

## **2024 Supplemental Department Questions – Office of the Public Advocate**

*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**

- 1. Provide your 2024 strategic goals; how are they different from 2023? In what way, if at all, are your strategic changes demonstrated in your budget request?**

The single, overarching goal for the Office of the Public Advocate is to provide independent, impartial, and confidential services to assist the people of Snohomish County with their complaints and concerns involving the operation of Snohomish County government.

Our strategic objectives are:

- To investigate complaints to ensure that individuals are receiving fair and just treatment in the administrative action of the departments or offices of Snohomish County government.
- To share an understanding of the governing regulations and to educate when necessary.
- To identify and advise county governmental entities when the need for efficiencies and other adjustments are identified.
- To promote fairness, justice and equity in administrative action while safeguarding the rights of individuals in their dealings with county government.

### **National, state and local landscape:**

- 1. What are the federal, state and local issues facing your work? What risks or opportunities does that create for you in 2024 and beyond? What is your plan to leverage the opportunity or mitigate the risk? What support do you need?**

I do not foresee any federal, state or local issues/risks that will be directed specifically at the functions of the Public Advocate office. However, the office is certainly impacted anytime there are uncertainties faced by government entities.

- 2. What, if any, new mandates do you have impacting your work? Are they funded or unfunded? What is the plan for accomplishing the work?**

The Office of the Public Advocate does not have any new mandates.

## **Programs**

- 1. List programs, projects and services within your department funded through federal COVID/ARPA funds. What, if any, of those programs are you recommending ongoing funding for and what is the source of ongoing funding?**

Our office does not have any programs funded through federal COVID/ARPA funds.

- 2. For programs funded by COVID/ARPA funds, detail the plan to close out and/or transition those programs to an ongoing funding source in 2025 and beyond.**

Our office does not have any programs funded through federal COVID/ARPA funds.

- 3. What new programs are you launching for 2024? What need or efficiency is that new program addressing? How is that program funded for sustainability? What metrics are in place to determine effectiveness?**

Our office does not have any new programs for 2024.

- 4. If different than #3, what are your areas of significant investment? What are you not doing because of that investment?**

## **Internal Operations**

- 1. What is your department doing to streamline processes or deliver services in a new way? How do your budget allocation requests play into these innovations? Are there ways which a different budget approach, e.g.**

**several departments sharing a resource, could achieve the same or better results in a more cost-effective way?**

The Office of the Public Advocate continues to work closely with IT, Operational Excellence (OpEx), the Executive's Office, PDS and Public Works to implement and improve the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) tool we created. The CRM is intended to streamline communication between Snohomish County residents and the various departments and offices they are working with.

- 2. What, if any, hiring challenges are you experiencing? How is that affecting your level of service or internal operations? How are you mitigating those operational challenges and/or what is your plan for recruitment?**

This office is currently in the hiring stages and have not noticed any challenges. We have received a good number of applications and look forward to the next stages to finding the right candidate.

- 3. 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.**

This office currently has 1.0 FTE vacant for the administrative specialist position. We are currently in the application acceptance stage of the hiring process.

- 4. What effect has the increase of inflation and/or supply chain issues had on your department? What, if any, services, or projects have you had to adjust to accommodate for this? (i.e. moving to outside contracted services, delaying of project starts and/or purchasing, redistribution of workload, etc.)**

Inflation and supply chain issues has not created an impact on this office.

- 5. When was the last time your department implemented a fee increase? Do you have any plans to increase fees?**

This office does not collect any fees.

**6. Do you have any plans to do a rate/fee study? Are your current fees established based on a full cost recovery model?**

This office does not collect any fees.

**Successes**

**1. Take this opportunity to share one significant success in your department over this past year. What made it a success?**

This past year has been a period of change as Jill McKinnie retired from her Public Advocate role in 2022. I, Gricelda Montes, was appointed Public Advocate in November 2022 and have focused on creating relationships with other service staff of Snohomish County. I have also dedicated time to meeting and engaging with local services providers who interact with constituents who may need assistance from my office. This office has had a vacant administrative specialist position since November 2022. However, I have made it my priority to continue maintaining outstanding customer service and rapid responsiveness to constituent questions and concerns.

This office has continued to participate in the implementation of the new Customer Relationship Management System (CRM). We continue to meet with various departments on an ongoing basis to address and resolve any barriers or challenges that came up during the implementation stage. Our goal is to make the CRM as useful and user friendly as possible while also streamlining communication between Snohomish County residents and the various departments and offices they are working with.