



King County

1200 King County
Courthouse
516 Third Avenue
Seattle, WA 98104

Meeting Agenda

Employment and Administration Committee

*Councilmembers: Sarah Perry, Chair;
Jorge L. Barón, Vice-Chair; Claudia Balducci,
Rod Dembowski, Teresa Mosqueda*

*Staff: Stephanie Cirkovich, Chief of Staff (206-477-6023)
Melani Hay: Committee Clerk (206-477-1025)*

2:00 PM

Tuesday, May 5, 2026

Hybrid Meeting

Hybrid Meetings: Attend the Employment and Administration Committee meetings in person in the Southwest Conference Room, 516 3rd Avenue in Seattle, or through remote access. Details on how to attend the meeting remotely are listed below.

CONNECTING TO THE WEBINAR

Webinar ID: 867 8846 4943

If you do not have access to the ZOOM application, you can connect to the meeting by calling 1 253 215 8782 and using the Webinar ID.

You have the right to language access services at no cost to you. To request these services, please contact our Equity and Social Justice Coordinator, Tera Chea at (206) 477 9259 or Tera.Chea2@kingcounty.gov, three (3) days prior to the meeting.

Pursuant to K.C.C. 1.24.035 A. and F., this meeting is also noticed as a meeting of the Metropolitan King County Council, whose agenda is limited to the committee business. In this meeting only the rules and procedures applicable to committees apply and not those applicable to full council meetings.

1. Call to Order

To show a PDF of the written materials for an agenda item, click on the agenda item below.

2. Roll Call

	<p>Sign language and interpreter services can be arranged given sufficient notice (206-848-0355). TTY Number - TTY 711.</p> <p>Council Chambers is equipped with a hearing loop, which provides a wireless signal that is picked up by a hearing aid when it is set to 'T' (Telecoil) setting.</p>	
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3. Approval of Minutes of February 3, 2026, and the special meeting of March 17, 2026 **pg 3**

Briefings

4. **Internal Ethics Audit** **pg 8**

BERK Consulting

5. **FIFA World Cup 2026**

Brendan McCluskey, King County Emergency Management

6. **Human Resources Update**

Deandra Stanley, Human Resources Manager

7. **Chief of Staff Update** **pg 61**

Stephanie Cirkovich, Chief of Staff

Other Business

Adjournment



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Meeting Minutes Employment and Administration Committee

*Councilmembers: Sarah Perry, Chair;
Jorge L. Barón, Vice-Chair; Claudia Balducci,
Rod Dembowski, Teresa Mosqueda*

*Staff: Stephanie Cirkovich, Chief of Staff (206-477-6023)
Melani Hay: Committee Clerk (206-477-1025)*

2:00 PM

Tuesday, February 3, 2026

Hybrid Meeting

DRAFT MINUTES

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1. **Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 2:04 p.m.

2. **Roll Call**

Councilmember Fain was also in attendance.

Present: 4 - Barón, Dembowski, Mosqueda and Perry

Excused: 1 - Balducci

3. **Approval of Minutes of September 2, 2025 and December 2, 2025**

Councilmember Barón moved to approve the minutes of the September 2, 2025, and December 2, 2025, meeting as presented. Seeing no objection, the Chair so ordered.

Discussion and Possible Action

4. **Proposed Motion No. 2025-0355**

A MOTION confirming the appointment of Minh Duc Nguyen to the citizens' elections oversight committee as a representative of the Vietnamese-speaking community.

Sponsors: Perry

Vice Chair Barón made an oral amendment, to insert "Minh Duc Nguyen" into the blanks on lines 4, 18, and 24. The motion carried.

Vice Chair Barón made an oral amendment to delete "December 2, 2025", and insert "February 3, 2026", on line 17. The motion carried.

Vice Chair Barón made an oral amendment to insert "King County council's employment and administration committee" into the blank on line 4. The motion carried.

Vice Chair Barón made an oral amendment to delete "December 3" and insert "December 31", on line 27. The motion carried.

Vice Chair Barón made an oral amendment to insert "Minh Duc Nguyen" into the blank on line 1. The motion carried.

This matter was Recommended Do Pass Consent - Expedite

Yes: 4 - Barón, Dembowski, Mosqueda and Perry

Excused: 1 - Balducci

Briefings

5. Meeting Materials Review

Jeana Kats, Clarity Consulting, briefed the Committee and answered questions.

This matter was presented.

6. Human Resources Update

Deandra Stanley, Manager, Human Resources, briefed the Committee and answered questions.

This matter was presented.

7. Chief of Staff Update

Stephanie Cirkovich, Chief of Staff, Briefed the Committee and answered questions.

This matter was presented.

Other Business

There was no other business.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 3:21 p.m.

Approved this _____ day of _____

Clerk's Signature



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Meeting Minutes Employment and Administration Committee

*Councilmembers: Sarah Perry, Chair;
Jorge L. Barón, Vice-Chair; Claudia Balducci,
Rod Dembowski, Teresa Mosqueda*

*Staff: Stephanie Cirkovich, Chief of Staff (206-477-6023)
Melani Hay: Committee Clerk (206-477-1025)*

2:00 PM

Tuesday, March 17, 2026

Hybrid Meeting

SPECIAL MEETING -DRAFT MINUTES-

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1. **Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 2:46 p.m.

2. **Roll Call**

Present: 5 - Balducci, Barón, Dembowski, Mosqueda and Perry

Briefings

3. **Human Resources Update**

Deandra Stanley, Manager, Human Resources, briefed the Committee and answered questions.

This matter was presented.

4. **Chief of Staff Update**

Stephanie Cirkovich, Chief of Staff, Briefed the Committee and answered questions.

This matter was presented.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 3:05 p.m.

Approved this _____ day of _____.

Clerk's Signature

King County Council

Internal Ethics Audit

March 2026





2200 Sixth Avenue, Suite 1000
Seattle, Washington 98121
P (206) 324-8760
www.berkconsulting.com

“Helping Communities and Organizations Create Their Best Futures”

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.

Project Team

Allegra Calder · Project Director

Isa Hirata · Project Manager

Oliver Hirn · Analyst

Maddie Immel · Analyst

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Introduction

King County Council engaged BERK Consulting to audit the Council’s rules, policies, procedures, and regulations concerning two key policy areas:

1. The Council’s **use of public facilities** and how those policies align with state law, national best or promising practices, and ethical standards. This report evaluates the efficacy and integrity of the Council’s system of checks and balances on the proper use of public facilities.
2. The Council’s **internal budgeting processes** and how those processes could be changed to enhance transparency for the Council and the public.

This report offers recommendations informed by ethical and operational best practices and based on interviews with internal King County staff and other jurisdictions, review of state and county policies and procedures, and desk research of other jurisdictions. See [Appendix A. List of Laws and Guidelines](#) for policies and procedures reviewed and [Appendix B. List of Interviewees](#) and [Appendix C. Summary of Peer Jurisdiction Benchmarking](#).

This Report

This report was requested by the legislative branch and, therefore, focuses primarily on the policies, practices, and areas of clarity relevant to the King County Council. King County operates under a separation of powers, with the legislative and executive branches maintaining distinct roles, responsibilities, and, in some cases, separate policies and procedures. Some findings and recommendations address countywide practices or executive branch operations; these are included where they affect the legislative branch, even if it is outside their direct operational control.

Where applicable, this report distinguishes legislative and executive branch responsibilities and highlights areas where coordination, clarification, or alignment may be beneficial. The goal is to provide insights that support the Council and legislative staff within King County’s governance structure.

Report Structure

The report is organized into four sections: 1) background information, 2) a summary of key findings; 3) an overview of core elements of a strong ethics foundation, including the Ethics Framework table and a comparison of King County’s practices with those of other jurisdictions; and 4) recommendations. The appendices include additional details, such as a list of applicable laws and guidelines, resources and interviewees of peer jurisdictions, and the recommended internal legislative budget process.

Background Information

Public Facilities Defined

Public facilities, as defined by King County,¹ include but are not limited to:

- Employee time during work hours.
- Phones, computers, copiers, pagers, and fax machines.
- Stationery, postage, and agency publications.
- Office space, vehicles, and tools.
- Lists of people served by the office or agency.

Other topics included in this report address ambiguous policies around meals, social media use, and event sponsorship.

The Legislative Branch

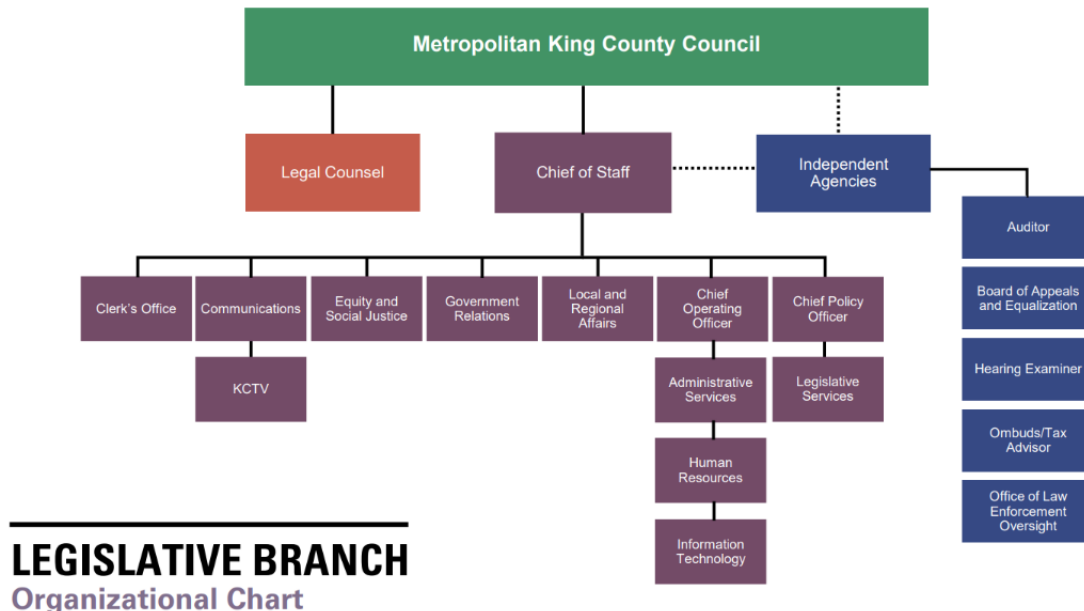
The legislative branch is comprised of central staff, district staff, councilmembers, and five independent agencies (see [Exhibit 1](#)). The King County Council is composed of nine elected councilmembers, each representing a geographic district. Councilmembers serve four-year terms and are responsible for setting policy for the County, adopting ordinances, and approving the budget.

Budget Processes

The King County Council is the legislative branch which, like other departments within King County, must submit a proposed budget to the executive branch. The legislative branch's internal budget process is currently not well documented and may change depending on who serves as Council Chair. [Appendix D. Internal Legislative Budget Processes](#) highlights in greater detail the key roles and phases of the larger, county-wide budget process, and proposes a more standardized internal legislative budget approach that fits within that process.

¹ King County, Internal Public Facilities PowerPoint Training, 2025. Provided by Stephanie Cirkovich, Chief of Staff.

Exhibit 1. Legislative Branch Organizational Chart



Source: King County, 2025.

Ethics Policies Oversight

The counties and jurisdictions reviewed use a mix of formal and informal mechanisms to ensure compliance with ethics rules and policies, particularly related to the use of public facilities and decision-making by elected officials or county staff. In King County and in the peer jurisdictions reviewed for this report (see [Appendix C. Summary of Peer Jurisdiction Benchmarking](#) for a list of jurisdictions reviewed), informal practices often serve as the first and most frequently used line of support, including the ability to ask questions of the Chief of Staff or legal counsel. Snohomish County noted that a culture of openness on their Council contributes to accountability by promoting information-sharing among councilmembers and their staff and supporting collective understanding and adherence to rules and requirements. Several jurisdictions emphasized the importance of councilmembers having access to legal counsel for questions that are not clearly covered in policies or procedures. The ability to consult an attorney privately encourages early questions and clarification, especially when navigating complex or uncertain situations.

At a formal level, King County maintains a structured ethics oversight system through the Office of the Ombuds in the legislative branch and the Board of Ethics in the executive branch. The Office of the Ombuds is an independent organization within the King County legislative branch that investigates allegations of ethics violations raised by both the public and King County employees. The Office of the Ombuds serving in this role is unique in the country and the state. In principle, the Board of Ethics issues advisory opinions; provides education and training to employees and elected officials; conducts the

annual review of the financial disclosure program; hears appeals; and oversees public office funds.² Historically the Board of Ethics operated with more robust processes, staffing support, and funding; it has not issued an advisory opinion since 2008 and does not meet regularly. In theory, together, the Office of the Ombuds and the Board of Ethics are intended to establish a clear and accessible framework for interpreting and enforcing ethical standards.

At the state level, the Washington State Public Disclosure Commission (PDC) regulates political disclosure to inform the public about campaign finances, lobbyist spending, and the financial affairs of public officials and candidates. This external, statewide body reinforces transparency expectations and ensures consistent compliance with state law, particularly in areas where public resources, political activity, or financial disclosure requirements intersect with local decision-making.

All interviewees also noted that effective ethics oversight requires a balance between written policies and the ability to exercise judgment in real time. While codified rules provide necessary guardrails, ethics questions often arise in gray areas that require flexibility, context-specific reasoning, and timely guidance. The combination of informal resources, internal staff and legal support, formal county processes, and state-level oversight is shown in **Exhibit 2**.

Exhibit 2. Checks and Balances for King County Councilmembers



Source: BERK, 2026.

² "Board of Ethics - King County, Washington," n.d., <https://kingcounty.gov/en/dept/executive-services/about-king-county/business-operations/risk-management-services/ethics-program/ethics-board>.

Summary of Key Findings

The following findings are based on interviews with internal King County staff and other jurisdictions, review of state and county policies and procedures, and desk research of other jurisdictions. See [Appendix A. List of Laws and Guidelines](#) for policies and procedures reviewed and [Appendix B. List of Interviewees](#) and [Appendix C. Summary of Peer Jurisdiction Benchmarking](#).

King County has a strong ethics framework, including comprehensive policies and procedures, staff resources for guidance and oversight, and the Office of the Ombuds and the Board of Ethics (though the Board's effectiveness could be strengthened), all of which work to prevent and address unethical behavior.

Exhibit 3 and the corresponding table provide information on the ethics framework's elements and our assessment of King County's current state. While some areas could be strengthened, the overall framework is comprehensive.

- **Internal controls and oversight exist at King County and other jurisdictions.** These include state-level RCWs, PDC oversight and enforcement, local codes of ethics and additional internal policies, the Board of Ethics, (in King County's context; the Office of the Ombuds), and internal legal counsel to guide council and staff. See [Exhibit 2](#) for further details on King County's internal controls and oversight.
- **Specificity of ethics-related policies and practices vary across jurisdictions.** Some have broad, general policies while others provide detailed guidance. Differences also exist in the frequency and quality of training as well as the availability of additional resources and support. See the "Jurisdiction Example" bullets in the [Full Ethics Framework and Assessment of King County Current State](#) for specific examples of other jurisdictions' approaches to ethics policies and procedures.
- **Generally, ethics-related policies provide clear guidance while allowing judgment in gray areas**, rather than addressing only specific situations and circumstances. Most interviewees believe their jurisdiction's ethics-related policies are sufficient.
- **Some jurisdictions believe policies on public facility use should be identical during election and non-election years.** As a result, they do not differentiate between election and non-election years, applying standard rules in all years. The ethical principle is that if an action (e.g., hosting public meetings with reasonable refreshments or sending out regular and electronic mail) is acceptable in a non-election year, it should also be allowed in an election year.
- **Councilmembers' district funds across jurisdictions generally have similar allowable and prohibited expenses.** See the textbox below for more details. See [Section J. Sponsorship, Fundraisers, and Events](#) for specific differences in how jurisdictions spend council district funds. Some jurisdictions maintain relatively small district budgets. For example, Snohomish County allocates \$12,000 per councilmember district, which limits the amount available for discretionary spending and reduces the potential scale of misuse. The Snohomish County interviewee noted that this allocation also constrains what councilmembers are willing and able to spend funds on.

Example of District Fund Expenses

Allowable expenses typically include:

- Training and conference registration fees
- Travel (airfare, mileage, car rental, lodging)
- Expenses for certain forums, town halls, and workshops (e.g., room rental, audio equipment, translation/interpreting services)
- Subscriptions and publications
- Advertising that promotes councilmember meetings or public engagement, provided it serves a County purpose
- Office supplies, equipment, and furniture

Prohibited expenses typically include:

- Items that do not serve a County purpose
- Individual councilmember advertisements
- Gifts
- Meals and refreshments for county employees, unless related to retreats, conferences, or events permitted under County rules
- Meals and refreshments for non-county employees, unless the individual is participating in substantive work, such as a department retreat or task force meeting, or event permitted under the County rules

Opportunities for improvement in King County Legislative Branch

- **There are some policy ambiguities and frequently asked questions from councilmembers and their staff** that could benefit from additional legislative branch guidance and policy for greater clarity.
- Currently, in the King County legislative branch, **accounts payable serves as the primary reviewer and approver for councilmember district office purchases.** Implementing a more structured approval and escalation process could reduce risk, relieve accounts payable of this decision-making role, and ensure consistent oversight.
- **Required countywide and legislative branch-specific ethics trainings could be improved.** Areas of improvement include: timing, clarity, inclusion of the Office of the Ombuds in designing or administering ethics training, and use of scenario-based examples.
- **While King County has a Board of Ethics, it has not been properly funded** in recent years and lacks dedicated staff and sufficient resources to fully carry out its responsibilities.
- **Documented, agency-specific budget processes help maintain continuity through leadership changes.** Clear budget instructions and timelines set expectations and enable councilmembers and staff to navigate personnel changes while keeping the process consistent, a practice currently limited in King County's legislative branch.
- **King County councilmembers currently have complete discretion to set staff salaries within their offices.** As a result, employees in the same position with similar experience may receive different

pay across offices. Some councilmembers adjust salaries up or down within the same year, leading to wide variation and volatility. These differences can also create significant disparities in the amount of discretionary funding available for other office expenses and operational needs. Operational challenges may arise when a general wage increase (GWI) is mandated but salaries are not aligned to a standardized schedule. By contrast, other Washington jurisdictions either do not use council district funds for staff salaries or rely on standardized salary bands to promote consistent pay based on job duties and candidate experience and reduce disparities across offices.

Ethics Framework and Assessment of Current State

The table below provides a list of ethics policies and processes identified across peer jurisdictions including City of Seattle, Pierce County, Snohomish County in Washington state; Cook County in Illinois; City of San Diego and Los Angeles County in California; and City of Boston (within Suffolk County) in Massachusetts. Not every jurisdiction had each element; rather, these represent the full range observed. For each ethics element, the table includes a description, jurisdiction examples, and King County’s current practice. The takeaways and recommendations directly build off this framework.

Exhibit 3. Summary of the Ethics Framework and Assessment of King County Current State

Legend  Complete |  Partial |  Does not exist

Ethics Element	KC Current State	Recommendation Reference
A. Code of Ethics		No action
B. Ethics Commission/Committee/Board of Ethics		See Recommendation 3
C. Internal Point of Contact for Ethics Questions		See Recommendation 4
D. Ethics Training	 / 	See Recommendation 2
E. Compiled Ethics Resources		See Recommendation 1
F. Campaign Year Guidance		See Recommendation 4
Specific Policies		
G. Non-travel Meals and Refreshments Policy	 / 	See Recommendation 5
H. Guidance on Electronic and Regular Mailings during Elections	 / 	See Recommendation 5
I. Social Media Policy		See Recommendation 5

Ethics Element	KC Current State	Recommendation Reference
J. Sponsorship, Fundraisers, and Events Policy		See Recommendation 5
K. Marketing and Advertising		See Recommendation 5
L. District Budget Reallocation		See Recommendation 6

The following section provides a more detailed version of the summary table above, including jurisdictional examples and recommendations. Recommendation numbers refer to the corresponding items in the **Recommendations** section. Where additional detail is available, a reference is included to the relevant recommendation for further information.

Full Ethics Framework and Assessment of King County Current State

A. Code of Ethics

Description: All jurisdictions have a code of ethics, but they vary in detail and in additional topics covered beyond the use of county property.

Jurisdiction Example: Pierce County’s recently updated code of ethics is more detailed and comprehensive than others. For example, it includes policies on election and campaign activities (3.12.030), restrictions on mailings by elected or appointed officials, advisory opinions (3.12.035), ethics commission (3.12.070), and enforcement procedures of ethics code violations (3.12.080).

King County Current State: King County code of ethics is comprehensive, broad, and high-level, covering topics such as the use of county property and funds (3.04.015), purpose of the Board of Ethics (3.04.090), advisory opinions (3.04.100), and policies on solicitation or acceptance of certain gifts, bequests, or donations (3.04.220).

Recommendation N/A: No action needed.

B. Ethics Commission/Committee/Board of Ethics

Description: Many jurisdictions have some form of an ethics board (typically composed of non-public employees) appointed by the Executive or Council, responsible for impartial administration, interpretation, and enforcement of local government ethics codes.

Jurisdiction Example: Jurisdictions without an external ethics body are moving toward creating one. Previously without an ethics body, the City of Boston announced in October 2025 the formation of an ethics committee tasked with reviewing changes to the City’s Ethics Policy, implementing a new Statement of Financial Interest for all City employees, developing continuing education programs on ethics, and analyzing existing practices and procedures. Snohomish County and Pierce County each have an ethics commission to receive and adjudicate complaints of ethics violations and administer the county’s code of ethics.

King County Current State: King County has a Board of Ethics under the executive branch, a five-member resident advisory board responsible for interpreting and implementing the county’s Code of Ethics. In principle, the Board issues advisory opinions, conducts appeal hearings, and provides ethics training. Historically, the Board was well-resourced, supported by a full-time staff member, a stable annual budget, and it provided regular trainings for staff, including onboarding for new county employees. Over time, however, resources and therefore capacity have significantly declined. The Board now operates on significantly reduced annual funding and only a portion of a single FTE dedicated to its work. Advisory opinions are outdated, meetings are infrequent, and training is limited. While the Board of Ethics remains a strong concept, its effectiveness is constrained by insufficient resources and a lack of administrative prioritization.


In addition to the Board of Ethics, the Office of the Ombuds is an independent office within the King County legislative branch. It is a separate entity from the Board of Ethics, with a different scope of work, and investigates allegations of ethics violations raised by both the public and by county employees. The Ombuds' role in ethics oversight is distinct from peer jurisdictions due to differences in authority and scope.

Recommendation 3: Provide dedicated staffing, sufficient resources, and clear administrative prioritization to restore the Board of Ethics' intended functions, including issuing timely advisory opinions, conducting regular meetings, and providing ongoing ethics training.

C. Internal Point of Contact for Ethics Questions

Description: Every jurisdiction has a designated staff member to handle ethics questions.

Jurisdiction Example: **City of Seattle** staff and council can consult the Executive Director of the Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission for legal advice outside of the City Attorney's office. The Executive Director may consult with the Ethics Commission for guidance on ambiguous areas.



King County Current State:  King County Council and staff can reach out to the Chief Legal Counsel, Chief of Staff, and the Ombuds Office for off-the-record guidance regarding ethical concerns.

Recommendation 4: Internal clarity around ambiguous scenarios (see Section G-K below) would lead to more consistent guidance staff and councilmembers. See **Recommendations** section for more information.

D. Ethics Training

Description: Many jurisdictions require councilmembers and staff to take an annual training on ethics policies, common questions, and scenarios, with some offering timely guidance before election periods on common violations or reminders.

Jurisdiction Example: Cities, counties, and special districts in **California** are required by law ([AB 1234, Chapter 700, Stats. of 2005](#)) to provide ethics training to their local officials. Effective January 1, 2026, [SB 827](#) expands the ethics training requirement to department heads or similar administrators of local agencies, including educational agencies. All local agency officials must complete an ethics training course within six months of being hired.


King County Current State:   King County provides an annual memo and public facilities training via the Chief Legal Counsel. Councilmembers may also receive ethics related training through presentations at council retreats. However, the inclusion of these types of trainings vary by year and council leadership, and attendance at retreats is not required, which can result in inconsistent participation and awareness. All county staff complete a required annual training course, which includes a brief online King County Code of Ethics training through NEOGOV, covering basic policy information. An election ethics training is also provided annually by the Prosecuting Attorney's Office. In prior years, there was more robust training through the Board of Ethics. The current trainings are largely provided through dense memos and online modules.

Recommendation 2: Adjustments to training timing and format, along with greater inclusion of the Office of the Ombuds in design and administering of training, increased interactivity, and more scenario-based examples could significantly improve understanding and consistency. See **Recommendations** section for more information.

E. Compiled Ethics Resources

Description: A few jurisdictions maintain a single webpage compiling all ethics-related policies, guidance, advisory opinions, and training resources making them available to County staff, elected officials, and the public.

Jurisdiction Example: **Cook County, IL** has a [Candidate and Elected Official Ethics Guidance](#) webpage with relevant policies, quick guides, guidance, Board of Ethics information, and advisory opinions.


King County Current State:  King County's [Ethics Program](#) page provides the Code of Ethics link and summary, Board of Ethics information, advisory opinions, and a few factsheets.

Recommendation 1: Compile all ethics related guidelines, policies, and processes in a single, accessible location. See *Recommendations* section for more information

F. Campaign Year Guidance

Description: Some jurisdictions provide “dos and don’ts” for election periods, offering guidance on the use of time, resources, and social media.

Jurisdiction Example: As part of the [City of San Diego’s](#) Ethics Commission webpage on [Campaigns and Ethic Ordinance](#), the City [compiled guidance](#) outlining rules for the use of city resources during an election, covering topics such as city time, city resources, and social media.

King County Current State:  In addition to RCW 42.17A.555, which prohibits public officials and staff from using public resources for political campaigns, King County has sufficient policy around what is and is not permitted during election times in various places including the code of ethics, organizational compilation, election training, and annual memos prepared by the Chief Legal Counsel.



Recommendation 4: Consolidate all existing campaign-related guidance and policies, as well as clear and easy to read “dos and don’ts” guidance. Additional election year FAQs and reminders that the Chief Legal Counsel is available for questions prior to the election period could better support timely understanding and compliance.

Specific Policies and Guidance

G. Non-Travel Meals and Refreshments Policy

Description: Most jurisdictions address food and refreshments in the travel and expense policies included in the county code. Some jurisdictions also maintain separate internal policies governing non-travel meals, which vary in dollar limits and authorization requirements.

Jurisdiction Example: [Pierce County](#) has an internal Non-Travel Meals and Light Refreshments Policy in its Policy and Procedures Manual. The policy permits meals and refreshments for attendees at county meetings, trainings, and events when they are integral to the activity and serve a clear county benefit. It also allows meals when employees must work outside their normal schedules and providing food enables them to continue working. Reimbursements for individuals may not exceed General Services Administration [per diem rates](#), and group meals/light refreshments must also fall within the per-employee per diem limit. Pierce County’s policy closely aligns with the state guidance under [WAC 142-40-050](#). [Snohomish County](#) noted that, due to smaller budgets for councilmembers (\$12,000 per councilmember office), they host meal-related events only a few times per year across all members and therefore do not maintain a written policy.



King County Current State:   King County Code includes a travel authorization and expense reimbursement policy ([3.24](#)), and establishes per diem meal and refreshment limits while traveling ([3.24.080](#)). There is also an additional policy ([PER-17-1-4-EP](#)) on authorized travel, travel expense and miscellaneous reimbursement for King County employees, which includes a policy on non-travel meals and refreshments focused on staff meetings and employee engagements. The executive branch maintains internal policies (which do not apply to the legislative branch), including ([FIN-9-1-EP](#)), Employee, Community and Public Engagement Food and Event Purchasing and Reimbursement Policy for Official County Business. This policy limits reimbursement for community engagement events to the fixed per diem rates established by the federal General Services Administration (GSA) for meals and related incidental expenses (e.g., delivery fees) for each participant.

Recommendation 5: Develop a Non-Travel Food and Refreshment Policy that outlines common scenarios and reflects current costs. See *Recommendations* section for more information.

H. Guidance on Electronic and Regular Mailings during Elections

Description: Some jurisdictions establish specific policies governing regular and electronic mailings during election periods, while others rely on general guidance emphasizing consistent practices between election and non-election years.

Jurisdiction Example: **Pierce County** provides clear parameters through its Administrative Guidelines ([3.12.030](#)), which prohibit sending regular print and electronic mail at public expense, including letters, e-newsletters, brochures, and similar materials, to constituents between April 30 and November 30 of any general election year in which a county elected or appointed official is a candidate. In contrast, the **City of Seattle** and **Snohomish County** focus on maintaining consistent communication practices at all times. Councilmembers are encouraged to avoid one-off communications during an election year, which may be perceived as campaign-related. In **Snohomish County**, councilmembers may use allocated district funds to produce printed newsletters or more extensive communication materials, provided the practice aligns with their typical non-election-year activity. Snohomish County's communications department also reviews newsletter content to ensure it does not contain campaign-related material. Staff report that they receive relatively few inquiries or challenges regarding these guidelines.

King County Current State:   King County has a self-imposed policy (not a violation of PDC) in the Organization of the Metropolitan King County Council (covering Motions through 16837) that restricts mass mailing (which is not inclusive of electronic newsletters) from the date a councilmember files their candidacy paperwork through Election Day in any year when they are on the ballot.


Recommendation 5: King County councilmembers should determine the most appropriate approach based on the County's operational context, current practices, and administrative capacity, with the primary objective of ensuring that public funds, staff time, and government communication tools are not used for campaign purposes.

- 1. Maintain the current policy (no changes).** Under the existing policy, printed mass communications are restricted during election years, while electronic communications are permitted. This approach maintains the status quo but results in inconsistent treatment across communication methods. It would not require additional administrative effort or rollout.
- 2. Expand the existing policy to include electronic forms of communications.** This option would extend election-year restrictions to both printed and electronic mass communications. It would create consistency across communication formats and further limit communications during election years. However, it would require clear communication and guidance to ensure understanding and compliance.
- 3. Allow consistent, routine communications at all times, including election year.** Under this approach, councilmembers could continue communications during election years as long as they are part of normal, established practices and are not expanded beyond routine activities. This would represent a significant shift from the current policy and would require a thoughtful rollout, including updated guidance and training.

I. Social Media Policy

Description: Most jurisdictions have a social media policy that is included in the Employee Manual, issued as a separate policy, or incorporated into the Code of Ethics. These policies provide guidance on records retention, distinguish between personal and official councilmember accounts, and clarify that official accounts are considered property of the jurisdiction and subject to applicable laws.

Jurisdiction Example: In **Snohomish County**, the context differs from King County, as councilmembers generally do not manage their own social media pages directly and may choose to engage the Communications Director for support. The County provides training led by the Public Records Deputy Prosecuting Attorney on best practices. While a social media policy and best practices exist, it is not specific to election years. In **Pierce County**, the Ethics Commission issued an opinion that their policy on mailings (see above Section H. Guidance on Electronic and Regular Mailings during Elections) applies to social media as well, even though it is not written in their policy. **Cook County** issued [Social Media Guidance](#) outlining what is prohibited and what is acceptable. Government officials may host separate official accounts, and content should primarily focus on county services, facilities, events, and activities. Campaign-related posts are not allowed; however, providing information on voter registration or reminding residents about Election Day to encourage civic participation is permitted.

King County Current State:  The Employee Policy Manual includes a social media policy stating that councilmembers' individual social media accounts when used to communicate with constituents or share information about county business are considered official property of King County. These accounts should be


created using a King County email address. In addition, election laws prohibiting the use of county resources for campaign, and public disclosure laws also apply. The legislative branch has an additional social media policy that outlines councilmembers' social media use, including procedures for closing accounts created with a King County email address after leaving office. Conversations with the Chief Legal Counsel indicated that councilmembers are encouraged to avoid "get out the vote" messaging, but there is no formal policy on this.

Recommendation 5: As stated in Section H. Guidance on Electronic and Regular Mailings during Elections, the County could consider whether to include electronic forms of communication and social media posts in its policy on mass mailing. However, the social media policy on its own is comprehensive.

J. Sponsorships, Fundraisers, and Events

Description: Approaches to sponsorships and event participation vary across jurisdictions. These activities can raise questions about appropriate use of county resources to benefit nonprofit organizations or groups, as well as the possible appearance of endorsement. These activities can also intersect with gift-acceptance rules, particularly when tickets include additional benefits such as complimentary items or beverages.

Jurisdiction Example: In **Snohomish County**, councilmembers are allowed to use county funds for event attendance when they participate in their official capacity. **Pierce County** does not have written guidance on this topic within its code or administrative policies. Staff have occasionally fielded questions about distinctions between attending an event as a private individual, where personal donations are appropriate, and attending in an official capacity using public funds, but no formal standards currently exist.


King County Current State:  Councilmembers are not permitted to use county funds for sponsorship of events, fundraisers, or to purchase tickets to attend an event. Although some situations require case by case analysis, King County generally does not allow giving a nonprofit or other type of organization money for nothing in exchange, as that is considered a gift of public funds. The prohibition on gifts of public funds originates with the Washington State Constitution ([Article 8, Section 7](#)). The Chief Legal Counsel sends written guidance in the form of a memo to councilmembers every year. There are prior published opinions from the King County Board of Ethics related to accepting gifts on the County [website](#). There are concerns that unpermitted purchases may be coded inconsistently by staff or councilmembers, which place accounts payable in the position of interpreting allowable expenses.

Recommendation 5: King County could provide clearer guidance about what an allowable expense is related to sponsorships, fundraisers, and events. For example, in the City of Seattle, city funds are not permitted for fundraising or sponsorships. If a councilmember wishes to purchase a ticket for such an event, they must contact the organizer to pay a fee that covers event expenses but does not have a fundraising/sponsorship component. The legislative branch could also issue written guidance specifying allowable and prohibited uses of district office funds.

K. Marketing and Advertising

Description: Marketing and advertising may be appropriate expenses for councilmembers when they advance official County business and provide a clear public benefit. However, payments to nonprofit organizations for marketing or advertising services can raise concerns if the primary effect is to support the nonprofit, promote an event, or create the appearance of endorsement. Without clear standards, such expenditures may risk being perceived as sponsorships or as a gift of public funds.

Jurisdiction Example: Some jurisdictions provide more structured guardrails around advertising expenditures. For example, the **Seattle City Council** works directly with media vendors and prohibits the use of non-media vendors such as nonprofits. Advertising invoices must be accompanied by the final advertisement to ensure the content promotes official Council business.

King County Current State:  There have been instances of councilmembers paying nonprofit organizations for marketing or advertising. King County legal counsel has advised that any marketing or advertising should include substantive information about County government services or issues of concern relevant to the councilmember's district and official duties. However, the current policy is broad and open to interpretation and accounts payable


staff must determine whether these ads and marketing expenses should be approved. Some marketing or advertising expenses may be appropriate, but the County should ensure these cannot reasonably be construed as sponsorships or gifts of public funds.

Recommendation 5: King County should adopt clearer written guidance defining what qualifies as an allowable marketing or advertising expense and under what circumstances payments to nonprofit organizations are appropriate, including documentation requirements demonstrating a clear public purpose and direct public benefit. To reduce legal risk, guidance should clarify that advertising must primarily communicate substantive information about County programs, services, or policy initiatives to a broad or defined public audience. Materials that primarily feature a councilmember’s name, likeness, or congratulatory message—particularly in connection with fundraising events or galas—may resemble sponsorships and increase the risk that the expenditure could be perceived as a gift of public funds. Examples of allowable expenditures could include promotion of public health services (e.g., vaccine clinics), benefit enrollment opportunities, emergency preparedness information, or other County-administered programs where the public receives a direct and measurable benefit.

L. District Budget Reallocation

Description: Internal budget transfers within the King County Legislative Branch allow the redistribution of funds in the case of underspending in one district budget or other reasons. Internal transfers can have varying levels of impact at the county level. It is important to establish relevant protocols for internal transfers impacting district office budgets and to identify clear communication roles in conveying this impact.

Jurisdiction Example: While no other jurisdiction reviewed had guidance specifically outlining internal transfers within their legislative department, several jurisdictions had more general policies and procedures that might be helpful in shaping King County’s internal procedures. In **Snohomish County**, the county executive has the authority to approve individual budget transfers within a department up to \$100,000 and agency heads can approve budget transfers between appropriation units up to \$50,000 without council approval. All other budget transfers required council approval. In **Pierce County**, all budget transfers within a fund or department may be authorized by the county executive but budget increases must be approved by council.

King County Current State:  King County’s existing code only address interfund borrowing within the executive finance committee. There is not clear language in King County Code that provides guidance or authority around internal transfers within the Legislative Branch. There is precedent for internal transfers. While functional, this precedent could benefit from more established guidance, specifically procedures.

Recommendation 6: The King County Council should consider outlining communication and transfer approval procedures for intra-branch transfers. Specifically, King County should establish better lines of communication between the Chief of Staff and Chief Operating Officer with councilmembers when considering legislative intra-branch transfers that have an impact on district funds.

Recommendations

The following recommendations aim to enhance King County’s policies, regulations, and processes.

- 1. Compile all ethics-related guidelines into a single, accessible location**, whether as a countywide resource or a councilmember specific reference. This centralized hub would include relevant policies, factsheets, trainings, Office of Ombuds information, Board of Ethics information, and advisory opinions. Consolidating these materials would make it easier for councilmembers and staff to navigate resources throughout their tenure, support new member orientation, and strengthen public transparency and trust in county government.
- 2. Improve ethics-related trainings.** King County offers a range of online trainings through NEOGOV and the Prosecuting Attorney’s Office, but the training’s emphasis and supporting materials remain inconsistent for councilmembers based on the year and council leadership. The effectiveness of the trainings has not been evaluated. This raises questions about whether these formats are well-suited for councilmembers and their staff, as online or presentation-based trainings may not fully address areas of confusion or complex situational ethics issues. These gaps may be especially pronounced during election years, when staff may have additional questions. User-friendly guidance on common ambiguities, interactive sessions or Q&A discussions, and the inclusion of the Office of the Ombuds in administering trainings could better support understanding and application of the material.
- 3. Reinvest in the Board of Ethics.** Provide dedicated staffing, sufficient resources, and clear administrative prioritization to restore the Board of Ethics’ intended functions, including issuing timely advisory opinions, conducting regular meetings, and providing ongoing ethics training.
- 4. Develop additional election year FAQ and reminders** that the Chief Legal Counsel is available for questions prior to the election period to support timely understanding and compliance. Consolidate all existing campaign related guidance and policies, as well as create a clear, easy-to-read “dos and don’ts” guide.
- 5. Develop guidance or policies on FAQ and known topics of confusion** including:
 - **Non-Travel Meals and Refreshment Policy:** Develop a Non-Travel Food and Refreshment Policy that outlines common scenarios and reflects current costs. Engage councilmember staff to identify questions and situations that have arisen or are anticipated. Align the policy with state guidance, including the Attorney General’s [1987 food memo](#), which emphasizes that providing food must serve a public purpose rather than support private or intimate gatherings, as well as the parameters in [WAC 142-40-050](#). Consider guidance from the City of Seattle, which notes that elected officials are effectively always campaigning, meaning standards should remain consistent during election years. The existing King County Executive Branch policy on Community and Public Engagement Food and Event Purchasing provides a useful foundation. The legislative branch should consider following its policy of limiting cost of food and meals to the fixed per diem rates established by the federal General Services Administration (GSA) for meals and related incidental expenses (e.g., delivery fees) for each participant.
 - **Electronic and Regular Mailings during Elections:** King County councilmembers should determine the most appropriate approach based on operational context, current practices, and administrative capacity, with the goal of ensuring that public funds, staff time, and government communication tools are not used for campaign purposes. Options include maintaining the

current policy, which restricts printed but not electronic communications during election years; expanding restrictions to include electronic communications to create consistency across formats; or allowing consistent, routine communications at all times, including election years, provided they reflect established practice and are not expanded beyond normal activities.

- **Sponsorship, Fundraisers, and Events:** King County should provide clearer guidance and processes about what an allowable expense is related to sponsorships, fundraisers, and events. For example, in the City of Seattle, city funds are not permitted for fundraising or sponsorships. If a councilmember wishes to purchase a ticket for such an event, they must contact the organizer to pay a fee that covers event expenses (i.e., the cost of their meal) but does not have a fundraising/sponsorship component. The legislative branch could also issue written guidance specifying allowable and prohibited uses of district office funds, which is currently included as part of a larger memo from the Chief Legal Counsel.
- **Marketing and Advertising:** King County should adopt clearer written guidance defining what qualifies as an allowable marketing or advertising expense and under what circumstances payments to nonprofit organizations are appropriate, including documentation requirements demonstrating a clear public purpose and direct public benefit. To reduce legal risk, guidance should clarify that advertising must primarily communicate substantive information about County programs, services, or policy initiatives to a broad or defined public audience. Materials that primarily feature a councilmember's name, likeness, or congratulatory message—particularly in connection with fundraising events or galas—may resemble sponsorships and increase the risk that the expenditure could be perceived as a gift of public funds. Examples of allowable expenditures could include promotion of public health services (e.g., vaccine clinics), benefit enrollment opportunities, emergency preparedness information, or other County-administered programs where the public receives a direct and measurable benefit.

6. King County's legislative branch should improve the process and clarify responsibilities for handling councilmember district office expenses, while fostering a culture of open communication between council staff and finance staff before purchases occur. Implement a structured process and clear rules around eligible expenses to support the review and approval process of accounts payable staff.

- For example, City of Seattle councilmembers and their legislative aides must first consult accounts payable on any purchases, which serves as an initial suitability check. Accounts payable staff have defined purchase approval areas. One staff member handles office supplies and another handles travel expenses allowing them to more effectively approve purchases. Any purchase that raises questions can be escalated to the Finance Director, who has authority to reject or override expenses that do not meet City standards, often in consultation with the councilmember to identify a compliant alternative. Seattle has intentionally fostered open communication between council and finance staff prior to purchases, reducing the need for post-purchase interventions. Adopting a similar approach in King County could clarify responsibilities, relieve accounts payable from having to adjudicate expenses, and ensure a consistent, transparent process for addressing questionable expenses.

7. Formalize the Legislative budget process. Document and standardize steps, roles, and timelines to ensure transparency and consistency. See [Appendix D. Internal Legislative Budget Processes](#).

8. Reaffirm precedent for facilitating intra-legislative branch transfers affecting district funds.

- **Establish a legislative branch internal precedent that any intra-branch budget transfers impacting district funds require discussion with Council.** For transfers affecting district funds, the Chief of Staff and Chief Operating Officer will communicate directly with councilmembers about the proposed transfer and incorporate their feedback into transfer decisions.
 - **Increase transparency when performing intermittent budget transfers.** The Chief of Staff and Operating Officer should clearly communicate the rationale behind budget transfers to the County Council. This includes communicating upcoming changes with ample time for councilmembers to ask questions or express concerns, and, where appropriate, reiterating relevant budget processes and providing references to statutes in communication materials.
- 9. Consider restructuring staff salaries to reduce disparities across offices and increase transparency.** Options include implementing salary bands based on job duties and experience, establishing policies governing when and how often salaries can change, and centralizing district staff salary funding within the general administrative budget.

Appendix A. List of Laws and Guidelines

The following is a list of state level policy and guidance, external guidance and best practices, King County code, and King County resources that informed the findings and recommendations sections.

State Level Policy and Guidance

Relevant RCWs

- [RCW 42.17A](#) – Campaign disclosure and contribution
- [RCW 42.23](#) – Code of ethics for municipal officers
- [RCW 42.52](#) – Ethics in state public service
- Office of the Attorney General [AGO Opinions](#)

Public Disclosure Commission (PDC) resources

- [PDC Guidelines](#) for Local Government Agencies in Election Campaigns

External Guidance and Best Practices

Municipal Research and Services Center (MRSC) guidance

- [County Budget Procedures](#)
- [County Budget Calendars](#)
- [Ethics and Conflict of Interest](#)
- [Election Season Tips and Reminders](#)
- [Gift of Public Funds](#)
- [Local Code of Ethics](#)
- [Travel and Expense Reimbursement Policies](#)
- [Use of Public Facilities in Election Campaigns](#)

Association of Washington Cities (AWC) and other resources

- [Review PDC guidelines on elections activity for city officials](#)
- [Guidelines for elected and appointed officials using social media](#)
- [National Association of Counties](#) (NACo)
- [Council of Governmental Ethics Laws](#) (COGEL)

King County Code

- [3.04](#) Employee Code of Ethics
- [1.24](#) Council Rules and Order of Business

King County Guidance and Resources

- Legislative Branch, Employee, Equipment and Facilities Policies (*internal*)
- [List of Executive Policies](#)
 - [Employee Community and Public Engagement Food and Event Purchasing and Reimbursement Policy for Official County Business](#)
 - [Authorized Travel, Travel Expense and Miscellaneous Reimbursement for King County Employees](#)
- [Legislative Branch Social Media Policy](#) (page 22)
- [King County Social Media Handbook](#)
- Workplace Travel Guidance for Telecommuting Employees (*internal*)
- Public Facilities Training (*internal*)
- King County Council Org Overview (*internal*)
- Organization of the Metropolitan King County Council Organizational Compilation (*internal*)
- [Ethics Program](#)
 - [Advisory Opinions Archive](#)
- 1987 Food Memo (*internal*)

Appendix B. List of Interviewees

Exhibit B1. Interviewees

Jurisdiction	Name	Title
King County	Janine Weihe	Chief Operating Officer
	Gennevie Cook	Business and Finance Manager
	Tracy Calderon	Administrative Services Manager
King County	Monique Cohen	Chief Legal Counsel
King County	Dwight Dively	Director, Office of Performance, Strategy and Budget (now Finance Director, City of Seattle)
King County	Jeremy Bell	Director, King County Ombuds
Pierce County	Julie Murray*	Executive Counsel
Pierce County	Hugh Taylor	Chief of Staff – County Council Office
	Susan Long	Council Counsel
City of Seattle	Benjamin Noble	Director, City Council Central Staff
Snohomish County	Heidi Beazizo	Chief of Staff
MRSC	Lisa Pool*	Public Policy Consultant

* Indicates email correspondance

Source: BERK, 2026.

Appendix C. Summary of Peer Jurisdiction Benchmarking

Exhibit C1. Peer City Benchmarking

	King County	City of Seattle	Snohomish County	Pierce County	Cook County	Los Angeles County
Population	2.4 million	816,600	873,800	959,900	5.2 million	10 million
# of Councilmembers	9	9	5	7	17	5
Government Structure	Home rule	Mayor + Council	Home rule	Home rule	Home rule	Charter county (similar to home rule)
Annual Budget	\$15.8 billion	\$8.9 billion	\$3.22 billion	\$3.5 billion	\$10.1 billion	\$45.6 billion
Recently updated ethics policy or ethics commission?	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes

Source: BERK, 2026.

Materials Reviewed Per Jurisdiction

City of Seattle

- [General Rules and Procedures of the Seattle City Council](#)
- [City of Seattle Personnel Rules \(Employee Handbook\)](#)
- City of Seattle Ethics Codes & Rules ([Seattle Municipal Code 4.16](#))
- [Seattle City Council Budget Process](#)
- [City of Seattle Legislative Dept Overview](#)
- [Seattle Ethics Committee](#)
- [Legislative Department Overview and Budget Snapshot](#)
- [City of Seattle Municipal Code](#)
- Council Expenditure Guidelines (*internal*)

Snohomish County

- [Code of Ethics](#)
- [Ethics Commission Overview](#)
- Social Media Policy (*internal*)

- Motion for Travel Reimbursement (*internal*)

Pierce County

- [Administrative Guidelines](#)
- [Pierce County Code – Legislative Branch](#)
- [Pierce County General Overview](#)
- [Budget Process Appendix](#)
- Non Travel Meals and Light Refreshment Policy (*internal*)

Cook County

- [Cook County Code of Ethical Conduct](#)
- [Candidate and Elected Official Ethics Guidance webpage](#)
- [Board of Ethics Advisory Opinions](#)
 - [Electronic Communications during Election and Non-Election Periods](#)
 - [Electronic Communications during Election Periods](#)
- [Quick Guide of Cook County Campaign Regulations For Political Candidates](#)
- [Election Period Restrictions Advisory](#)
- [Permanent Prohibitions on Use of County Funds for Promotional Materials](#)
- [Campaign Finance Database & Guidance](#)
- [Guidance regarding Social Media Accounts and Usage](#)

Los Angeles County

- [County Charter](#)
- [County Code of Conduct](#)
- [Measure G](#)
- [Governance Reform Task Force](#)

Appendix D. Internal Legislative Budget Processes

This appendix is an effort to formally outline and document the preferred internal budget process for the King County Legislative Branch. This will help ensure transparency and consistency around timelines, decision points, and deliverables. Because the Council Chair has significant discretion of the budget cycle process, this appendix aims to create a more consistent internal Legislative budget process that the Council Chair can easily follow.

Overview of Roles & Key Phases

Executive Branch

- **Executive Branch Budget Office:** Runs the countywide budget process, works with agencies to set priorities, negotiate changes, and prepares an Executive Proposed Budget Book.
- **County Executive:** Sets the budget cycle priorities and provides a proposed budget (i.e., the Executive Proposed Budget Book) to Council for final approval.

Legislative Branch

- **Legislative Branch:** Develops and proposes a branch budget with independent agency directors, the Chief Operating Officer, the Chief of Staff, and the Council Chair. The Legislative Branch then reviews and adjusts its proposed budget with the Executive Branch during the executive phase. During the council phase, the County Council then reviews and may propose adjustments to the proposed Executive Proposed Budget Book that the Executive Branch develops.
- **Council Chair:** Leads the Legislative Branch budget development and is responsible for negotiating with the Executive Branch. They are also responsible for negotiating with the budget chair during council phase to fill any missing gaps in the Legislative Department's proposed budget. The Council Chair is elected through collaboration with all active councilmembers during County Council's annual "reorg."
- **Budget Chair:** Leads the County Council's Budget and Fiscal Management (BFM) Committee. They also lead the review of the Executive Proposed Budget Book during the council phase. The Budget Chair is an active councilmember who is selected for the role during the County Council's annual "reorg."
- **Budget Leadership Team:** Supports the Budget chair in reviewing the Executive Proposed Budget Book during the council phase. The Budget Chair selects three councilmembers to serve on the Budget Leadership Team.
- **Budget and Fiscal Management Committee:** All active members of the County Council serve on the BFM Committee during a budget review cycle. At all other times, the BFM Committee is comprised of a subset of councilmembers and meets twice a month.

- **Chief Operating Officer:** Leads the budget development and proposal process for the Legislative Branch. The Chief Operating Officer will work closely with the Council Chair and Chief of Staff throughout this process.
- **Chief of Staff:** Serves as a thought partner and process facilitator to the Chief Operating Officer throughout this process. They are responsible for proposing the Central Staff Budget to the Council Chair.
- **Policy Analysts:** These individuals act as liaisons between the Legislative Branch and the County Council during the Council Review phase of the King County Budget Process. They deliver questions from the County Council to the Legislative Branch Chief Operating Officer and provide a staff report answering questions back to County Council based on the Chief Operating Officer's response.

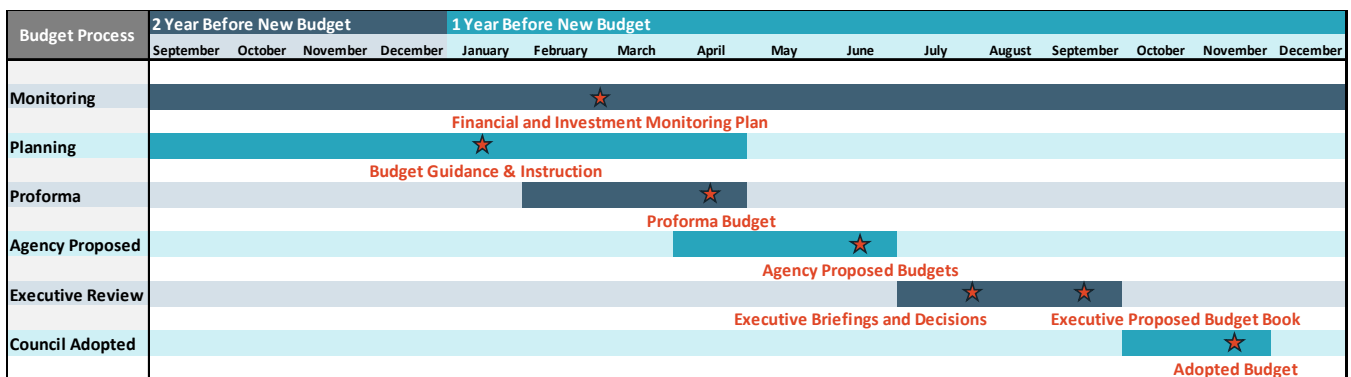
Key Phases

- **Department Phase:** A phase when the Executive Branch (i.e., the County Executive) shares the budget priorities and the proforma budget for the upcoming budget cycle, and agencies work to prepare their individual budgets for Executive Branch approval.
- **Executive Phase:** A phase when the Executive Branch has received agencies' individual budget proposals and works with agencies to adjust budgets based on the Executive Branch's priorities. During this phase, the Executive Branch develops the Executive Proposed Budget Book.
- **Council Phase:** A phase when the King County Council reviews the Executive Proposed Budget Book. During this phase the County Council has an opportunity to ask agencies questions about their proposals through policy analysts, adjust the Executive Proposed Budget Book, and ultimately adopt a final budget.

King County Budget Process Overview

Exhibit D1. King County Budget Process highlights the six main components of the King County budget process. Each of these components are highlighted in more detail below.

Exhibit D1. King County Budget Process



Source: King County Budget Development Process Guidance; BERK, 2026.

Monitoring (January through December)

This portion of the budget process takes place year-round and is an effort to constantly evaluate the health of county funds and identify any financial risks that might emerge. Monitoring can lead to small budgeting modifications throughout the year and helps to inform the larger upcoming budget process. The Executive Branch Budget Office plays an important role in the monitoring process by reviewing a subset of funds and investments for stability and efficacy each quarter.

Planning (September [of Prior Year] through April)

This phase provides guidance to agencies so they can properly plan and resource in their budget requests. Once again, the Executive Branch Budget Office provides guidance on policy, schedule, deliverables, and quality expectations for submitted budgets. The County Executive will meet with their leadership team to identify priorities and resource needs that will be communicated to departments to consider when developing their budget proposals. Simultaneously, departments will begin identifying priorities and goals that will inform their budget request.

Proforma Budget (February – April)

This phase seeks to refine budget projections and estimate total revenues and expenditures for the upcoming budget. This estimate provides a baseline expectation that can help set expectations for the Executive branch as well as departments as they are organizing budgets. Proforma establishes a common base budget upon which agencies layer their budget proposals.

Agency Proposed (April – June)

This phase is an opportunity to evaluate agency budget requests in the context of the Proforma Budget. Agencies will submit their proposed budgets including changes to FTEs, revenues, and expenditures. The Executive Branch Budget Office will then consider how these proposed changes fit within the Executive Branch priorities, department priorities, financial constraints of the county, and community needs. As a part of this phase, agencies have the opportunity to meet directly with Executive Branch Budget Office analysts and leadership to discuss their budget proposals.

Executive Proposed (July – September)

Executive Branch Budget Office analysts will then review and modify agency budgets to conform with the King County Executive's priorities. The Executive Branch Budget Office will relay these decisions to the King County Executive and their leadership team, and they will revise the Agency Proposed Budget to reflect the King County Executive and their leadership team's decisions in an Executive Proposed Budget Book.

Council Review and Adoption (September – November)

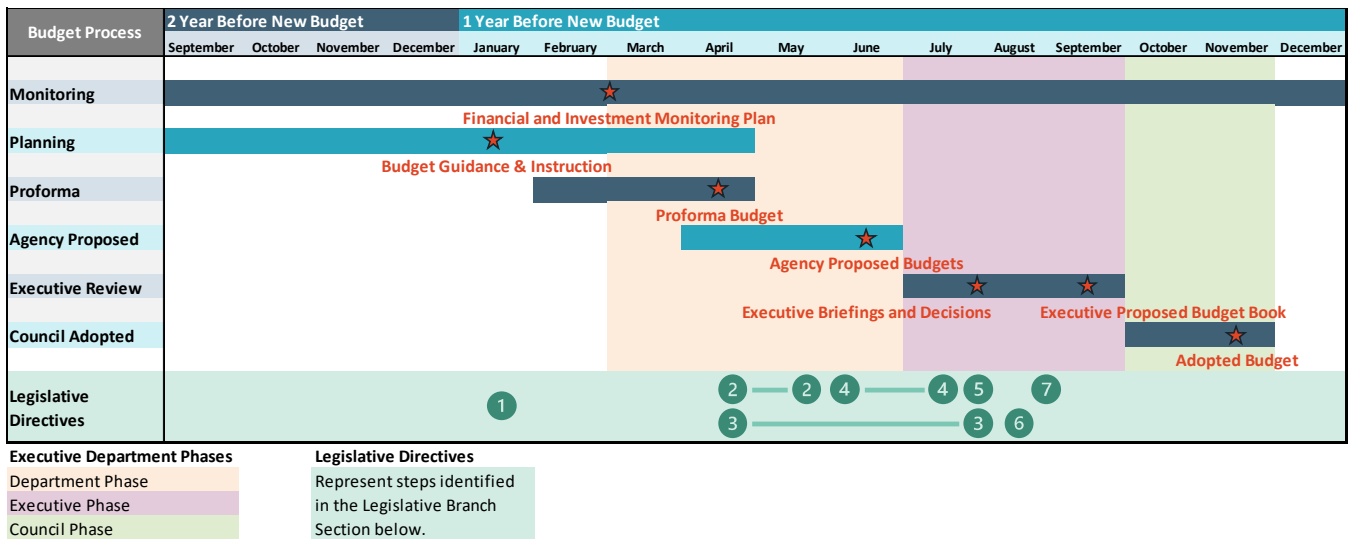
This phase is an opportunity for the King County Council to review, modify, and adopt the Executive Proposed Budget Book. As a part of this process, the King County Council may reach out to agency staff via policy analysts with questions. The Council will also facilitate public council hearings.

Executive and Legislative Branch Budget Process

Exhibit D2 highlights how the King County Executive Branch and the King County Legislative Branch fit into the larger King County budget process.

- The budget processes outlined on the left are the major stages that King County identified as part of its budget process.
- The shaded sections from March through November represent different phases of the budgeting process to the Executive Branch.
- The stars and red text are major deliverables as a part of the King County Budget Process.
- The bottom row titled, “Legislative Directive” outlines how specific Legislative Branch actions fit into the larger King County Budget Process. See [The Legislative Branch](#) section for corresponding steps.

Exhibit D2. Executive and Legislative Branch Budget Process



Source: King County Budget Development Process Guidance; BERK, 2026.

The Legislative Branch

The following Legislative Branch process, as outlined, reflects the intended approach but may slightly shift depending on the Council Chair.

1. The Legislative Branch Chief Operating Officer begins the budget process in January by verifying all positions and salaries.
2. The Council Chair reaches out to the Executive Branch in April to receive budget priorities and target reduction information by May.
3. Starting in April or May, the Chief Operating Officer starts to develop the Legislative Branch budget to submit to the Executive branch for review.
4. The Chief Operating Officer meets with independent agency directors and the Council Chief of Staff to convey budget priorities and reduction information for the upcoming budget cycle. These meetings are conducted in May and June.

5. Independent agency directors and the Council Chief of Staff submit proposals to the Chief Operating Officer. Proposals are submitted in June.
 - The Chief Operating Officer presents proposals to the Council Chair. Proposals are presented in June and July.
 - Council Chair either approves the budget proposals or asks for revisions by June or July.
6. Once independent agencies, central staff, and district budgets are approved, the Chief Operating Officer submits a Legislative Budget to the Executive Branch. The final budget is submitted in July or early August.
7. During the Executive Branch's review, the Council Chair collaborates with the Executive Branch to align the two Branch's budget goals and priorities.
8. The Executive Branch submits the Executive Proposed Budget Book to the King County Council for their review.
 - The Legislative Branch Chief Operating Officer works with policy analysts to answer questions from the King County Council (specifically, the Budget Leadership Team).
9. The Council Chair reviews the Executive Proposed Budget Book with the Legislative Branch Chief Operating Officer and identifies any gaps in the Legislative Branch's proposed budget.
 - If gaps are identified, the Council Chair negotiates with the Budget Leadership Team to fill any identified gaps. The Council Chair carries out this advocacy throughout the council phase from September through November.
10. The King County Council adopts a finalized legislative budget in November.

King County Council Internal Ethics Review

Employment and Administration Committee

May 5, 2026



Agenda

Provide a high-level overview of the King County Council Internal Ethics Report, with a focus on topics most relevant for Council consideration

- Project overview and objective
- Findings
- Recommendations
- Q&A

You can find the full report in your meeting packet.



About BERK Consulting

Public policy consulting firm founded in 1988 and based in Seattle.

Our Mission: Helping communities and organizations create their best futures.

Project Overview

- Review the Council's rules, policies, procedures, and regulations concerning two key policy areas:
 1. **The Council's use of public facilities** and how those policies align with state law, national best or promising practices, peer jurisdictions, and ethical standards.
 2. **The Council's internal budgeting processes** and how those processes could be changed to enhance transparency for the Council and the public.

Public Facilities:

- Employee time during work hours
- Phones, computers, copiers, pagers, and fax machines
- Stationery, postage, and agency publications
- Office space, vehicles, and tools

Findings and Recommendations Informed by:

- Ethical and operational best practices
- Desk research of other jurisdictions
- Interviews with internal King County staff and other jurisdiction staff

Peer Jurisdictions

- City of Seattle
- Snohomish County
- Pierce County
- Cook County
- Los Angeles County
- City of Boston

Interviews









- King County
 - Dwight Dively, previously Office of Management and Budget Director
 - Janine Weihe, Gennevie Cook, Tracy Calderon – KCC Operations (COO, Business and Finance Manager, Administrative Services Manager)
 - Monique Cohen, Chief Legal Counsel
 - Jeremy Bell, Director of Ombuds
- City of Seattle – Ben Noble, Central Staff
- Snohomish County – Heidi Beazizo, Chief of Staff
- Pierce County – Julie Murray, Hugh Taylor, Susan Long, County Council Office (Exec Counsel, Chief of Staff, Council Counsel)
- MRSC – Lisa Pool, Public Policy Consultant

Ethics Oversight for King County Council



Key Findings

King County has a strong ethics framework, including comprehensive policies and procedures, staff resources for guidance and oversight, and the Office of the Ombuds and the Board of Ethics (though the Board’s effectiveness could be strengthened), all of which work to prevent and address unethical behavior.

Ethics Element	KC Current
A. Code of Ethics	
B. Board of Ethics	
C. Internal Contact for Ethics Questions	
D. Ethics Training	 
E. Compiled Ethics Resources	
F. Campaign Year Guidance	
Specific Policies	
G. Non-travel Meals and Refreshments Policy	 
H. Guidance on Electronic and Regular Mailings during Elections	 
I. Social Media Policy	
J. Sponsorship, Fundraisers, and Events Policy	
K. Marketing and Advertising	
L. District Budget Reallocation	

Deeper Dive on Findings/Recommendations

1. Board of Ethics

Context

Description:

- Many jurisdictions have some form of an ethics board (typically composed of non-public employees) appointed by the Executive or Council or are moving toward creating one.

King County: Current State

- King County has a Board of Ethics under the Executive Branch.
- Historically, the Board was well-resourced, supported by a full-time staff member, a stable annual budget, and it provided regular trainings for staff, including onboarding for new county employees. Over time, however, resources and therefore capacity have significantly declined.

Recommendation

- Reinvest in the Board of Ethics. Provide dedicated staffing, sufficient resources, and clear administrative prioritization to restore the Board of Ethics' intended functions.

2. Electronic and Regular Mailings Policy

Context

King County: Current State

- King County has a self-imposed policy (not a violation of PDC) that restricts mass mailing (which is not inclusive of electronic newsletters) from the date a councilmember files their candidacy paperwork through Election Day in any year when they are on the ballot.

Pierce County

- Prohibits sending regular print and electronic mail to constituents between April 30- November 30 of any general election year.

City of Seattle and Snohomish County

- Consistent communication practices at all times (avoid one-off or irregular communications during election years)

Options for Mailings Policy

Question: What approach would work best for KCC, given your knowledge of current practices, context, and operational needs?

Objective of policy: Make sure public funds, staff time, and government tools are not used for campaign purposes.

1. Keep current policy (no changes)

- Printed mass communications are restricted during elections years, but electronic communications are allowed.
- Results in inconsistent treatment across communication methods.

2. Expand to include e-communications

- Restrict both printed mass communications and electronic communications during election years.
- Creates consistency across all communication formats.
- Limits constituent communications during election years.

3. Consistent communication practices

- Maintain consistent, routine communication practices at all times, including election years.
- Councilmembers may continue communicating as long as communications are part of normal practice and not out of the ordinary.
- Significant change from current policy.

3. District Staff Salaries

Context

King County: Current State

- King County councilmembers currently have complete discretion to set staff salaries within their offices.
- As a result, employees in the same position with similar experience may receive different pay across offices. These differences can also create significant disparities in the amount of discretionary funding available for other office expenses and operational needs.
- By contrast, other Washington jurisdictions either do not use council district funds for staff salaries or rely on standardized salary bands to promote consistent pay based on job duties and candidate experience and reduce disparities across offices.

Options for District Staff Salaries

Question: What approach would work best for KCC, given your knowledge of current practices, context, and operational needs?

Objective of policy: Reduce disparities across offices and increase transparency.

1. Keep current policy (no changes)

- Councilmembers have discretion to set staff salaries within their offices.
- Results in variation for the same position with similar experience, and disparities in the amount of discretionary funding available.

2. Implementing salary bands

- Implement salary bands based on job duties and experience.
- Establish policies governing when and how often salaries can change.
- Limits disparities between staff salaries across offices and discretionary funding.

3. Centralize district staff salary funding

- Centralizing district staff salary funding within the general administrative budget.
- Standardize discretionary funding amounts. Limits disparities between salaries across offices.
- Significant change from current policy.

An example of work underway

Processes for expense approval and budget

King County: Current State

- King County legislative branch, accounts payable serves as the primary reviewer and approver for councilmember district office purchases.
- There is no formalized or consistently documented legislative budget process, resulting in timelines and approaches that vary with leadership.

Working toward:

- Implementing a more structured approval and escalation process to relieve accounts payable of the decision-making role and ensure consistent oversight.
- Formalizing the legislative budget process to help maintain continuity through leadership changes. Clear budget instructions and timelines set expectations and enable councilmembers and staff to navigate personnel changes while keeping the process consistent.

Any questions or comments?

Metropolitan King County Council

Position Descriptions



Position: OLEO Director	FLSA: salaried, overtime exempt
Department: Office of Law Enforcement Oversight (OLEO)	Salary Grade: 134
Council Approved: December 15, 2020	Revised: April 1, 2025

Classification Summary

The OLEO Director is appointed by the King County Council for a four-year term and is subject to reappointment per the provisions of the King County Charter and King County Code. This is a salaried, overtime-exempt classification. This position administratively reports to the Chair of the Council and functionally reports to the Council as a whole, with a dotted-line relationship to the Council Chief of Staff.

Distinguishing Features of this Position

Under King County Code Chapter 2.75, the OLEO Director serves as the lead administrator of the Office of Law Enforcement Oversight (OLEO), which is responsible for representing the interests of the public and increasing confidence in King County police services through independent civilian oversight of the King County Sheriff’s Office and its employees.

Essential Duties and Responsibilities

- Lead and manage OLEO in an independent and objective manner that is consistent with King County Code, governing codes of ethics, and equity and social justice principles.
- Provide leadership and management of OLEO’s programs related to: receiving complaints and concerns about the Sheriff’s Office; monitoring and reviewing sheriff’s office investigations of misconduct and serious officer-involved incidents; administering or facilitating alternative dispute resolution processes between community members and officers; attending investigative interviews for internal investigations; conducting systemic reviews of the Sheriff’s Office practices; making policy recommendations for improvement of Sheriff’s Office practices; community engagement of those served by OLEO and the Sheriff’s Office; and investigating complaints of the Sheriff’s Office where permitted.
- Establish and ensure OLEO’s timely access to information that is required to carry out its duties.
- Engage the various communities served by OLEO and the Sheriff’s Office in a two-way exchange that allows for community input into OLEO’s work and priorities, and facilitates the sharing of different perspectives between community members and the Sheriff’s Office.
- Attend the scenes of serious officer-involved incidents, including deadly use of force and monitoring the subsequent investigation and Sheriff’s Office review process.
- Coordinate with the Sheriff’s Office in the development of all technology applications for tracking and information sharing regarding complaints, internal investigations, and systemic reviews.
- Receive recommendations from the Community Advisory Committee regarding the handling of allegations of misconduct in the Sheriff’s Office, policies, procedures and practices of the director of law enforcement oversight, and public perceptions of the Sheriff’s Office.

- Issue an annual report to the clerk of the council and council that includes a statistical analysis of complaints, investigative findings, and final discipline for sustained complaints.
- Serve as primary OLEO attendee at scenes of serious officer-involved incidents or in-custody deaths.
- Comply with the terms of the Collective Bargaining Agreement between the King County's Sheriff's Office and the King County Police Officers' Guild, including Article 22 of that agreement.
- Serve as a subject matter expert during labor negotiations between the King County Sheriff's Office and the King County Police Officers' Guild.
- Manage public records requests and disclosures.
- Perform other duties as needed to support the mission of OLEO.

Qualifications

Required Knowledge and Skills

- Well-developed human relations skills, emotional intelligence, and the ability to readily connect with diverse personalities and styles, establish harmony and cooperation, facilitate and moderate group discussions, prepare and deliver influential formal presentations to audiences that may offer argumentative discussion, often in frustrating situations, and carry out advanced negotiations and issue resolution with a variety of stakeholders in situations that may be sensitive, high risk and publicly visible.
- In-depth knowledge of County structure, functions, strategies, programs, policies, investigation processes, resolution of community member and employee-initiated complaints, transparency of the Sheriff's discipline and complaint handling processes and related community issues and challenges.
- Ability to prepare professional reports and presentations suitable for public communication and communication to a variety of stakeholders.
- Well-developed communications skills to present and discuss findings and recommendations and negotiate solutions with policy makers, executive management and other key stakeholders.
- Well-developed knowledge of, and skill in using personal computers, common desktop productivity software, relational databases, decision-sciences and simulation tools, and specialized research applications.
- Ability to understand statistical, financial, and economic analyses and evaluations.
- Professional knowledge of the principles, practices and methods of public sector program evaluation.
- Expertise at conducting thorough, objective investigations, and research and critically analyze issues.
- Knowledge of principles of trauma-informed care and practice and how to apply those principles, with the awareness that many people working in the field of police accountability have experienced trauma.
- Knowledge of policing operations, policies and training for a major urban area, demonstrated experience in law enforcement oversight in major urban area, and skilled or experience in negotiations, as these relate to collective bargaining agreements.
- Lived or direct experience with the criminal legal system.

Required Abilities

- Reputation for integrity and professionalism, and the ability to maintain a high standard of integrity and independence in the office.
- Navigate highly charged situations while maintaining the integrity and reputation of the office.
- Understanding and commitment to the responsibilities of the office.
- Demonstrated leadership and a history of effective management and administration.
- Ability to manage conflict in a constructive and positive manner.
- Earn the trust and respect of both the Sheriff's Office employees and the greater King County community.
- Work effectively with the executive, council, prosecuting attorney, and sheriff, as well as other public agencies, labor organizations, private organizations and community members.
- Open to innovation and new ideas.
- Sensitivity to and knowledge of the particular needs and concerns of historically underrepresented groups in the community and in law enforcement.
- Work under pressure on controversial issues and the ability to effectively communicate with diverse groups.
- Reputation for even-handedness and fairness in dealing with both complaints and regulated parties.
- Pass criminal background check prior to confirmation.
- Maintain appropriate confidentiality regarding investigations or as required by the Collective Bargaining Agreement between the King County Sheriff's Office and the King County Police Officers' Guild.

Supplemental Information:

Appointment by a majority vote of the King County Council. The King County Council shall consider reappointment of the Director at the end of each four-year term. The Director may be removed prior to the end of a four-year appointment for cause and upon a majority vote of the King County Council. Among other forms of cause is a determination that the Director failed to comply with the provisions of the Collective Bargaining Agreement between the King County Sheriff's Office and the King County Police Officers' Guild.

Education and Experience

Education and experience may be combined to demonstrate the requisite knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary for this position.

- At least five (5) years of progressively responsible experience leading an organization and performing complex investigations or reviews related to personnel or labor issues, human or civil rights issues, or law enforcement related issues.
- Minimum of a bachelor's degree in a related field or Juris Doctorate will demonstrate sufficient formal education, but experience may be substituted for education.