

# 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

	2022 Actuals	2023 Adopted	2024 Endorsed	2024 Adopted
<b>Department Support</b>				
General Fund Support	36,894,671	40,023,100	40,308,921	40,780,772
<b>Total Operations</b>	<b>36,894,671</b>	<b>40,023,100</b>	<b>40,308,921</b>	<b>40,780,772</b>
<b>Total Appropriations</b>	<b>36,894,671</b>	<b>40,023,100</b>	<b>40,308,921</b>	<b>40,780,772</b>

Full-Time Equivalents Total\* 214.10 210.80 209.80 209.80

\* 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

## Law Department

### Incremental Budget Changes

#### Law Department

	2024 Budget	FTE
<b>Total 2024 Endorsed Budget</b>	<b>40,308,921</b>	<b>209.80</b>
<b>Baseline</b>		
Citywide Adjustments for Standard Cost Changes	(245,927)	-
Net-zero Budget Alignment	-	-
<b>Proposed Technical</b>		
Ongoing Changes from Current Year Legislation	933,000	-
<b>Council</b>		
SCERS Contribution Rate Change	(215,222)	-
<b>Total Incremental Changes</b>	<b>\$471,851</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Total 2024 Adopted Budget</b>	<b>\$40,780,772</b>	<b>209.80</b>

### Description of Incremental Budget Changes

#### Baseline

##### Citywide Adjustments for Standard Cost Changes

Expenditures \$(245,927)

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.

##### Net-zero Budget Alignment

Expenditures -

This technical net-zero change corrects funding between projects and Divisions to properly align budget with where expenses are recorded.

#### Proposed Technical

##### Ongoing Changes from Current Year Legislation

Expenditures \$933,000

This change includes ongoing budget and/or position changes resulting from current year legislation in 2023, including the Q3 Supplemental Ordinance.

## Law Department

A labor agreement with assistant city prosecutors was negotiated and approved through Ordinance 126782 which increased wages by 20% effective January 1, 2023. This requires ongoing appropriation in 2024.

### Council

#### SCERS Contribution Rate Change

Expenditures \$(215,222)

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

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

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

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

Budget Summary Level	Fund	Budget Process Phase Endorsed	Adopted Changes	Grand Total
Civil	00100 - General Fund	16,556,736	-28,841	16,527,895
<b>Civil Total</b>		<b>16,556,736</b>	<b>-28,841</b>	<b>16,527,895</b>
Criminal	00100 - General Fund	9,832,733	764,435	10,597,168
<b>Criminal Total</b>		<b>9,832,733</b>	<b>764,435</b>	<b>10,597,168</b>
Leadership and Administration	00100 - General Fund	13,194,283	-263,743	12,930,539
<b>Leadership and Administration Total</b>		<b>13,194,283</b>	<b>-263,743</b>	<b>12,930,539</b>
Precinct Liaison	00100 - General Fund	725,170	0	725,170
<b>Precinct Liaison Total</b>		<b>725,170</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>725,170</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>		<b>40,308,921</b>	<b>471,851</b>	<b>40,780,772</b>