

2025-2026 PROPOSED BUDGET
POLICY CONSIDERATIONS PAPER

SEATTLE POLICE DEPARTMENT NAME (SPD)

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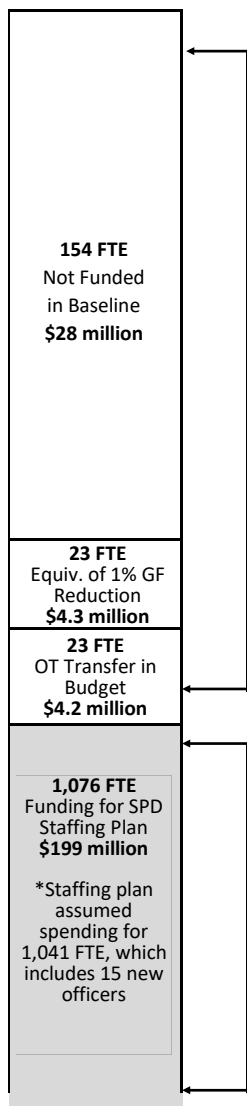
This paper highlights selected policy considerations related to the Seattle Police Department’s (SPD’s) 2025-2026 Proposed Budget. Considerations included here are not intended to be exhaustive and others may surface as Central Staff continues its analysis of the proposed budget. For more information about SPD’s 2025-2026 Proposed Budget, please see the 2025-2026 Proposed Budget Overview Papers.

Policy Considerations

1. Sworn Salary Funding Surplus and 2025 Overtime Deficit

Staffing

1,277 Positions in Proposed Budget



Creating the 2025-2026 Sworn Salary Budget

The Department has 1,277 sworn officer positions, but at present many of these positions are unfilled. Facing constraints posed by the City’s General Fund budget deficit, recent officer wage increases, and the Department’s need to fund overtime to provide an appropriate level of service, SPD used the following logic to build its proposed sworn salary budget:

SPD’s baseline budget funded 1,123 positions. From there, two policy adjustments were made:

- 23 FTE were unfunded to save \$4.3 million in order to achieve a one percent reduction in SPD’s General Fund allocation; and
- An additional 23 FTE were unfunded to make \$4.2 million available for the department’s overtime budget.

The remaining funding is sufficient to support a total of 1,076 FTE. This level of funding is not actually consistent with the staffing levels now anticipated in 2025.

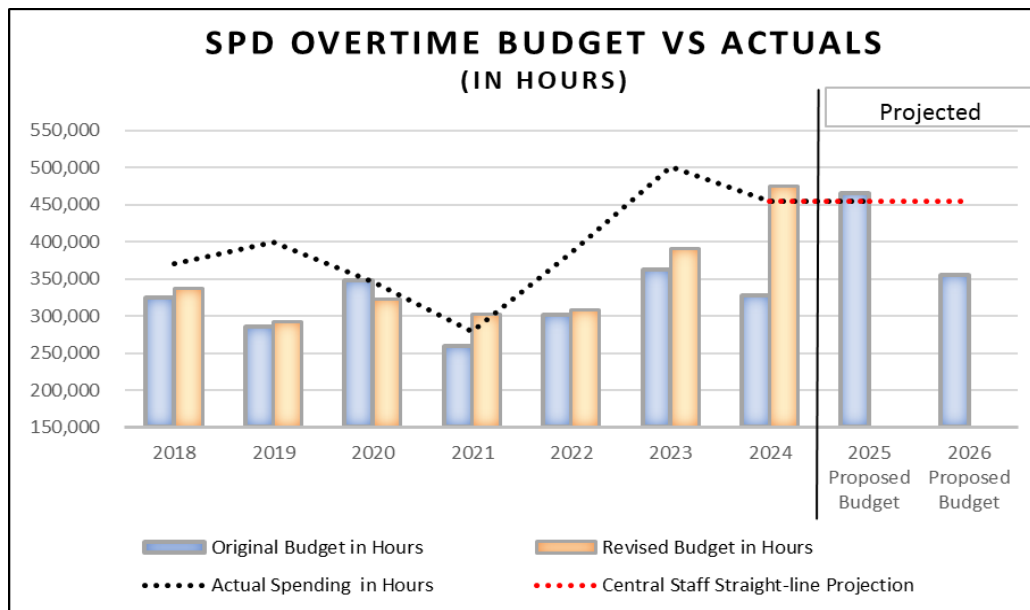
In particular, City Budget Office (CBO) and SPD staff have indicated that SPD will need 1,041 Funded FTE to support all of its recruit and sworn positions in 2025, and to hire an additional 15 officers above attrition. The difference between what is funded (1,076 FTE), and what is needed for existing staff and 15 net new hires (1,041 FTE) is a total of 35 FTE and approximates \$6.5 million in salary savings. This salary saving is currently unprogrammed in SPD’s budget and is available for any other use, including for unplanned, unbudgeted overtime expenses or for additional sworn officer hires, beyond the 15 net new hires that already are funded in 2025. The 2026 Staffing Plan is overbudgeted by \$6.5 million for the same underlying reason.

Creating the 2025-2026 Overtime Budget

Overtime

SPD staff indicate that ongoing officer shortages have required the department to rely on overtime to deliver essential public safety services, and that spending on emphasis patrols and patrol augmentation will exceed the \$37.8 million allocated in the department's 2024 Adopted Budget.¹ In order to align overtime spending with the required funding, the Executive has requested an additional \$12.8 million in the 2024 Year-End Supplemental Budget Ordinance. If authorized by the Council, this add would bring SPD's 2024 overtime budget to \$54.2 million. SPD is on track to use between 455k and 475k overtime hours in 2024, which represents a 5-10 percent decrease from 2023.

Chart 1. Overtime Budget vs. Actuals History



The 2025-2026 Proposed Budget would add \$10 million to continue funding overtime in 2025 at a level that approximates projected spending in 2024. Notable is that the \$10 million add in 2025 does not continue into 2026, which means that SPD would have to severely curtail its overtime spending, or the Executive and Council would need to add more funding in 2026.

Also notable in the 2025-2026 Proposed Budget is a \$165,000 reduction to the Office of Police Accountability (OPA) overtime budget, which was made to fulfill an overall General Fund reduction target. OPA staff have indicated that while the reduction represents a two-thirds cut to its overtime budget, which is part of the larger agency-wide overtime budget, the addition of 2.0 FTE civilian investigators in OPA will reduce total overtime hours worked. Additionally, the overtime reduction is not inconsistent with spending in 2023 and year-to-date 2024.

¹ Not all of this spending represents an increase in the use of officer overtime hours. Some of the spending is driven by an increase in per-hour overtime rates as adjusted in [Ordinance 127067](#), which appropriated \$3.7 million to cover wage and overtime adjustments for the Seattle Police Officer's Guild (SPOG) Interim Agreement.

Central Staff has concluded that (1) SPD's sworn staffing plan is likely overfunded by \$6.5 million in both years of the biennium; and (2) SPD's overtime budget is likely underfunded by \$10 million in 2026.

Options:

- A. Reduce from the SPD sworn salary budget up to \$6.5 million in 2025 and \$6.5 million in 2026.
- B. Add to the SPD overtime budget \$10 million in 2026.
- C. Adopt a Statement of Legislative Intent that (1) recognizes OPA's overtime budget as part of SPD's department-wide, overtime budget; and (2) encourages OPA to use as much overtime as is necessary to pursue and complete investigations within contractual timelines.
- D. Some combination of A, B, and/or C
- E. No change.

2. Parking Enforcement Officers

The Parking Enforcement unit is made up of a Parking Enforcement Manager and two Parking Enforcement Operations Managers. In recent years, the City has had difficulty staffing this unit. The PEO unit was located in the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) from 2021 to 2023, where SDOT held vacant 20 positions to produce salary savings that was repurposed to cover SDOT overhead expenses. The City transferred the unit back to SPD in 2023 with an expectation that SPD would fully staff the unit. Unfortunately, the department has not been able to reach full staffing and the unit has been carrying 19 vacancies since it was relocated to SPD.

The PEO vacancy problem is creating at least two issues for the City: (1) SPD is providing a lower level of service when managing the right-of-way, enforcing parking regulations, providing traffic control for events and incidents, and performing other related activities; and (2) the City is not taking full advantage of recent changes that allow PEOs to staff special events in place of sworn officers.

In December 2023, the Council passed [ORD. 120720](#), which authorized a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Seattle Police Officers Guild (SPOG) that provides until January 2026 additional flexibility for the City to use limited commission and non-commission employees to fill special event assignments. While the MOU is in force, SPD may create staffing plans that expand its use of PEOs by filling posts that might otherwise be filled with SPOG members, where legally allowable and within public safety constraints.

PEO Hiring Challenges: Department leadership have indicated that issues in SPD's hiring process may be contributing to the vacancy problem, and have provided the following information:

Backgrounding and Testing

Executive staff have indicated that a large number of candidates are lost to the backgrounding and testing processes. As an example: in the April 2024 hiring cycle, only 2 out of 123 applicants made it to the training phase.² While backgrounding and testing are potential obstacles to applicants, they cannot be eliminated because they are essential to screening candidate quality. The PEO unit has observed that many candidates fail to meet the expectations and requirements of the position. While the multiple layers of screening slow down the hiring process, they play an important role in ensuring the candidate is able to perform the functions of the job. The backgrounding process is also a requirement to make sure candidates are eligible to access secured SPD facilities and criminal justice information.

Duration of Process

The hiring process involves multiple steps over multiple months. Table 1 is a sample timeline.

Table 1. PEO Hiring Timeline

	Est. Start Date	Est. End Date
1. Job Posting	8/15/2023	9/5/2023
2. Written Exam	9/16/2023	9/16/2023
3. Interviews	9/25/2023	9/30/2023
4. Fitness Assessment	10/14/2023	10/14/2023
5. Candidates input eSOPH background system	10/19/2023	11/2/2023
6. Background	11/3/2023	12/7/2023
7. Class Start	1/3/2024	3/1/2024

SPD's Metropolitan Bureau Chief has created a hiring group consisting of PEO Field Training Officers, (FTOs), PEO managers, and Human Resources personnel, to identify potential solutions to the process heavy and time-intensive hiring procedures. The group is working to determine if the written exam can be revised to better predict PEO success and if the hiring and background processes can be streamlined. In addition to these efforts, the PEO unit has restarted a referral program where PEOs receive a day off for referring a candidate that is hired, and another day off when their referral gets off probation.

PEO Training Challenges

The Manager of the Parking Enforcement unit has indicated that the PEO unit's capacity to train new PEOs is currently limiting the number of candidates that can be sent through SPD's backgrounding process. It is possible that additional, dedicated PEO training positions would allow SPD to admit into the backgrounding process more candidates, as the department would have confidence that it has the back-end capacity to handle more frequent training classes.

The Manager indicates that when the PEO unit reaches full staffing, the dedicated trainers could be used for: (1) other required trainings such as First Aid or CPR; and (2) to expand the unit with more PEOs to assist with management of the city right-of-way or to increase civilian staffing of special events.

² SPD staff indicate that the applicant number is higher than the number of actual viable candidates; it includes candidates who were previously rejected, as well as applications that do not appear to be intended for the posted position.

It is likely that the addition of new, dedicated training positions would need to be negotiated as part of the collective bargaining process with both the PEO and PEO Supervisor unions. PEOs currently provide the department's basic PEO training while serving in an out-of-class PEO Supervisor role. This practice suggests that it would make sense to add one or two PEO Supervisor positions to serve as dedicated trainers. Although ultimately, the exact position type would be determined through the collective bargaining process, and it is possible that the department may reclassify the positions through the city's Classification and Compensations process.

Department efforts to fill PEO vacancies are not succeeding. The Council may wish to provide additional oversight and/or more resources to SPD to: (1) ensure that city's PEO hiring processes are streamlined; and (2) ensure that the PEO unit's training capacity does not continue to limit the number of candidates that might otherwise be hired.

Options:

- A. Create a Statement of Legislative Intent that requests that the Executive submit to the Council a report showing how SPD proposes to streamline the hiring process, and notes other changes that might be made to attract and retain PEOs.
- B. Add 2.0 FTE PEO Supervisor positions and create a Statement of Legislative Intent that requests that the positions be funded in 2025 and 2026 by salary savings that are created from current PEO vacancies. The annual cost of 1.0 FTE PEO Supervisor position is \$143,000.
- C. Option A + Option B
- D. No change.

2. SPD's 30x30 Initiative

SPD was one of the first police departments nationally to commit to the 30x30 Initiative, a program coordinated by the New York University Policing Project to advance the representation and experiences of women in policing in agencies across the United States. The Initiative, which was launched in 2021, is a coalition of police leaders, researchers, and professional organizations who share the common goals of (1) increasing the representation of women in police recruit classes to 30 percent by 2030 and (2) ensuring that police policies and culture intentionally support the success of qualified women officers throughout their careers. SPD was an early signatory to the "30x30 Pledge," affirming its support for these goals and for the need for the Department fully to represent the diverse residents it serves.

SPD views its work towards the 30x30 goals as having four phases. Phase I, completed in October 2022, involved an internal quantitative data-gathering effort and an assessment of SPD's compliance with the Initiative's "Immediate Actions," which include such areas of the availability of nursing areas for mothers returning from parental leave and the existence of strategic priorities around gender diversity in hiring, retention, and promotion. At that time, 14.5 percent of sworn SPD personnel identified as female. In Phase II, completed in February 2024, SPD retained a consultant, Dr. Lois James of Washington State University, to conduct a qualitative review of the perspectives of sworn and non-sworn women SPD employees to establish baseline sentiment and direction towards actionable recommendations.

The department's ongoing Phase III requests additional analysis by Dr. James, seeking to identify any gender disparity in SPD promotions, and the results of that analysis are anticipated to be available in December. Phase III work has also included the formation of an internal 30x30 workgroup that seeks to develop new programs that are consistent with the 30x30 Initiative and the department's commitment to transforming policing culture in ways that will better support women. In particular, this workgroup has identified flexible, round-the-clock childcare and flexible work schedules as two potential innovations that would better support women. SPD has engaged Marie Keller, a childcare consultant at the Imagine Institute, to develop a set of proposals that would implement new childcare options for SPD officers, and her work is anticipated to be completed in Q2 2025. SPD is also exploring opportunities for its women officers to participate in leadership development programs and expand their training, professional development, and career advancement opportunities. The department is also ensuring that existing leadership training promotes cultural change and develops skills consistent with the goals of the Initiative. In Phase IV, SPD will develop a roadmap to implement the Phase III recommendations that it accepts.

[ORD 127026](#), passed by the Council in May, included new annual reporting requirements for SPD related to actions the department was taking consistent with its 30x30 Pledge. SPD views the 30x30 Pledge as a cultural-change effort that requires commitment from officers and civilian staff throughout the department, as an element of their individual assigned bodies of work. Currently, there is not an SPD position designated as the operational coordinator of all 30x30 Initiative efforts and reporting, nor has the department made discrete investments in new programming that explicitly aligns such programming with the Initiative.

Council may wish to add staff and/or to direct investments that would align with the Initiative and reflect the priorities of the internal workgroup. Council may also wish to express support for funding SPD's current childcare and work-schedule focus areas.

Options:

- A. Add a staff member in SPD to document, coordinate, and monitor all department work related to the 30x30 Initiative, including development of Council-requested reports and an ongoing 30x30 Program funding request that could be added in a mid-year supplemental budget.
- B. Adopt a Statement of Legislative Intent requesting that SPD prepare a timeline for a future implementation of flexible work schedules and flexible round-the-clock childcare for sworn personnel and an impact analysis of such implementation.
- C. Adopt a Statement of Legislative Intent that expresses support for flexible round-the-clock childcare or flexible work schedules or both at SPD, particularly in terms of how any new offering would align with the 30x30 Initiative.
- D. Some combination of A, B, and C.
- E. No change