't know or I'm not sure	
All Respondents	27%	35%	17%	4%	4%	12%	n=2,320
White	27%	36%	17%	4%	3%	12%	n=1,803
People of Color	32%	31%	17%	3%	6%	10%	n=392
Black or African American	19%	36%	25%	11%	3%		n=36
Asian	34%	30%	20%	2%	7%	7%	n=148
Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish	41%	27%	15%	2%	5%	9%	n=92

■ Strongly agree ■ Somewhat agree □ Neutral ■ Somewhat disagree ■ Strongly disagree ■ I don't know or I'm not sure

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neutral	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	I don't know or I'm not sure	
All Respondents	27%	35%	17%	4%	4%	12%	n=2,320
$0 - $24,999	31%	32%	15%	5%	2%	15%	n=130
$25,000 - $49,999	35%	35%	14%	2%	1%	13%	n=228
$50,000 - $74,999	31%	35%	16%	2%	1%	15%	n=273
$75,000 - $99,999	31%	36%	19%	3%	3%	8%	n=301
$100,000 - $149,999	26%	35%	19%	4%	4%	12%	n=464
$150,000 - $199,999	23%	38%	17%	4%	6%	11%	n=336
$200,000 or greater	24%	36%	18%	5%	6%	11%	n=427

■ Strongly agree ■ Somewhat agree □ Neutral ■ Somewhat disagree ■ Strongly disagree ■ I don't know or I'm not sure

Democracy Vouchers enable a more diverse/representative group of candidates to run for office.

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neutral	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	I don't know or I'm not sure	
All Respondents	35%	35%	11%	4%	5%	9%	n=2,322
White	35%	37%	11%	4%	4%	9%	n=1,805
People of Color	40%	32%	10%	4%	6%	7%	n=393
Black or African American	28%	39%	11%	17%	0%		n=36
Asian	44%	28%	11%	5%	6%	7%	n=148
Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish	48%	33%	8%	2%	5%	4%	n=92

■ Strongly agree ■ Somewhat agree □ Neutral ■ Somewhat disagree ■ Strongly disagree ■ I don't know or I'm not sure

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neutral	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	I don't know or I'm not sure	
All Respondents	35%	35%	11%	4%	5%	9%	n=2,322
$0 - $24,999	41%	31%	12%	3%	4%	9%	n=129
$25,000 - $49,999	43%	36%	7%	3%	2%	9%	n=228
$50,000 - $74,999	41%	33%	12%	3%	1%	10%	n=274
$75,000 - $99,999	39%	40%	10%	3%	4%	5%	n=301
$100,000 - $149,999	35%	36%	13%	2%	4%	9%	n=465
$150,000 - $199,999	29%	41%	10%	6%	6%	8%	n=336
$200,000 or greater	33%	32%	11%	7%	7%	9%	n=428

■ Strongly agree ■ Somewhat agree ▧ Neutral ■ Somewhat disagree ■ Strongly disagree ▧ I don't know or I'm not sure

Source: BERK, 2020.

Democracy Vouchers encourage Seattle residents to engage with campaigns for local office.

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neutral	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	I don't know or I'm not sure	
All Respondents	39%	39%	10%	3%	5%	4%	n=2,317
White	39%	41%	9%	4%	4%	3%	n=1,801
People of Color	46%	31%	11%	2%	6%	4%	n=392
Black or African American	42%	39%	14%		3%	3%	n=36
Asian	46%	27%	14%	3%	6%	4%	n=148
Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish	58%	29%	5%	2%	3%	2%	n=92

■ Strongly agree ■ Somewhat agree ▧ Neutral ■ Somewhat disagree ■ Strongly disagree ▧ I don't know or I'm not sure

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neutral	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	I don't know or I'm not sure	
All Respondents	39%	39%	10%	3%	5%	4%	n=2,317
$0 - $24,999	44%	36%	8%	2%	4%	5%	n=129
$25,000 - $49,999	51%	33%	8%	2%	2%	3%	n=227
$50,000 - $74,999	44%	41%	9%	1%	1%	5%	n=274
$75,000 - $99,999	45%	40%	8%	3%	2%	2%	n=300
$100,000 - $149,999	40%	40%	10%	3%	4%	3%	n=464
$150,000 - $199,999	34%	40%	10%	6%	7%	3%	n=334
$200,000 or greater	36%	37%	12%	4%	7%	4%	n=428

■ Strongly agree ■ Somewhat agree ▧ Neutral ■ Somewhat disagree ■ Strongly disagree ▧ I don't know or I'm not sure

Source: BERK, 2020.

Democracy Vouchers make candidates more accountable to Seattle residents.

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neutral	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	I don't know or I'm not sure	
All Respondents	23%	29%	23%	10%	8%	7%	n=2,317
White	22%	29%	24%	10%	7%	7%	n=1,802
People of Color	29%	29%	20%	7%	10%	6%	n=392
Black or African American	31%	28%	19%	6%	17%		n=36
Asian	32%	26%	21%	7%	10%	4%	n=148
Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish	30%	32%	21%	7%	4%	7%	n=92

■ Strongly agree ■ Somewhat agree ■ Neutral ■ Somewhat disagree ■ Strongly disagree ■ I don't know or I'm not sure

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neutral	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	I don't know or I'm not sure	
All Respondents	23%	29%	23%	10%	8%	7%	n=2,317
$0 - $24,999	36%	23%	19%	6%	6%	9%	n=129
$25,000 - $49,999	33%	31%	21%	7%	2%	7%	n=228
$50,000 - $74,999	26%	31%	22%	11%	3%	8%	n=274
$75,000 - $99,999	27%	28%	25%	10%	5%	6%	n=301
$100,000 - $149,999	21%	32%	25%	8%	7%	8%	n=464
$150,000 - $199,999	19%	31%	21%	12%	11%	6%	n=335
$200,000 or greater	18%	26%	26%	11%	13%	6%	n=426

■ Strongly agree ■ Somewhat agree ■ Neutral ■ Somewhat disagree ■ Strongly disagree ■ I don't know or I'm not sure

Source: BERK, 2020.

Democracy Vouchers make candidates less reliant on private campaign contributions.

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neutral	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	I don't know or I'm not sure	
All Respondents	31%	38%	11%	8%	7%	5%	n=2,320
White	31%	39%	11%	8%	6%	5%	n=1,804
People of Color	37%	35%	11%	6%	7%	4%	n=392
Black or African American	28%	28%	22%	17%	6%		n=36
Asian	39%	35%	11%	5%	6%	4%	n=147
Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish	40%	38%	7%	5%	7%	3%	n=92

■ Strongly agree ■ Somewhat agree ■ Neutral ■ Somewhat disagree ■ Strongly disagree ■ I don't know or I'm not sure

All Respondents	31%	38%	11%	8%	7%	5%	n=2,320
$0 - $24,999	41%	33%	9%	6%	5%	5%	n=129
$25,000 - $49,999	41%	31%	11%	7%	4%	6%	n=228
$50,000 - $74,999	38%	39%	8%	7%	3%	4%	n=274
$75,000 - $99,999	35%	44%	7%	6%	5%	4%	n=300
$100,000 - $149,999	33%	38%	11%	7%	6%	5%	n=464
$150,000 - $199,999	24%	39%	13%	9%	7%	7%	n=336
$200,000 or greater	26%	38%	13%	11%	9%	4%	n=427

■ Strongly agree ■ Somewhat agree ■ Neutral ■ Somewhat disagree ■ Strongly disagree ■ I don't know or I'm not sure

Source: BERK, 2020.

Appendix C: Selected Seattle Resident Survey Responses

Question: How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the Democracy Voucher Program?

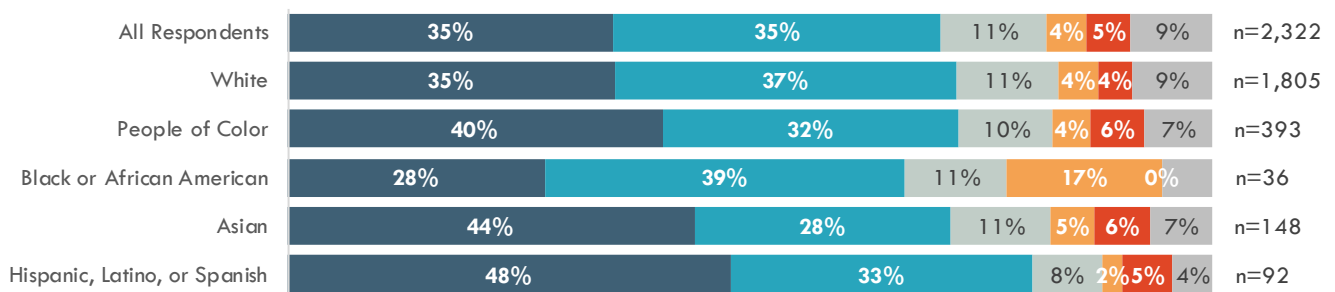Democracy Vouchers encourage more candidates to run for elected office.

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neutral	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	I don't know or I'm not sure	
All Respondents	20%	32%	25%	8%	2%	13%	n=490
White	23%	32%	23%	7%	2%	14%	n=336
People of Color	13%	33%	31%	7%	4%	11%	n=122
Black or African American	4%	30%	33%	11%	11%	11%	n=27
Asian	12%	40%	27%	13%	2%	7%	n=60
Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish	29%	17%	25%	0%	8%	21%	n=24

■ Strongly agree ■ Somewhat agree ■ Neutral ■ Somewhat disagree ■ Strongly disagree ■ I don't know or I'm not sure

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neutral	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	I don't know or I'm not sure	
All Respondents	20%	32%	25%	8%	2%	13%	n=490
$0 - $24,999	9%	21%	30%	11%	4%	25%	n=92
$25,000 - $49,999	16%	31%	28%	6%	1%	17%	n=81
$50,000 - $74,999	9%	47%	24%	6%	3%	10%	n=78
$75,000 - $99,999	28%	30%	19%	13%	0%	11%	n=64
$100,000 - $149,999	28%	34%	20%	8%	2%	8%	n=89
$150,000 - $199,999	34%	34%	24%	2%		5%	n=41
$200,000 or greater	27%	29%	27%	2%	7%	9%	n=45

■ Strongly agree ■ Somewhat agree ■ Neutral ■ Somewhat disagree ■ Strongly disagree ■ I don't know or I'm not sure

Source: BERK, 2020.

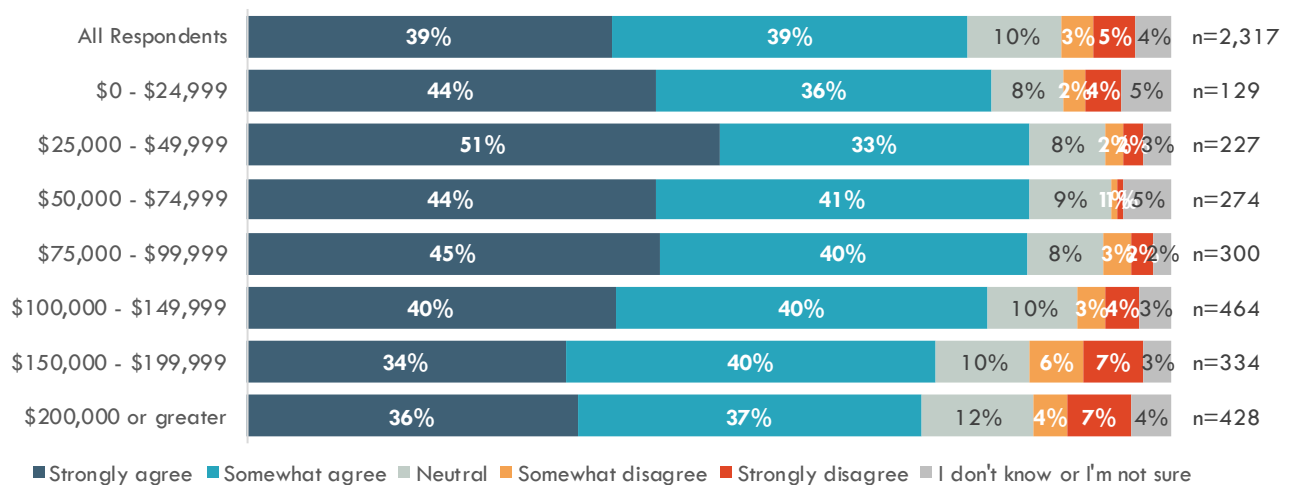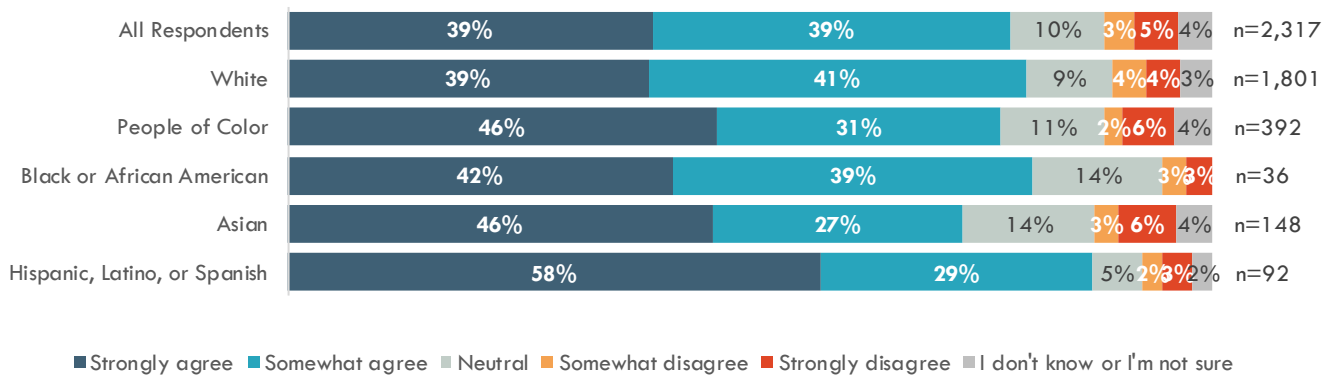Democracy Vouchers enable a more diverse/representative group of candidates to run for office.

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neutral	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	I don't know or I'm not sure	
All Respondents	22%	34%	23%	7%	3%	11%	n=490
White	23%	35%	21%	6%	2%	12%	n=336
People of Color	19%	34%	26%	10%	3%	8%	n=122
Black or African American	14%	31%	28%	7%	10%	10%	n=27
Asian	17%	38%	28%	10%	2%	5%	n=60
Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish	33%	21%	25%	0%	4%	17%	n=24

■ Strongly agree ■ Somewhat agree ■ Neutral ■ Somewhat disagree ■ Strongly disagree ▢ I don't know or I'm not sure

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neutral	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	I don't know or I'm not sure	
All Respondents	22%	34%	23%	7%	3%	11%	n=492
$0 - $24,999	14%	23%	25%	6%	4%	28%	n=93
$25,000 - $49,999	17%	34%	27%	10%	2%	10%	n=82
$50,000 - $74,999	14%	45%	28%	5%	3%	5%	n=78
$75,000 - $99,999	27%	33%	20%	11%	0%	9%	n=64
$100,000 - $149,999	26%	45%	16%	7%	2%	4%	n=89
$150,000 - $199,999	37%	29%	20%	7%	2%	5%	n=41
$200,000 or greater	29%	27%	27%	4%	4%	9%	n=45

■ Strongly agree ■ Somewhat agree ■ Neutral ■ Somewhat disagree ■ Strongly disagree ▢ I don't know or I'm not sure

Source: BERK, 2020.

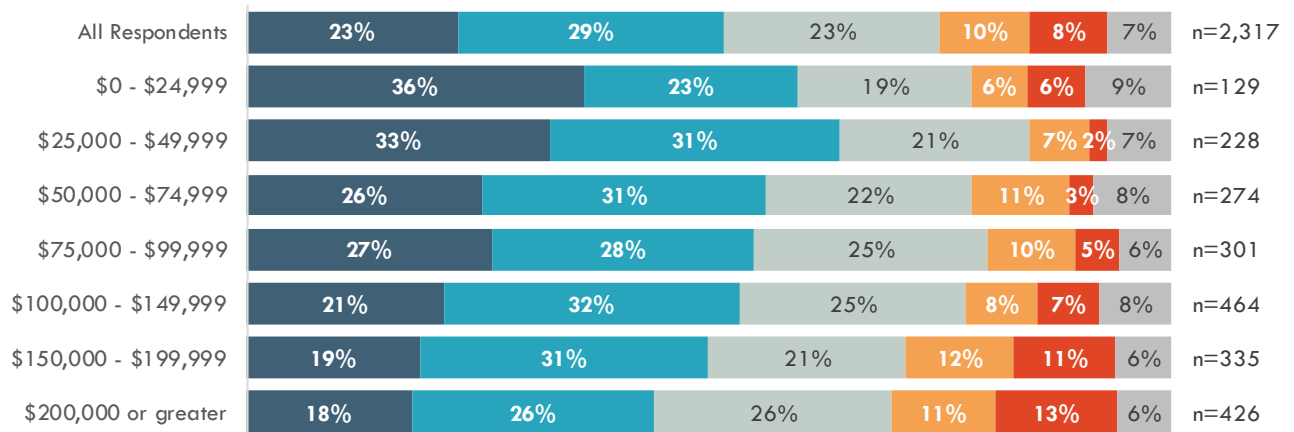Democracy Vouchers encourage Seattle residents to engage with campaigns for local office.

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neutral	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	I don't know or I'm not sure	
All Respondents	27%	34%	21%	5%	4%	9%	n=490
White	29%	35%	18%	5%	3%	10%	n=336
People of Color	23%	32%	25%	7%	4%	9%	n=122
Black or African American	7%	28%	34%	14%	3%	14%	n=27
Asian	27%	38%	25%	5%	3%		n=60
Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish	38%	21%	13%	4%	8%	17%	n=24

■ Strongly agree ■ Somewhat agree ■ Neutral ■ Somewhat disagree ■ Strongly disagree ■ I don't know or I'm not sure

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neutral	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	I don't know or I'm not sure	
All Respondents	27%	34%	21%	5%	4%	9%	n=492
$0 - $24,999	20%	23%	22%	6%	4%	25%	n=93
$25,000 - $49,999	22%	35%	28%	4%	2%	9%	n=82
$50,000 - $74,999	23%	45%	18%	5%	4%	5%	n=78
$75,000 - $99,999	32%	29%	19%	8%	5%	8%	n=63
$100,000 - $149,999	35%	36%	18%	7%	2%	2%	n=89
$150,000 - $199,999	34%	34%	20%	5%	2%	5%	n=41
$200,000 or greater	24%	41%	20%	2%	7%	7%	n=46

■ Strongly agree ■ Somewhat agree ■ Neutral ■ Somewhat disagree ■ Strongly disagree ■ I don't know or I'm not sure
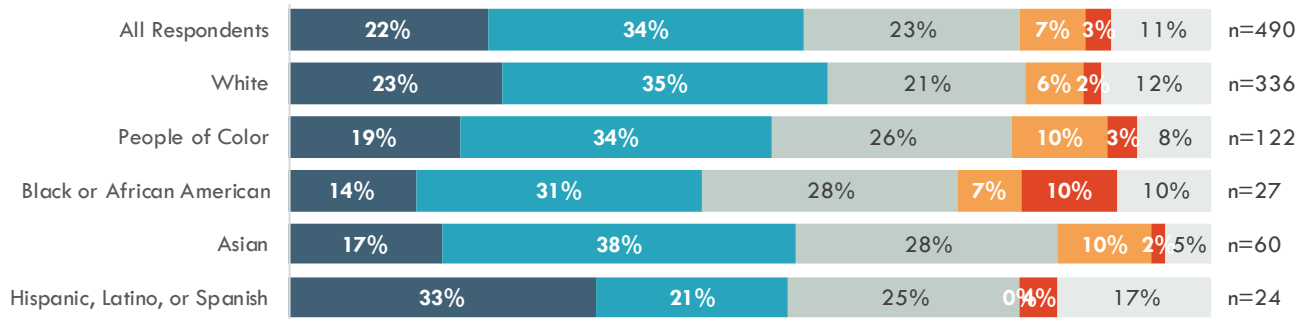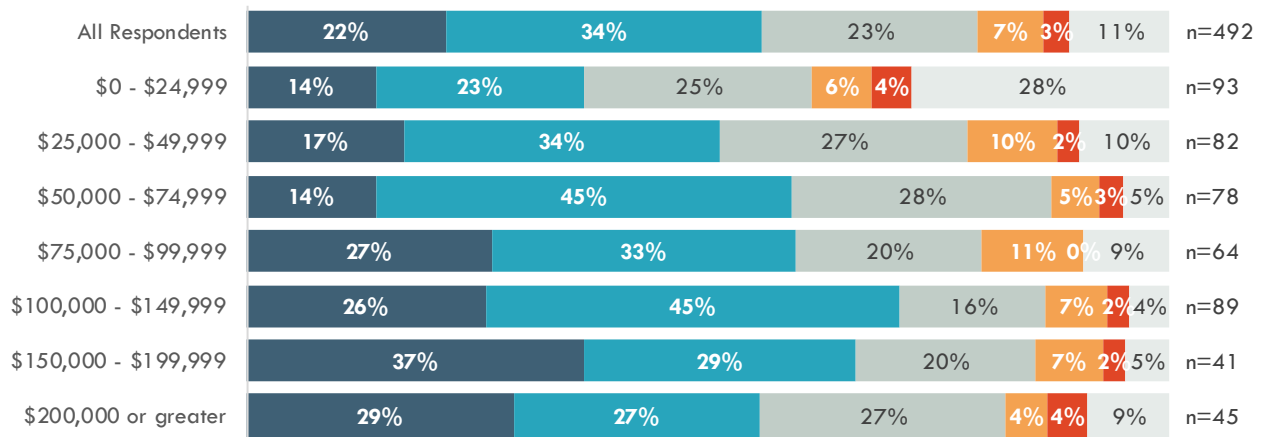
Source: BERK, 2020.

Democracy Vouchers make candidates more accountable to Seattle residents.

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neutral	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	I don't know or I'm not sure	
All Respondents	19%	32%	24%	8%	6%	12%	n=490
White	20%	33%	23%	7%	5%	12%	n=336
People of Color	16%	30%	27%	11%	6%	11%	n=122
Black or African American	21%	28%	28%	10%	3%	10%	n=27
Asian	14%	34%	34%	5%	8%	5%	n=60
Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish	25%	25%	17%	4%	8%	21%	n=24

■ Strongly agree ■ Somewhat agree ■ Neutral ■ Somewhat disagree ■ Strongly disagree ▫ I don't know or I'm not sure

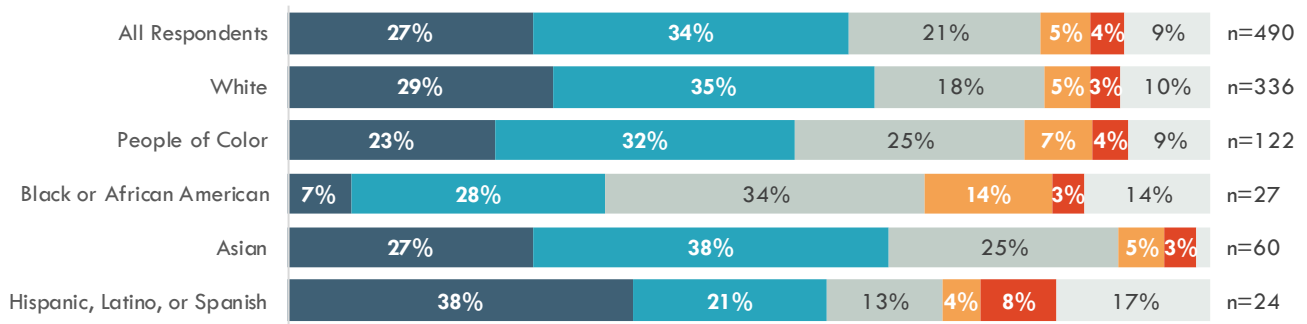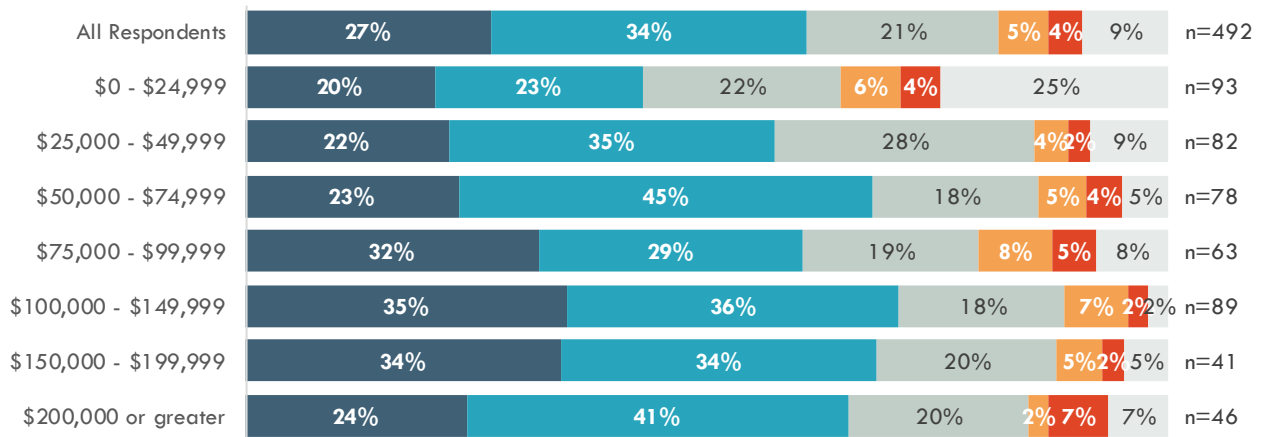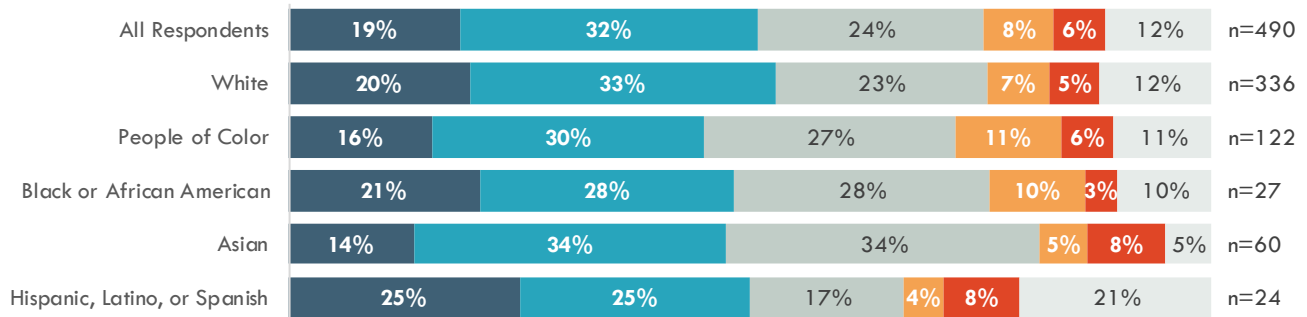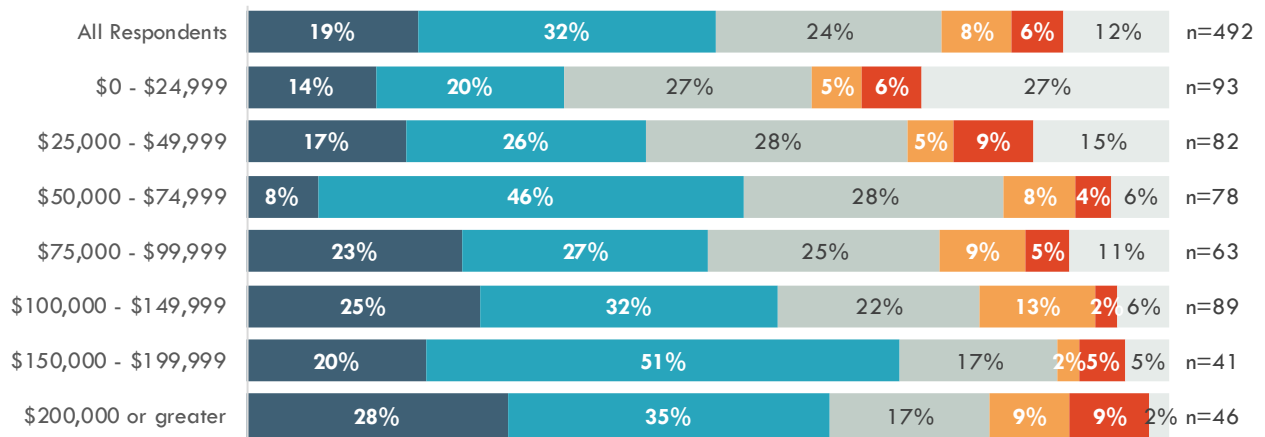|	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neutral	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	I don't know or I'm not sure	
All Respondents	19%	32%	24%	8%	6%	12%	n=492
$0 - $24,999	14%	20%	27%	5%	6%	27%	n=93
$25,000 - $49,999	17%	26%	28%	5%	9%	15%	n=82
$50,000 - $74,999	8%	46%	28%	8%	4%	6%	n=78
$75,000 - $99,999	23%	27%	25%	9%	5%	11%	n=63
$100,000 - $149,999	25%	32%	22%	13%	2%	6%	n=89
$150,000 - $199,999	20%	51%	17%	2%	5%	5%	n=41
$200,000 or greater	28%	35%	17%	9%	9%	2%	n=46

■ Strongly agree ■ Somewhat agree ■ Neutral ■ Somewhat disagree ■ Strongly disagree ▫ I don't know or I'm not sure

Source: BERK, 2020.

Democracy Vouchers make candidates less reliant on private campaign contributions.

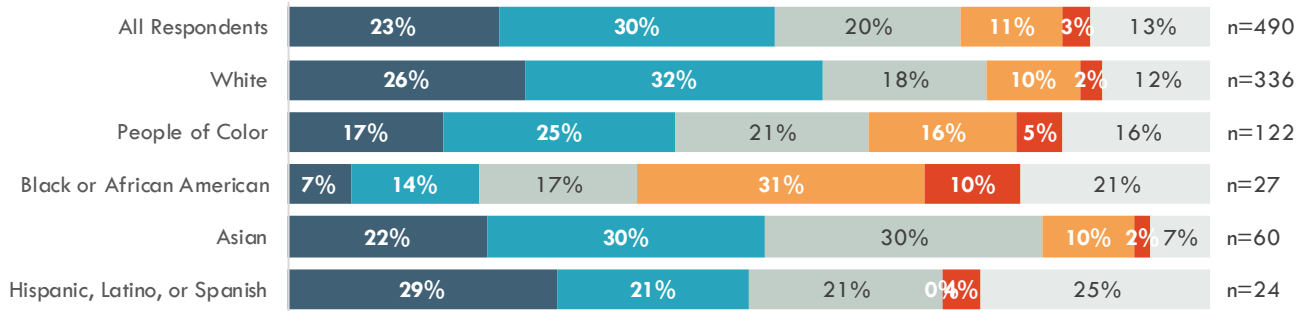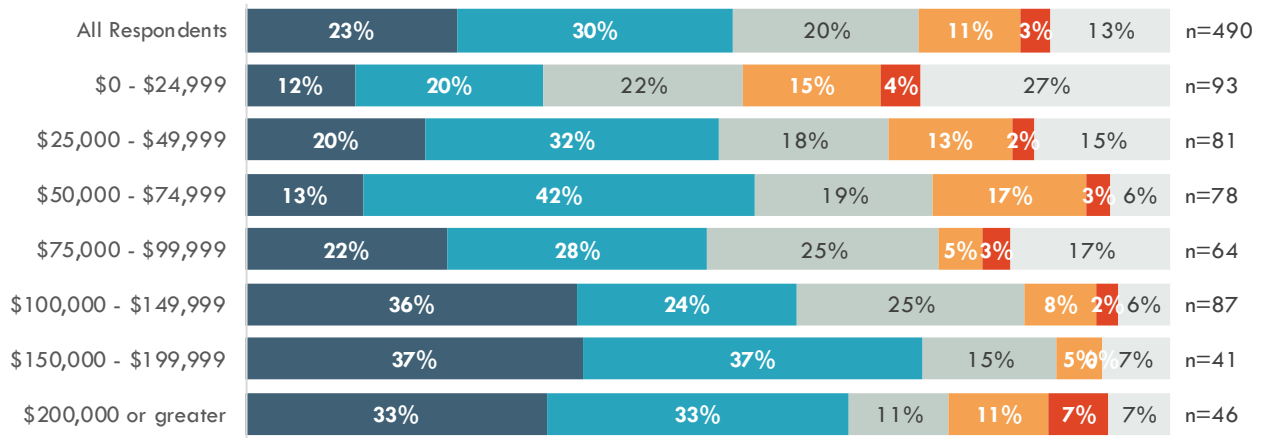|	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neutral	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	I don't know or I'm not sure	
All Respondents	23%	30%	20%	11%	3%	13%	n=490
White	26%	32%	18%	10%	2%	12%	n=336
People of Color	17%	25%	21%	16%	5%	16%	n=122
Black or African American	7%	14%	17%	31%	10%	21%	n=27
Asian	22%	30%	30%	10%	2%	7%	n=60
Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish	29%	21%	21%	0%	4%	25%	n=24

■ Strongly agree ■ Somewhat agree ■ Neutral ■ Somewhat disagree ■ Strongly disagree ■ I don't know or I'm not sure

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neutral	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	I don't know or I'm not sure	
All Respondents	23%	30%	20%	11%	3%	13%	n=490
$0 - $24,999	12%	20%	22%	15%	4%	27%	n=93
$25,000 - $49,999	20%	32%	18%	13%	2%	15%	n=81
$50,000 - $74,999	13%	42%	19%	17%	3%	6%	n=78
$75,000 - $99,999	22%	28%	25%	5%	3%	17%	n=64
$100,000 - $149,999	36%	24%	25%	8%	2%	6%	n=87
$150,000 - $199,999	37%	37%	15%	5%	0%	7%	n=41
$200,000 or greater	33%	33%	11%	11%	7%	7%	n=46

■ Strongly agree ■ Somewhat agree ■ Neutral ■ Somewhat disagree ■ Strongly disagree ■ I don't know or I'm not sure

Source: BERK, 2020.