

Legislative Department

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

Department Overview

The Legislative Department is comprised of the Seattle City Council, as well as two primary divisions: Central Staff and the Office of the City Clerk. Each division supports various aspects of the Council and works with members of the public and City departments to facilitate and develop effective and responsive public policy. The Council and Legislative Department are part of the legislative branch of government, which also includes the Office of City Auditor, the Office of Hearing Examiner, and the Office of Inspector General for Public Safety.

The Council is composed of two at-large and seven district-elected seats for a total of nine, nonpartisan, elected Councilmembers. In November 2023, seven district Councilmembers were elected to a four-year term beginning in 2024. Two at-large Councilmembers are elected to align with the election for a four-year term with the Mayor and City Attorney election in 2021. This approach staggers the district and at-large elections two years apart. In 2024, one at-large position was appointed to the Council as a resignation replacement. A special election in November 2024 will determine the Councilmember for the last year of this term in 2025.

The City Council establishes City laws; creates, evaluates and approves policies, legislation, and regulations; approves the City's annual operating and capital improvement budgets; and provides oversight to the City's executive departments. Each Councilmember has a staff of legislative assistants who assist in this work.

Central Staff provides policy and budget analysis for Councilmembers and their staffs, as well project management related to City Council consultant contracts. The Office of the City Clerk advances principles of open government and inclusive access through effective facilitation of the legislative process and transparent, accountable stewardship of public information and the official record, including City Council proceedings and legislation. The City Clerk serves as ex-officio elections administrator and filing officer. The office manages the City's Boards and Commissions Registry Program; coordinates public records disclosure requests; and provides information technology, administrative and operational support to the Legislative Department.

Communications and Human Resources/Finance teams are also a part of the Legislative Department. Communications staff assist Councilmembers and the Council as a whole in communicating values, goals and issues to the public by providing marketing and public relations services, including website and social media management, strategic media relations and public affairs work. Human Resources/Finance staff provide employee relations, talent acquisition, employee development, performance management, benefits administration services, finance, budget, accounting, and payroll for the Legislative Department and the Office of City Auditor.

Budget Snapshot

	2023 Actuals	2024 Adopted	2025 Proposed	2026 Proposed
Department Support				
General Fund Support	19,558,917	21,022,811	22,764,475	23,938,977
Total Operations	19,558,917	21,022,811	22,764,475	23,938,977
Total Appropriations	19,558,917	21,022,811	22,764,475	23,938,977
Full-Time Equivalents Total*	100.50	101.50	101.50	101.50

* 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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Budget Overview

The 2025-2026 Proposed Budget maintains core services for the Legislative Department. This proposed budget increases the department's budget by 8% from 2024, and it includes technical adjustments to bring the department's baseline budget into alignment with internal service cost changes and annual wage and market adjustment increases.

The General Fund revenue forecast for the budget is insufficient to cover all anticipated Citywide costs. General Fund reductions were identified to mitigate this shortfall. To preserve critical City services due to the General Fund deficit, budget adjustments were made in the following areas: an increase in vacancy rate assumption by 1% resulting in a reduction of approximately \$165,500 in ongoing General Fund salary appropriation.

Incremental Budget Changes

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	Dollars	FTE
2024 Adopted Budget	21,022,811	101.50
Baseline		
Bargained Annual Wage and Market Wage Increases to Base Budget	2,012,536	-
Citywide Adjustments for Standard Cost Changes	263,749	-
Remove One-Time Council Staff Transition Funding	(200,000)	-
Proposed Operating		
Increase Vacancy Rate by 1%	(165,579)	-
Proposed Technical		
Final Adjustments for Standard Cost Changes	(169,042)	-
Total Incremental Changes	\$1,741,664	-
Total 2025 Proposed Budget	\$22,764,475	101.50

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Description of Incremental Budget Changes

Baseline

Bargained Annual Wage and Market Wage Increases to Base Budget

Expenditures \$2,012,536

This centrally administered change adjusts appropriations to reflect the Annual Wage Increases and Market Adjustments, as outlined in the agreements between the City and the Coalition of Unions or other standalone Unions, for personnel costs included in this department's baseline budget. This includes increases to salary, FICA, Medicare, retirement, overtime and temporary labor.

Citywide Adjustments for Standard Cost Changes

Expenditures \$263,749

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.

Remove One-Time Council Staff Transition Funding

Expenditures \$(200,000)

This item removes one-time funding that was appropriated to assist with elected officials and staff transitions for 2024, due to the high number of transitions.

Proposed Operating

Increase Vacancy Rate by 1%

Expenditures \$(165,579)

The General Fund revenue forecast for the City's 2025-2026 Proposed Budget is insufficient to cover all expected Citywide costs. General Fund reductions were identified to mitigate this shortfall in revenues. This ongoing item increases the Legislative Department's vacancy rate assumption by 1%, which reduces its General Fund budget and could result in the department temporarily holding vacancies when and where they become available.

Proposed Technical

Final Adjustments for Standard Cost Changes

Expenditures \$(169,042)

Citywide technical adjustments made in the proposed 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 for the department. These adjustments reflect final decisions about these costs made during the Proposed Phase of the budget process.

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Expenditure Overview

	2023 Actuals	2024 Adopted	2025 Proposed	2026 Proposed
Appropriations				
LEG - BO-LG-G1000 - Legislative Department				
00100 - General Fund	14,232,325	15,979,471	17,744,320	18,656,233
Total for BSL: BO-LG-G1000	14,232,325	15,979,471	17,744,320	18,656,233
LEG - BO-LG-G2000 - Leadership and Administration				
00100 - General Fund	5,326,592	5,043,340	5,020,156	5,282,745
Total for BSL: BO-LG-G2000	5,326,592	5,043,340	5,020,156	5,282,745
Department Total	19,558,917	21,022,811	22,764,475	23,938,977
Department Full-Time Equivalents Total*	100.50	101.50	101.50	101.50

** 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*

Budget Summary by Fund Legislative Department

	2023 Actuals	2024 Adopted	2025 Proposed	2026 Proposed
00100 - General Fund	19,558,917	21,022,811	22,764,475	23,938,977
Budget Totals for LEG	19,558,917	21,022,811	22,764,475	23,938,977

Revenue Overview

2025 Estimated Revenues

Account Code	Account Name	2023 Actuals	2024 Adopted	2025 Proposed	2026 Proposed
341120	Data Proc-Tech/Operations	1,831	-	-	-
341150	Private Reimbursements	25	-	-	-
341900	General Government-Other Rev	4,654,321	5,451,459	7,185,175	7,584,956
360540	Cashiers Overages & Shortages	275	-	-	-
Total Revenues for: 00100 - General Fund		4,656,452	5,451,459	7,185,175	7,584,956
Total LEG Resources		4,656,452	5,451,459	7,185,175	7,584,956

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Appropriations by Budget Summary Level and Program

LEG - BO-LG-G1000 - Legislative Department

The purpose of the Legislative Department Budget Summary Level is to set policy, enact City laws, approve the City's budget, provide oversight of City departments, and support the mission of the Council.

Program Expenditures	2023 Actuals	2024 Adopted	2025 Proposed	2026 Proposed
Central Staff	3,985,207	3,926,597	4,431,997	4,661,504
City Clerk	3,951,418	4,022,455	4,521,028	4,757,438
City Council	6,295,700	8,030,419	8,791,295	9,237,291
Total	14,232,325	15,979,471	17,744,320	18,656,233
Full-time Equivalents Total*	95.50	95.50	95.50	95.50

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The following information summarizes the programs in Legislative Department Budget Summary Level:

Central Staff

The purpose of the Central Staff Program is to provide high-quality, objective research and analysis to the Council and its individual members on a variety of policy and budget issues, as well as consultant contract services for the Legislative department.

Expenditures/FTE	2023 Actuals	2024 Adopted	2025 Proposed	2026 Proposed
Central Staff	3,985,207	3,926,597	4,431,997	4,661,504
Full Time Equivalents Total	19.00	19.00	19.00	19.00

City Clerk

The purpose of the City Clerk Program is to support and facilitate the City's legislative process in compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act; manage the City's Records Management Program and ensure public access to the City's records; preserve the City's official and historical records in compliance with the Public Records Acts; manage the City's Boards and Commissions Registry; serve as the City's ex officio elections officer; and provide information technology, administrative and operational support to the Legislative Department.

Expenditures/FTE	2023 Actuals	2024 Adopted	2025 Proposed	2026 Proposed
City Clerk	3,951,418	4,022,455	4,521,028	4,757,438
Full Time Equivalents Total	27.50	27.50	27.50	27.50

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City Council

The purpose of the City Council Program is to set policy; review, consider and determine legislative action; approve the City's budget; and provide oversight of City departments. The goal of the City Council is to be transparent, effective and accountable, as well as to promote diversity and health of all neighborhoods. This program consists of the nine Councilmembers, their Legislative Assistants and the Communications staff.

Expenditures/FTE	2023 Actuals	2024 Adopted	2025 Proposed	2026 Proposed
City Council	6,295,700	8,030,419	8,791,295	9,237,291
Full Time Equivalents Total	49.00	49.00	49.00	49.00

LEG - BO-LG-G2000 - Leadership and Administration

The purpose of the Leadership and Administration Budget Summary Level is to provide executive, community, financial, human resource, technology and business support to the department.

Program Expenditures	2023 Actuals	2024 Adopted	2025 Proposed	2026 Proposed
Citywide Indirect Costs	3,863,541	3,218,499	3,711,228	3,905,028
Departmental Indirect Costs	1,463,052	1,824,842	1,308,927	1,377,716
Total	5,326,592	5,043,340	5,020,156	5,282,745
Full-time Equivalents Total*	5.00	6.00	6.00	6.00

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The following information summarizes the programs in Leadership and Administration Budget Summary Level:

Citywide Indirect Costs

The purpose of the Citywide Indirect Costs program is to fund internal services costs originating from outside of the department such as allocated costs from the Department of Finance and Administrative Services and Seattle Information Technology Department.

Expenditures/FTE	2023 Actuals	2024 Adopted	2025 Proposed	2026 Proposed
Citywide Indirect Costs	3,863,541	3,218,499	3,711,228	3,905,028

Departmental Indirect Costs

The purpose of the Departmental Indirect Costs program is to fund costs associated with management of the department. This may include personnel costs related to department leadership and administration or other administrative costs such as external rent and operating supplies or services.

Expenditures/FTE	2023 Actuals	2024 Adopted	2025 Proposed	2026 Proposed
Departmental Indirect Costs	1,463,052	1,824,842	1,308,927	1,377,716
Full Time Equivalents Total	5.00	6.00	6.00	6.00