

2024 Supplemental Department Questions

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 Auditor's Office strategic goals for 2024 include:

1. Deliver accurate, timely, kind and efficient services to our customers.
2. Finalize elections space and facility security issues for both the 3rd and 1st floors in Admin West to be prepared to support fair, accountable, accurate and secure 2024 elections. The remodel provides a much-improved elections observation experience for political parties, the public and the press.
3. Continue to build and expand strategic partnerships with non-profits and other government agencies to assist with voter outreach and education, and to leverage communication channels such as social media, website, community events to educate and connect residents to Auditor's Office services.
4. Kick-off the back post project in early 2024 which will import and index scanned recorded documents from the 1880s through 1976, so that all documents in our county's history are easily accessible online.

The Auditor's Office 2024 budget reflects these goals with continued funding of essential staff, outreach and education, requests expenditure authority to remodel our 1st floor, Admin West, and to continue progress on our back post project.

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?

At the federal, state and local level there continues to be focus on the integrity of the elections process and the spread of mis/dis/mal information about elections, all which raise safety concerns for voters and staff during critical election times. We appreciate the support of both council and the executive in our elections space remodel which will ensure we have secure, safe facilities for voters to receive and cast ballots and for election workers to process and count votes.

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?

There are no significant 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?
 - a. The 3rd floor, Admin West remodel for the Elections Ballot Processing Center will be primarily funded by ARPA funds. The bulk of the work will be completed in 2023, but some will remain for 2024.
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.
 - a. Once the remodel is finished, all operations will return to our normal budget process.
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?

We will be continuing our project to import and index into our recording system recorded documents from 1976 and earlier (called the Back Post Project). Recorded documents are important in documenting a person's ownership or interest in a property. Recorded documents also preserve our community's history.

This project will be a multi-year project and will be fully funded by our Recording O&M fund, with no general fund expenditures. The Recording O&M fund is supported by a portion of the fee charged when a document is recorded and is earmarked in state law for specific document preservation activities.

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

Our Back Post Project is a significant investment and could cost approximately \$2 million – all of which will be paid for with non-general funds.

However, we cannot stress enough the importance of adequate, ongoing elections funding.

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?

Our elections space remodel is critical to improving operational efficiencies and enhancing security of operations. Once completed, we will be able to consolidate our election operations to one location, eliminating excessive movement of ballots and materials between buildings, floors and workspaces and providing a consistent location for the voting public to access our services. This consolidation of elections spaces will eliminate the need to build-out a Presidential Election Processing Center every four years.

Also for 2024, we are embarking on a website overhaul to provide our customers with easy to find information for all our services. We are fortunate to have a communications professional on staff to spearhead this project.

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?

We have struggled in 2023 with hiring Animal Control Officers – as most law enforcement related agencies are struggling with recruitment and hiring. Currently we have 4 officers (2 just started in August/September) and are recruiting for two additional officers. Our AC officers go through the same pre-employment testing as do Sheriff deputies, and these processes are time consuming and often result in candidates unable to make it through the all-encompassing requirements. Our 5th officer will be joining us in January and we remain committed to finding our 6th officer in early 2024. We promoted our positions at job fairs, animal control related agencies, we made a recruiting video, recruited at law enforcement pre-employment testing sites, posted our vacancies on LinkedIn, etc.

Our ACOs are no longer on call 24/7 due to limited staffing, and Sheriff's Deputies have been handling animal related calls evenings and weekends for us for the last 6 months and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future. We respond to priority #1 calls only, which relate to neighborhood safety or imminent danger to an animal.

We see a light at the end of the tunnel as we are onboarding and training our two new officers this fall. We are excited about this next chapter and look forward to resuming our normal operations soon.

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.

See attached spreadsheet.

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.)

The elections space remodel project may be impacted by inflation and supply chain issues as the project progresses. We have been instructed to order hardware well in advance for this project due to supply chain issues.

We have also experienced supply chain concerns associated with the printing of the local voters' pamphlet, envelope and ballot printing. Paper stock necessary for these supplies are at historically low levels based on shifts to other paper products to meet consumer demand. This is a nationwide situation and we are working closely with our vendors to mitigate the impacts by ordering far earlier than we have in the past.

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

Most of our fees are dictated by state law, i.e. recording and licensing fees, and most of the time these fee increases do not trickle down to county government.

County code sets most of the fees related to our Animal Control division, and we are looking at code changes in 2024 that will add a new fee when a dog is declared potentially dangerous.

Our Everett Animal Shelter fees go up each year, so in turn, our animal redemption and relinquishment fees follow suit.

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

Any time we raise fees that are in our control, we do a rate/fee study by evaluating our internal costs and investigating other neighboring jurisdiction fees. We understand that raising fees has a direct impact on our customers.

Successes

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

We are excited about our elections remodel project and want to thank the Executive's Office and Council for their support. We appreciate Facilities taking on the project management of this large and important upgrade of our elections space.

For the past two Presidential Elections we had to find and lease a facility large enough to handle all our requirements – which was a huge undertaking that

involved many county departments. We are grateful to have found a permanent home for our Ballot Processing Center on campus. We could not be more pleased with this outcome! We now have the needed space to grow, the security required, the parking needed, and the access assured for many years to come.