

Law Department

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

Department Overview

The department provides legal advice to City officials, represent the City in litigation, and protect the public health, safety, and welfare of the community by prosecuting violations of City criminal and civil ordinances and state law. The three department divisions are described below.

The **Administration Division** provides executive leadership, communications, and operational support for the entire department. It is comprised of the executive leadership team, human resources, finance, media relations, and information technology staff.

The **Civil Division** provides legal counsel and representation to the City's elected and appointed policymakers in litigation at all levels of county, state, federal courts, and administrative agencies. The Civil Division is organized into eight specialized areas of practice: Employment, Environmental Protection, Land Use, Constitutional and Complex Litigation, Government Affairs, Torts, Civil Enforcement, and Contracts & Utilities.

The **Criminal Division** prosecutes misdemeanor crimes in Seattle Municipal Court, provides legal advice to City clients on criminal justice matters, monitors state criminal justice legislation of interest to the City, and participates in criminal justice reform efforts, policy development and management of the criminal justice system. The Criminal Division is comprised of a Prosecution Support Unit, Case Preparation Unit, Domestic Violence Unit (prosecutors and victim advocates), Appeals, Review and Filing Unit, Specialty Courts Unit (Infractions, Mental Health, Veterans' Court, Let Everyone Advance with Dignity (LEAD), and Pre-filing Diversion), and Trial Team Unit.

The **Precinct Liaisons** supports a program where attorneys work in each of the City's police precincts, providing legal advice to police and other City departments. In helping to address a variety of neighborhood and community problems, the precinct liaison attorneys coordinate with the Civil and Criminal divisions with the goal of providing a consistent, thorough, and effective approach.

Budget Snapshot

	2023 Actuals	2024 Adopted	2025 Proposed	2026 Proposed
Department Support				
General Fund Support	41,114,503	40,780,772	45,559,667	47,911,990
Total Operations	41,114,503	40,780,772	45,559,667	47,911,990
Total Appropriations	41,114,503	40,780,772	45,559,667	47,911,990

Full-Time Equivalents Total*	209.80	209.80	209.80	209.80
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* 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 Overview

Law Department

The City’s 2025 – 2026 Proposed Budget maintains core services for the Law Department. The department will continue to invest in programs such as prosecution of misdemeanors, advise on legal matters, and provide legal counsel to the City’s elected and appointed policymakers in litigation at all levels.

The General Fund revenue forecast for the City’s 2025 – 2026 Proposed Budget are insufficient to cover expected costs. General Fund reductions were identified to mitigate this shortfall in revenues. The Law Department provides a 1.4% reduction in the Civil and Criminal Divisions by removing funding for 3.0 FTE attorney positions. Two baseline technical changes increase the department’s ongoing budget. One item includes inflation for the Memorandum of Agreement with King County for the Regional Domestic Violence Firearms Enforcement Unit. The other item a paralegal to support the collection of delinquent accounts and is funded by Seattle City Light.

The budget is also adjusted for minor Citywide and departmental technical changes.

Incremental Budget Changes

Law Department

	Dollars	FTE
2024 Adopted Budget	40,780,772	209.80
Baseline		
Citywide Adjustments for Standard Cost Changes	1,560,469	-
Bargained Annual Wage and Market Wage Increases to Base Budget	3,543,406	-
Law Baseline Adjustments	-	-
Inflation for the Firearms Surrender Memorandum of Agreement with King County	47,025	-
Seattle City Light Memorandum of Agreement - Paralegal	141,274	-
Proposed Operating		
Remove Funding for Two Civil Division Assistant City Attorneys	(433,754)	-
Remove Funding for One Specialty Court Unit Prosecutor	(181,842)	-
Proposed Technical		
Final Adjustments for Standard Cost Changes	(187,474)	-
Criminal Case Management System Licensing Costs	185,000	-
Bargained Annual Wage and Market Wage Increases to Base Budget – Local 77	104,791	-
Total Incremental Changes	\$4,778,894	-
Total 2025 Proposed Budget	\$45,559,667	209.80

Law Department

Description of Incremental Budget Changes

Baseline

Citywide Adjustments for Standard Cost Changes

Expenditures \$1,560,469

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.

Bargained Annual Wage and Market Wage Increases to Base Budget

Expenditures \$3,543,406

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.

Law Baseline Adjustments

Expenditures -

This technical change corrects issues of funding between projects and Divisions. It corrects errors associated with funds coded to Memorandum of Agreements which are no longer in place. It also provides detail to centralized changes associated with the City Council change to adjust pension contributions by departments. These changes have no net financial impact.

Inflation for the Firearms Surrender Memorandum of Agreement with King County

Expenditures \$47,025

In 2017, the City entered into a six-year MOA with King County to standup and staff a regional unit to enhance public safety and public health with effective processing, service and enforcement of Protection Orders and Orders to Surrender Weapons. This adjustment reflects the inflationary adjustments to the MOA which haven't increased since 2023.

Seattle City Light Memorandum of Agreement - Paralegal

Expenditures \$141,274

Revenues \$141,274

This item increases appropriation authority by \$141,273 in the Civil Budget Control Level. This appropriation increase is revenue backed by funding provided by Seattle City Light (via MOA) and will support a Paralegal-Law to assist with collections monies associated with past-due accounts. This is a continuation of contract position from the Department of Human Resources included in the mid-year supplemental in 2024.

Proposed Operating

Remove Funding for Two Civil Division Assistant City Attorneys

Law Department

Expenditures \$(433,754)

This item removes funding for two 1.0 FTE Assistant City Attorneys in the Civil Division Employment and Contracts/Utilities Sections. This change reduces capacity to provide guidance and advice to elected officials and departments. This may also lead to an increase in costs to departments and/or the Judgment and Claims fund as they may need to contract with outside attorneys to perform the work that is time-sensitive and cannot be delayed as a result of fewer attorneys in the City Attorney's Office.

The position authority is retained to allow flexibility in hiring and address emergency legal needs as required.

Remove Funding for One Specialty Court Unit Prosecutor

Expenditures \$(181,842)

Following the closure of Community Court at the Seattle Municipal Court this item eliminates funding for one prosecutor in the Specialty Court Unit (SCU) of the Criminal Division. This unit houses a team of attorneys who utilize alternative approaches to the traditional prosecutorial approach. The SCU team handles cases in cases in Mental Health Court, Veteran's Treatment Court and LINC (Legal Intervention and Network of Care). SCU also handles both traffic and non-traffic infractions, parking citations, animal control violations, impounds and other non-criminal violations. This reduction will lower the caseload capacity for attorneys of these alternative case types. Four prosecutors remain in SCU along with the Unit Supervisor.

The position authority is retained to allow flexibility in hiring and address emergency legal needs as required.

Proposed Technical

Final Adjustments for Standard Cost Changes

Expenditures \$(187,474)

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.

Criminal Case Management System Licensing Costs

Expenditures \$185,000

The Law Department has been collaborating with the Information Technology Department (ITD) to develop a new Criminal Case Management System (CCMS). This item funds \$185,000 in ongoing licensing and maintenance costs associated with contracted vendor Justice Nexus.

Bargained Annual Wage and Market Wage Increases to Base Budget – Local 77

Expenditures \$104,791

This centrally administered change adjusts appropriations to reflect the Annual Wage Increases and Market Adjustments, as outlined in the agreements between the City and Local 77 bargaining units, for personnel costs included in this department's budget. This includes increases to salary, FICA, Medicare, retirement, overtime and temporary labor.

Law Department

Expenditure Overview

	2023 Actuals	2024 Adopted	2025 Proposed	2026 Proposed
Appropriations				
LAW - BO-LW-J1100 - Leadership and Administration				
00100 - General Fund	12,769,930	12,930,539	14,815,398	15,715,870
Total for BSL: BO-LW-J1100	12,769,930	12,930,539	14,815,398	15,715,870
LAW - BO-LW-J1300 - Civil				
00100 - General Fund	16,557,242	16,527,895	18,222,862	19,102,302
Total for BSL: BO-LW-J1300	16,557,242	16,527,895	18,222,862	19,102,302
LAW - BO-LW-J1500 - Criminal				
00100 - General Fund	11,059,445	10,597,168	11,706,858	12,240,047
Total for BSL: BO-LW-J1500	11,059,445	10,597,168	11,706,858	12,240,047
LAW - BO-LW-J1700 - Precinct Liaison				
00100 - General Fund	727,886	725,170	814,549	853,771
Total for BSL: BO-LW-J1700	727,886	725,170	814,549	853,771
Department Total	41,114,503	40,780,772	45,559,667	47,911,990
Department Full-Time Equivalents Total*	209.80	209.80	209.80	209.80

** 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 Law Department

	2023 Actuals	2024 Adopted	2025 Proposed	2026 Proposed
00100 - General Fund	41,114,503	40,780,772	45,559,667	47,911,990
Budget Totals for LAW	41,114,503	40,780,772	45,559,667	47,911,990

Law Department

Revenue Overview

2025 Estimated Revenues

Account Code	Account Name	2023 Actuals	2024 Adopted	2025 Proposed	2026 Proposed
333110	Ind Fed Grants	49,535	-	-	-
341060	Photocopy Svcs	4	-	-	-
341180	Legal Service Fees	1,436,191	3,195,043	3,545,777	3,665,340
341900	General Government-Other Rev	10,545,433	10,232,902	11,011,531	11,643,384
343320	Recoveries-Sundry	20	-	-	-
360690	Building/Oth Space Rent	49,200	-	-	-
Total Revenues for: 00100 - General Fund		12,080,382	13,427,945	14,557,308	15,308,724
Total LAW Resources		12,080,382	13,427,945	14,557,308	15,308,724

Appropriations by Budget Summary Level and Program

LAW - BO-LW-J1100 - Leadership and Administration

The purpose of the Leadership and Administration Budget Summary Level is to provide executive, financial, technological, administrative and managerial support to the Department.

Program Expenditures	2023 Actuals	2024 Adopted	2025 Proposed	2026 Proposed
Citywide Indirect Costs	6,444,510	6,184,724	7,094,645	7,534,736
Departmental Indirect Costs	3,105,934	2,762,740	3,300,801	3,451,343
Pooled Benefits	3,219,486	3,983,075	4,419,952	4,729,791
Total	12,769,930	12,930,539	14,815,398	15,715,870
Full-time Equivalents Total*	20.50	20.50	20.50	20.50

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

Citywide Indirect Costs

Expenditures/FTE	2023 Actuals	2024 Adopted	2025 Proposed	2026 Proposed
Citywide Indirect Costs	6,444,510	6,184,724	7,094,645	7,534,736

Law Department

Departmental Indirect Costs

	2023 Actuals	2024 Adopted	2025 Proposed	2026 Proposed
Expenditures/FTE				
Departmental Indirect Costs	3,105,934	2,762,740	3,300,801	3,451,343
Full Time Equivalents Total	20.50	20.50	20.50	20.50

Pooled Benefits

	2023 Actuals	2024 Adopted	2025 Proposed	2026 Proposed
Expenditures/FTE				
Pooled Benefits	3,219,486	3,983,075	4,419,952	4,729,791

LAW - BO-LW-J1300 - Civil

The purpose of the Civil Budget Summary Level is to provide legal advice to the City's policy-makers, and to defend and represent the City, its employees, and officials before a variety of county, state, federal courts, and administrative bodies.

Program Expenditures	2023 Actuals	2024 Adopted	2025 Proposed	2026 Proposed
Civil	16,557,242	16,527,895	18,222,862	19,102,302
Total	16,557,242	16,527,895	18,222,862	19,102,302
Full-time Equivalents Total*	105.30	105.30	105.30	105.30

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LAW - BO-LW-J1500 - Criminal

The purpose of the Criminal Budget Summary Level includes prosecuting ordinance violations and misdemeanor crimes, maintaining case information and preparing effective case files for the court appearances of prosecuting attorneys, and assisting and advocating for victims of domestic violence throughout the court process.

Program Expenditures	2023 Actuals	2024 Adopted	2025 Proposed	2026 Proposed
Criminal	11,059,445	10,597,168	11,706,858	12,240,047
Total	11,059,445	10,597,168	11,706,858	12,240,047
Full-time Equivalents Total*	80.00	80.00	80.00	80.00

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Law Department

LAW - BO-LW-J1700 - Precinct Liaison

The purpose of the Precinct Liaison Budget Summary Level is to support a program where attorneys work in each of the City's five precincts, providing legal advice to police and other City departments. In helping to address a variety of neighborhood and community problems, the precinct liaison attorneys coordinate with the Civil and Criminal divisions with the goal of providing a consistent, thorough and effective approach.

Program Expenditures	2023 Actuals	2024 Adopted	2025 Proposed	2026 Proposed
Precinct Liaison	727,886	725,170	814,549	853,771
Total	727,886	725,170	814,549	853,771
Full-time Equivalents Total*	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00

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