

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?

Our main goal for 2025-2026 will be balancing out-of-county cases given we will now have a third doctor. We want to help the rest of the state as much as possible while maintaining a healthy balance for our own employees.

National, state and local landscape:

1. What critical issues are you facing in your department/industry, and how are you addressing them?

In general, there is a national forensic pathologist shortage. Thankfully, we just sent out an offer that was accepted for a third doctor. However, it is still stressful knowing that if one of the doctors were to leave, it may once again take over a year to rehire.

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.

RCW 36.24.210 and RCW 68.50.104 mandate that we be accredited by the National Association of Medical Examiner's (NAME) or the International Association of Medical Examiners and Coroner (IACME) in order to receive reimbursement for autopsy services from the state (a significant portion of our revenue). We are currently accredited by NAME.

Programs

1. With ARPA funding ending, what programs/services will be impacted and how? What is your plan for mitigating the impacts?

None, we didn't receive any ARPA funding.

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?

We do not have any new programs, but we are funding genetic testing for cases where death cannot be explained with a full autopsy, toxicology, histology, virology, etc.

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.

No.

Internal Operations

1. Please explain how you intended to meet the Executive's 3% Resource Alignment request.
Thankfully, we were granted partial forgiveness. For the remainder that we do owe back, we will be limiting uniform purchasing (via stocking up in 2024), limiting OT (partially as a result of being fully staffed and not needing as much OT, but also by limiting non-critical OT opportunities).
2. How are increasing Internal Service Rates impacting your department/programs?
We've seen little to no impact thus far.
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.
There are no vacancies at this time.
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?
The only fees we charge the public are for records, which are set by a state mandated fee schedule. The fees we charge other counties for autopsy services is based upon full cost recovery, not profit. These costs can be adjusted as needed upon contract reviews, but we feel they're appropriate for now.