

2025-2026 Supplemental Department Questions

Please answer the following questions in a word document and return to Council. The answers to these questions will be provided to council as supplemental information. While not part of the physical budget presentation to Council, departments should be prepared to answer questions Council may have on these supplemental questions. If you feel that you have provided an answer in a previous question, please don't repeat your answer, simply refer to the earlier question/answer.

Strategic Goals

- Provide your 2025-2026 strategic goals; How are they reflected in your budget request? DEM's strategic goals include:
 - Deliver excellent customer service
 - Improve preparedness and resilience countywide
 - Instill emergency management into the County's culture
 - Enhance response and emergency operations center (EOC) readiness
 - Build DEM's grant strategy and increase fiscal transparency
 - Enhance DEM's existing and future staff
 - Align plans, processes, and procedures within countywide Emergency Management Program

These goals are reflected in DEM's budget requests in three primary ways:

- Extending the Readiness Analyst position to improve EOC preparedness and to strengthen the linkages among jurisdictional EOCs and the County EOC. This position has an important role in multiple strategic goals, improving countywide resilience by aligning emergency processes and procedures among the communities within the County and meeting federal grant requirements for EOC qualifications.
- Our amateur radio volunteers play a critical role in our catastrophic preparedness. The Radio Officer position coordinates multiple FTE worth of highly skilled volunteer hours annually to maintain radios and build out equipment for the county. By shifting funding for the DEM's Radio Officer away from shrinking and unreliable homeland security grant streams, we reduce our vulnerability to diminishing federal grants and ensure that the technical aspects of radio, cellular, and network communications are resilient Countywide.
- DEM's mobile assets (radios, trailers, equipment, and vehicles) support important communications capabilities for County, jurisdictional, and tribal emergency operations. These assets also support the communities throughout the County when private sector communications are impacted by emergencies and disasters. In our budget request we propose dropping the least useful assets in our fleet and updating the most requested assets, ensuring that we continue to deliver excellent customer service to our partners without maintaining unnecessary equipment.

National, state and local landscape:

1. What critical issues are you facing in your department/industry, and how are you addressing them?
 - a. Federal emergency preparedness grants are shrinking, with a 10% reduction between 2023 and 2024. DEM currently has 5.5 positions funded between State Homeland Security (SHSP) grant (1 position), Emergency Management Performance Grants (2.5 positions), and Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI) grants (2 positions). The regional UASI leadership has made it clear that they will no longer fund multiple positions for any jurisdiction. This is why we need alternative funding for the Radio Officer position (the other position funded by UASI conducts functions required for grant eligibility). We are having additional conversations with the SHSP region about whether the region needs a full time coordinator or whether these responsibilities could be shared across the 5 county region.
 - b. Climate related disasters are increasing—globally, nationally, and statewide. This is impacting us in a variety of ways: we are having to prepare for new kinds of disasters that did not historically impact the county (wildfire, smoke, extreme heat) while responding to historic disasters (record level flooding along the Stillaguamish in Dec 2023, historic wildfire at Bolt Creek in 2022), and competing with other jurisdictions, some of which are more vulnerable to climate change than us, for limited federal and state resources. We are mitigating these impacts by coordinating with other departments and committees across the county and region that are focused on climate change adaptation. We are also applying for outside funding to support climate planning efforts—and will receive three federal grants to support: developing a community wildfire protection plan, updating the county hazard mitigation plan, and conducting a countywide flood control structure analysis.
2. Are there federal, state, and local issues/mandates that will impact your department, operationally and/or fiscally. Please address what it is, the anticipated impact, and how you plan to mitigate it.
 - a. Limited English Proficiency (LEP) outreach: Senate Bill 5046 was signed by the Governor in 2016 and mandates that State and local emergency management programs ensure that vital life safety information is provided to all people in Washington. This has led to additional staff time and funding to identify appropriate methods of communicating vital life safety information, whether that is translated materials, real-time translation, partnership with language communities other than English, etc. and then implement them in meaningful ways. This is not a quick project and requires ongoing maintenance, outreach, and expansion to be both effective and to meet the spirit of the law. DEM's plan to mitigate it is to form and strengthen partnerships with groups and communities who speak our key languages and support them in sharing preparedness and life safety information before, during, and after disasters.
 - b. Additional mitigation planning requirements create a heavier burden on smaller jurisdictions to complete FEMA-approved and adopted Hazard Mitigation Plans. DEM has successfully applied for grants to support the update of the Hazard Mitigation Plan, however the updated requirements also impact other planning processes (the comprehensive plan, the capital improvement plan, etc.), managing that the requirements will continue to impact DEM staff time beyond the update to the Hazard Mitigation Plan itself.

- c. National Qualifications System: DEM has two positions that are funded by the Emergency Management Performance Grant. Eligibility for this grant will be tied to the implementation of the National Qualifications System. The EOC Analyst is supporting defining what this means for Snohomish County. While this does create costs for the county, it also brings potential benefits, as it increases the ability to deploy our staff to other jurisdictions during disaster response. This leads to tremendous gains of real-world experience for our staff, and DEM has recently entered into a contract with DNR, which brings the potential for the county to be reimbursed for the salary of any personnel deployed to a disaster on a DNR team.

Programs

1. With ARPA funding ending, what programs/services will be impacted and how? What is your plan for mitigating the impacts?
 - a. DEM is implementing one, one-time contract with ARPA funding, but have no other ARPA funded programs or services. We will not have any impacts with the end of ARPA funding. However, we are indirectly seeing the impact in some ILA jurisdictions that were reliant on ARPA funding. In one case this has impacted their ability to continue to pay for the ILA.
2. What new programs are you proposing for 2025-2026? What need or efficiency is that new program addressing? How is that program funded for sustainability? What metrics are in place to determine effectiveness?
 - a. South County Fire ILA: DEM is in discussions with South County Fire about potentially entering an ILA directly with them for planning support to the Regional Fire Authority. This would simultaneously enable DEM to work with South County Fire to identify and address potential internal planning gaps, but also help fill any operational gaps generated due to 1(a) above. DEM would be able to continue to supply operational support to South County Fire, regardless of whether the jurisdiction they are responding to is within an ILA city or not.
3. Are there departmental change requests not in the Executive's Recommended Budget that you feel Council should consider including? If so, please provide the change request number and justification for the inclusion of the request.
 - a. The Executive's Recommended Budget includes DEM's highest priority funding needs.

Internal Operations

- Please explain how you intended to meet the Executive's 3% Resource Alignment request.
 - a. DEM proposes meeting the resource alignment through a reduction of assets (vehicles and EOC computers). Because the EOC computer reduction would not impact DEM's budget until 2026, for 2025 we propose a one-time, partial reduction of consultant support services.
- How are increasing Internal Service Rates impacting your department/programs?
 - a. Increasing internal service rates compound the impact of shrinking federal grants. The increasing rates also magnify the increased cost of private sector

services, such as cell phones and copier lease/maintenance. It is difficult for DEM to absorb these rising costs and continue providing the level of service stipulated by State and Federal law and interlocal agreement.

- To help inform Council on experiences around hiring and retention, please provide a list of all vacant position titles, position codes, FTE amount (1.0, 0.5, etc.), date vacated, and date first posted. Template spreadsheet attached for convenience and conformity; if already tracking information in another format, that is acceptable as well. Please list each vacancy separately.
 - a. See attached.
- When was the last time your department implemented a fee increase? Do you have any plans to increase fees? Are your current fees established based on a full cost recovery model?
 - a. We instituted a fee increase with the revised ILA this summer. The revised fees will go into effect at the new year. Our fees are not based on a full cost recovery model. Due to both Federal and state disaster management systems, the county has a responsibility for emergency management even in the non-ILA jurisdictions.