

2023 Budget Supplemental 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 2023 strategic goals; how are they different from 2022? In what way, if at all, are your strategic changes demonstrated in your budget request?*

The *Department of Emergency Management Strategic Plan 2021-2025* identifies six initiatives:

- A. Deliver excellent customer service
- B. Improve countywide preparedness
- C. Instill emergency management into the County's culture
- D. Increase emergency operations center (EOC) readiness
- E. Address fiscal sustainability
- F. Enhance staffing

In 2022, DEM focused strategically on building a culture of preparedness in Snohomish County, standardizing emergency management practices throughout Snohomish County, continuing to be leaders and innovators in all phases of emergency management, and meeting our mission as efficiently and effectively as possible.

In 2023, our budget proposal focuses on our first four strategic initiatives. While we strongly believe fiscal sustainability and staff development should remain strategic priorities, we recognize that we operate in a resource-constrained environment. Our requests for additional staffing and support for new equipment represent very baseline investments that will we need to continue to provide the level of service expected by our residents, to continue to work with communities and our governmental partners to support their preparedness efforts, and to ensure our emergency operations center remains ready to respond to the myriad of identified hazards that threaten Snohomish County.

It is very important to note that we need adequate staffing to do all of that while meeting the requirements of federal grants, to adhere to state law and County Code, and to fulfill the contractual obligations outlined in our interlocal agreements with 19 cities, towns, and tribes throughout the county.

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 2023 and beyond? What is your plan to leverage the opportunity or mitigate the risk? What support do you need?*

Uncertain grant funding combined with an increasing number (and type) of emergency response situations creates a very turbulent environment for DEM. At the federal level, DHS/FEMA continues to send clear signals that local emergency management organizations should expect to see diminishing amounts of federal preparedness grants and/or increasing requirements to qualify for these grants. These grants fund 70% (nine of thirteen) of DEM's emergency management staff. These same grants fund Washington's Emergency Management Division (WAEMD), which relies on them even more heavily than we.

WAEMD receives very little general fund support from the Legislature. As federal grant funds diminish, we expect the state to take an increasingly larger percentage to ensure they retain their staffing level. Further, because EMD remains a division of the Military Department (i.e., it is sub-Cabinet), it exercises little influence over other state agencies. As demonstrated repeatedly during the COVID-19 response, the lack of coherent and cohesive strategies across state agencies placed an incredible amount of additional strain on local response efforts. We need legislative advocacy to ensure that the state funds state agencies, especially WAEMD, adequately with state funds. We also recommend advocacy for the Governor to make EMD a Cabinet-level agency. Oregon recently did this and its already having a significant benefit for state and local emergency management efforts.

- 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 new mandates we face result from a changing hazard environment and the increasing need for DEM response. For many years DEM's primarily responded to riverine flooding events that usually occurred during the fall and early winter. DEM now responds on a near continuous basis to hazards that used to be incredibly rare – wildfires, severe snowstorms, and flooding that more closely resembles flash flooding than our historic floods – as well as crises like the opioid epidemic, which requires multiagency coordination best facilitated by DEM.

In some cases (e.g., the opioid response), DEM received additional funding to support the work. For the others, DEM continues its best to strike a balance between fulfilling the work mandated by federal grant requirements, state law, County Code, and its interlocal agreements with 19 cities, towns, and tribes. DEM works actively with our regional partners to advocate for the Legislature to provide state funds to support WAEMD and make more federal grant funds available to local emergency management organizations. DEM also seeks opportunities to utilize other programs to fund our

efforts, particularly the funding for pre-disaster mitigation and resilience that have grown significantly in recent years.

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?*

DEM currently uses ARPA funds for upgrades to its existing facility, especially the emergency operations center. This is a project for which there is a need for ongoing funding but not a current request. This will need to be addressed in future budget years.

DEM also uses ARPA funds for one project position for which we are requesting ongoing funding. The fund source would be a combination of general fund and grant funds. To minimize the impact to the general fund, we have decided to do some internal consolidation (see next question).

- 2. What new programs are you launching for 2023? What need or efficiency is that new program addressing? How is that program funded for sustainability? What metrics are in place to determine effectiveness?*

While not necessarily new, we are consolidating two of our programs (Community Resilience and Planning) into one program. While this places an additional burden on our management team (i.e., one program manager will now essentially oversee what was previously two programs), it allows us to free up funding for staff, staff that are desperately needed to achieve our overall mission.

The budget request we submitted, combined with this voluntary consolidation, allows the program to be sustainable for now and at the bare minimum to meet our requirements. Our strategic plan and the Emergency Management Accreditation Program (EMAP) standards define our measurements for success.

- 3. If different than #2, what are your areas of significant investment? What are you not doing because of that investment?*

Our other areas of significant investment are upgrading our very dated A/V technology in the County's EOC and maintaining deployable equipment (e.g., our command vehicles) that support partner agencies and jurisdictions throughout the county. Doing this takes significant staff time, which hinders our ability to complete other tasks. One of the most important of these is researching and pursuing other grant opportunities. Staff simply don't have the time to find other funding sources when they struggle to balance their daily requirements.

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?*

Over 90% of the work that DEM produces is mandated by Federal, State or County codes. We recently re-classified a vacant management position to an Analyst to provide staffing where most needed. The Planning and Community Resilience programs were moved under one manager and all DEM work was evaluated and re-aligned to allow for better work balance. We put our focus for this re-alignment on the programs with the most mandated work, but this leaves a gap in our Readiness and Activation programs. Our request for a Readiness Analyst will fill the current gap and allow us to better focus on being prepared for the next hazard.

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?*

DEM faces significant hiring challenges that directly impact our internal operations, resulting in lower levels of service as we move beyond the COVID EOC activation. During the extended COVID response, 13 positions were vacated – some more than once! This represents a 60% turnover in staffing levels. Recruiting has refilled many positions, but there are still five key vacancies. Emergency planning, a cornerstone of the County's emergency management program, is behind schedule and DEM's level of service within this program area is lower, due to two key vacancies within the program.

This translates to slower plan completion and minimal capacity to provide technical assistance to our ILA partners while we meet federal requirements and contract obligations. An added burden in recruitment is trying to attract candidates with temporary positions. National searches do not result in numerous candidates when the positions have durations less than two years. DEM's plan for recruitment is requesting long term solutions in future budget cycles (shifting project positions to permanent positions) and in the short term, promoting qualified individuals from within.

3. *Please provide a list of all vacant position titles, position codes, date vacated, and date first posted. This should be a separate page or spreadsheet attachment.*

See file called DEMVacancies

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 four federal Homeland Security/Emergency Management grant programs we rely on have been impacted by supply chain issues and affected by higher inflation; basically, purchases cost more and arrive later than usual. This delays project implementation and diminishes project scope. To accommodate these new realities, DEM works with the granting agencies to extend our contracts, so we have more time to spend the funds. DEM staff work to find alternate vendors or scope projects differently (usually smaller) so the work can finish on time and with available supplies or equipment. The supply chain issues also result in increased staff time spent researching alternatives and re-scoping projects.

Successes

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

One significant success for DEM this past year is the integration of five new staff into the DEM team while also building new partnerships and pursuing final Emergency Management Accreditation Program (EMAP) accreditation. The people working for DEM are the reason for this success. We've maintained contract obligations, local and federal requirements; all while supporting the community in various ways in response to COVID.

Additionally, we expanded understanding of catastrophic hazards in Snohomish County by analyzing where infrastructure breaks down in a large earthquake and sharing those results in map form with residents. The new information identifies where emergency management will get life-saving commodities to points of distribution within impacted neighborhoods throughout the County. New DEM staff prioritized building partnerships with the private sector so that we can also mutually understand how private enterprise will support these points of distribution and how government can support commerce post-disaster.

DEM received conditional accreditation from EMAP in July of 2021. We have been working over the last year with the EMAP Commission to address remaining gaps and anticipate full accreditation by the end of 2022, which is considerable work for staff.

Through it all, the DEM team pushed forward with community preparedness, welcomed new staff, continued to respond to community emergencies and disasters, like COVID, weather impacts, and the Bolt Creek Fire, and all while finalizing a long and detailed professional accreditation process.