

# Ethics and Elections Commission

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<http://www.seattle.gov/ethics/>

## Department Overview

The Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission (SEEC) helps foster public confidence in the integrity of Seattle city government by providing education, training, and enforcement of the City's Ethics Code, Whistleblower Code, and lobbying regulations. It also promotes informed elections through education, training, and enforcement of the City's Elections Code and Election Pamphlet Code. With the passage of [Initiative 122](#) in November 2015, the Commission now administers and funds the Democracy Voucher Program.

The Commission's work on behalf of the City of Seattle centers around five main lines of business:

**Ethics Code:** The Commission conducts ethics training for all City of Seattle employees upon request and through the City's New Employee and New Supervisor Orientation programs. It also provides ethics training information for City employees via the City's intranet site. The Commission issues advisory opinions regarding interpretations of the Code of Ethics and also investigates and rules upon alleged violations of the Code. More than thirty years of formal advisory opinions, organized and searchable by topic, are available on the Commission's website.

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

**Elections Code and Election Pamphlets Code:** The Commission fulfills the public's mandate of full campaign disclosure by:

- training organizations required to report campaign contributions and expenditures in proper reporting procedures;
- auditing campaign reports;
- working with organizations to correct errors; and
- making all campaign finance information available to the public.

Since 1993, the Commission has made summary reports of campaign financing information available to the public, and since 1995, the Commission has published campaign financing information on its website. The Commission also produces voters' pamphlets for City elections and ballot measures. It makes these pamphlets available in several languages and produces a video voters' guide with King County.

**Lobbying Regulations:** The Commission is charged with administering the City's lobbying regulations. The Commission collects and posts information so that residents know who is lobbying and how much they are being paid to lobby. The Commission also enforces compliance with the lobbying regulations.

**Democracy Voucher Program:** The Commission administers the Democracy Voucher Program which was approved with the passage of I-122 in November 2015. The primary goal of the program is to provide \$100 in vouchers to eligible Seattle residents so that they can contribute to candidates for City office who qualify to participate in the program.

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### Budget Snapshot

	2022 Actuals	2023 Adopted	2024 Endorsed	2024 Adopted
<b>Department Support</b>				
General Fund Support	1,380,237	1,276,345	1,298,509	1,303,105
Other Funding - Operating	667,039	6,735,048	882,245	3,002,768
<b>Total Operations</b>	<b>2,047,277</b>	<b>8,011,393</b>	<b>2,180,754</b>	<b>4,305,873</b>
<b>Total Appropriations</b>	<b>2,047,277</b>	<b>8,011,393</b>	<b>2,180,754</b>	<b>4,305,873</b>
 Full-Time Equivalents Total*	 9.40	 9.40	 9.40	 9.40

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

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## Incremental Budget Changes

### Ethics and Elections Commission

	2024 Budget	FTE
<b>Total 2024 Endorsed Budget</b>	<b>2,180,754</b>	<b>9.40</b>
<b>Baseline</b>		
Citywide Adjustments for Standard Cost Changes	13,668	-
<b>Proposed Operating</b>		
Potential 2024 Election Year Costs for Democracy Voucher Program	2,118,608	-
<b>Proposed Technical</b>		
Fund Balance Adjustment - Proposed	-	-
<b>Council</b>		
SCERS Contribution Rate Change	(7,157)	-
<b>Total Incremental Changes</b>	<b>\$2,125,118</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Total 2024 Adopted Budget</b>	<b>\$4,305,873</b>	<b>9.40</b>

## Description of Incremental Budget Changes

### Baseline

#### Citywide Adjustments for Standard Cost Changes

Expenditures \$13,668

Citywide technical adjustments made in the baseline phase reflect changes to internal services costs, including rates from the Department of Finance & Administrative Services, Seattle Information Technology Department, Seattle Department of Human Resources, and for healthcare, retirement, and industrial insurance charges for the department. These adjustments reflect initial assumptions about these costs and inflators early in the budget process.

### Proposed Operating

#### Potential 2024 Election Year Costs for Democracy Voucher Program

Expenditures \$2,118,608

This item adds appropriation authority to the Democracy Voucher Program to cover costs should there be an election during 2024 for one of the "at large" Seattle City Council seats. This funding covers costs associated with qualifying signature and voucher processing, voucher printing and mailing, postage and business reply envelopes, outreach materials and event costs, translation costs, advertising, program staff wage and salaries, and candidate disbursements associated with a citywide election.

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## Proposed Technical

### **Fund Balance Adjustment - Proposed**

Revenues \$2,768

This is a technical item to balance revenues and expenditures for the Funds managed by this department.

## Council

### **SCERS Contribution Rate Change**

Expenditures \$(7,157)

The City's employee retirement system, the Seattle City Employees Retirement System (SCERS), of which most non-uniformed City employees are members, is a defined benefit pension program funded by a combination of salary-based employer (i.e., the City) and employee contributions, and investment earnings.

The employer portion of the SCERS contribution is funded through the annual budget process as a percentage of salaries based on several factors including reports from the contracted actuary and the City's long-range financial forecasts. The Mayor's 2024 Proposed Mid-Biennial Budget included an employer contribution rate of 16.22%, which was determined prior to the actuary's recommendation but provided for long-term "smoothing" given the City's long-term financial challenges.

This item reduces the employer contribution rate from the proposed rate of 16.22% to the SCERS minimum actuarial required rate of 15.17%, which was determined to provide sufficient funding to the retirement system to achieve 100% funded status by 2042.

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## 2023-24 Mid-Biennium Adopted Budget Updates - Expenses

Budget Summary Level	Fund	Budget Process Phase Endorsed	Adopted Changes	Grand Total
Election Vouchers	12300 - Election Vouchers Fund	882,245	2,120,522	3,002,768
<b>Election Vouchers Total</b>		<b>882,245</b>	<b>2,120,522</b>	<b>3,002,768</b>
Ethics and Elections	00100 - General Fund	1,298,509	4,596	1,303,105
<b>Ethics and Elections Total</b>		<b>1,298,509</b>	<b>4,596</b>	<b>1,303,105</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>		<b>2,180,754</b>	<b>2,125,118</b>	<b>4,305,873</b>