

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

1. Provide your 2025-2026 strategic goals; How are they reflected in your budget request?
 - a. Recruitment and Retention. *Over the last six-plus years, we have experienced a period of unprecedented turnover. During that time frame, 62 Criminal Division DPAs left the office for reasons other than retirement; most often for better paying jobs and more forgiving workloads. In stark contrast, during a similar period between 2012 and 2017, a total of 16 Criminal Division DPAs left the office for different jobs. The recent, collectively bargained, salary adjustments should help our cause significantly, but we still need more FTEs to properly address current workload levels.*
 - b. Keep Up with the Crime Rate in Snohomish County. *Increased DPA staffing levels are necessary to actually keep up with the criminal referrals in Snohomish County and to begin meaningfully addressing the historic backlog of case referrals that was created by, and has only worsened since, the pandemic. We have been under-staffed for a very long time. Years of budget cuts, resource realignments, and targeted reductions have been compounded by ever-larger and more labor-intensive caseloads (the collective consequence of the explosion in of digital media evidence, a more litigious defense bar, and a change in court rules by the Supreme Court making it more difficult to require criminal defendants to appear in court prior to trial), were worsened by the above referenced unprecedented numbers of DPA resignations triggered by below-market wages, and an absence of qualified applicants who are willing to work for what we could pay. The result is that we have more work than we have bodies to perform the work. Our non-violent trial team DPAs are carrying upwards of 150 felony matters pending trial - caseloads so large that we've had to stop charging new cases lest they drown in open files. The need to prioritize felony crimes committed against persons has left our depleted non-violent felony charging unit with just 2 DPAs for most of the last two years, leaving property crime victims without resolution or the possibility of court ordered restitution.*

- c. *Increased Victim Services.* Felony Victim Advocates are currently carrying caseloads in excess of 400 matters. In District Court, that number exceeds 1200. It is simply not possible to adequately meet needs and constitutionally protected rights victims with current staffing.
- d. *Employee Wellness/Secondary Trauma Training and Counseling.* The PA's Office is finalizing a contract for Executive and Council approval to provide secondary trauma training and therapeutic counseling to Snohomish County deputy prosecutors, victim advocates, and staff. Trainings will prioritize standard psychotherapeutic principles and specialized instruction on recognizing and treating the impacts of working with traumatic material. Individual, stand-by counseling services will be available for two hours every other week in 30-minute intervals, utilizing a variety of therapeutic modalities including Cognitive Behavior Therapy, Lifespan Integration Therapy, and Talk Therapy.

National, state and local landscape:

1. What critical issues are you facing in your department/industry, and how are you addressing them?
 - a. *We have insufficient staffing levels to handle the workload in our Criminal Division. The cold reality is that at current staffing levels, the per capita crime rate in Snohomish County, based on criminal referrals, exceeds our ability to timely and effectively prosecute them. Absent an unforeseeable, unprecedented diminution in crime, the only cure is additional FTEs.*
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. *Defense case load standards.*
 - b. *The monumental increase in digital medial evidence.*
 - c. *The legislature continuing to place greater, time-intensive burdens on prosecutors, such as conducting discretionary felony resentencing reviews (with a newly proposed bill to allow direct resentencing petitions as a matter of right); and defending NGRI post-plea adjudications, all without funding such work, while simultaneously reducing victim penalty assessments.*
 - d. *Supreme Court decisions.*

Each of these issues/mandates results in additional work for DPAs, Advocates, and staff on top of their already arduous caseloads. The only means of mitigating the impact is adding personnel.

Programs

1. With ARPA funding ending, what programs/services will be impacted and how? What is your plan for mitigating the impacts?
 - a. *This has already been addressed as all of our ARPA positions ended in September.*

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. *We are not proposing new programs for 2025-2026 as we must properly fund existing programs first.*
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. *As indicated above, we need additional Criminal Division DPAs, victim advocates, and staff to meet the demands the criminal justice system currently places on our office. (See our response to Strategic Goals at paragraphs 1 a.-c.).*

Internal Operations

1. Please explain how you intended to meet the Executive's 1.5% Resource Alignment request.
 - a. *We intend to meet our 1.5% Resource Alignment obligation through attrition-driven salary and benefits savings. To the extent such savings do not fully materialize, we will have to lay off personnel.*
2. How are increasing Internal Service Rates impacting your department/programs?
 - a. *Unfortunately, increasing Internal Service Rates necessarily means fewer dollars will be available to meet the core programming needs of the office.*
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.
 - a. *Please see the spreadsheet attached hereto.*
4. 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. *The only fees imposed by our office are in our Diversion and TAP Programs. They are set fees for the eligibility evaluation and contract signing, and monthly case management assessments. The majority of our program participants have some portion of those fees reduced, forgiven, or converted to additional community service hours (by the independent Financial Advisory Committee review committee) due to indigency. There is no plan to increase fees.*