



SEATTLE CITY COUNCIL

Governance, Accountability, and Economic Development Committee

Agenda

Special Meeting

Thursday, December 4, 2025

2:00 PM

Council Chamber, City Hall
600 4th Avenue
Seattle, WA 98104

Sara Nelson, Chair
Robert Kettle, Vice-Chair
Joy Hollingsworth, Member
Eddie Lin, Member
Maritza Rivera, Member

Chair Info: 206-684-8809; Sara.Nelson@seattle.gov

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Council Chamber Listen Line: 206-684-8566

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SEATTLE CITY COUNCIL
**Governance, Accountability, and Economic
Development Committee**
Agenda
December 4, 2025 - 2:00 PM
Special Meeting

Meeting Location:

Council Chamber, City Hall, 600 4th Avenue, Seattle, WA 98104

Committee Website:

seattle.gov/council/committees/governance-accountability-and-economic-development

This meeting also constitutes a meeting of the City Council, provided that the meeting shall be conducted as a committee meeting under the Council Rules and Procedures, and Council action shall be limited to committee business. Pursuant to Council Rule VI.C.10, members of the public providing public comment in Chambers will be broadcast via Seattle Channel.

Members of the public may register for remote or in-person Public Comment to address the Council. Speakers must be registered in order to be recognized by the Chair. Details on how to register for Public Comment are listed below:

Remote Public Comment - Register online to speak during the Public Comment period at the meeting at <https://www.seattle.gov/council/committees/public-comment>. Online registration to speak will begin one hour before the meeting start time, and registration will end at the conclusion of the Public Comment period during the meeting.

In-Person Public Comment - Register to speak on the public comment sign-up sheet located inside Council Chambers at least 15 minutes prior to the meeting start time. Registration will end at the conclusion of the Public Comment period during the meeting.

Please submit written comments no later than four business hours prior to the start of the meeting to ensure that they are distributed to Councilmembers prior to the meeting. Comments may be submitted at Council@seattle.gov or at Seattle City Hall, Attn: Council Public Comment, 600 4th Ave., Floor 2, Seattle, WA 98104. Business hours are considered 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. Comments received after that time will be distributed after the meeting to Councilmembers and included as part of the public record.

Please Note: Times listed are estimated

A. Call To Order

B. Approval of the Agenda

C. Public Comment

D. Items of Business

1. [CB 121130](#) **AN ORDINANCE relating to the Ethics Code; establishing reporting and disclosure requirements for political consultants; prohibiting political consultants from concurrently performing consulting work with the city; establishing a cooling-off period for political consultants; adding a new Section 4.16.072 to the Seattle Municipal Code; and amending Section 4.16.030 of the Seattle Municipal Code.**

Supporting
Documents:

[Summary and Fiscal Note](#)

[Presentation](#)

[Substitute Bill](#)

Briefing and Discussion

Presenters: Wayne Barnett, Executive Director, Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission; Lauren Henry, Council Central Staff

2. [CB 121131](#) **AN ORDINANCE** relating to City employment, commonly referred to as the Pay Zone Ordinance; adjusting the pay zone structures for 2026 for the City’s discretionary pay programs; and ratifying and confirming certain prior acts.

Supporting
Documents:

[Summary and Fiscal Note](#)

[Presentation](#)

[Central Staff Memo](#)

Briefing, Discussion, and Possible Vote

Presenter: Amanda Allen, Council Central Staff

E. Adjournment



Legislation Text

File #: CB 121130, **Version:** 1

SCITY OF SEATTLE

ORDINANCE _____

COUNCIL BILL _____

AN ORDINANCE relating to the Ethics Code; establishing reporting and disclosure requirements for political consultants; prohibiting political consultants from concurrently performing consulting work with the city; establishing a cooling-off period for political consultants; adding a new Section 4.16.072 to the Seattle Municipal Code; and amending Section 4.16.030 of the Seattle Municipal Code.

WHEREAS, the integrity of city government depends on public confidence that decisions are made in the public interest without undue influence from private interests; and

WHEREAS, consultant arrangements that blur the lines between policy advice and political campaign strategy undermine democratic governance and create unfair electoral advantages; and

WHEREAS, taxpayer-funded consultants should not concurrently profit from private political work that may conflict with their government duties; NOW, THEREFORE,

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY OF SEATTLE AS FOLLOWS:

Section 1. The City finds and declares:

A. The City of Seattle is committed to ethical, open, transparent, and accountable government.

B. In furtherance of that commitment, the City has a wide-ranging Ethics Code in Chapter 4.16 of the Seattle Municipal Code (SMC).

C. Chapter 4.16 SMC does not specifically address political consultants or businesses providing political consulting services, important categories of persons and entities that may influence public policy beyond the public's awareness or oversight.

D. City elected officials, specifically the Mayor, City Councilmembers, and the City Attorney, must

uphold the public trust and confidence in government by being ethical and transparent in policy decisions.

Candidates for City elected offices, City elected officials, and campaigns for City ballot propositions engage political consultants as advisors.

E. In providing political consulting services, which include campaign management and political strategy services, a political consultant or consulting business has access to nonpublic information related to elected official clients.

F. Registered lobbyists must file reports pursuant to Chapter 2.06 SMC, which makes their relationships with elected officials more publicly transparent than the elected officials' unreported relationships with their political consultant(s). Given consultants' access and potential influence over the City's decisionmakers, it is important to expand transparency by establishing registration and reporting requirements for political consultants and City elected officials and prohibiting certain concurrent consulting activities.

G. In SMC 4.16.075, those leaving City employment, including City contractors and consultants, are restricted from certain types of activities or from using confidential information gained from the City; likewise, this legislation creates a cooling off period wherein those performing consulting services for the City must wait one year before providing political consulting services to an election campaign.

H. The new regulations in this ordinance build on similar regulations in Portland and San Francisco.

I. The new regulations do not regulate the content and viewpoint of the services provided to City elected officials.

Section 2. Section 4.16.030 of the Seattle Municipal Code, last amended by Ordinance 125589, is amended as follows:

4.16.030 Definitions

As used in this (~~chapter, the following terms shall have the meanings indicated~~) Chapter 4.16:

* * *

“Ballot proposition” has the same meaning as in Section 2.04.010.

~~((“Board of Ethics” or “Board” or “Commission” means the Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission established by Section 3.70.010.))~~

“Candidate” has the same meaning as in Section 2.04.010.

“City” means The City of Seattle.

“City agency” means every department, office, board, commission, or committee of the City, or any subdivision thereof, but excludes public corporations and ad hoc advisory committees.

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“City officer” means every individual elected or appointed to an office in any City agency, whether such individual is paid or unpaid.

“City volunteer” means someone who volunteers services to the City.

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“Elected official” has the same meaning as in Section 2.04.010.

“Election campaign” means any campaign in support of or in opposition to a candidate for election to public office of the City and any campaign in support of or in opposition to a City ballot proposition.

“Employee member of an advisory committee” means a paid City officer or employee who serves on an advisory committee by virtue of their paid position with the City.

“Executive Director” means the Executive Director of the Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission or designee.

* * *

“Legislative matter” means any enacted or introduced ~~((council bill))~~ Council Bill, ordinance, resolution, ~~((clerk file))~~ Clerk File, ballot ~~((measure))~~ proposition, or ~~((charter))~~ Charter amendment. A legislative matter may include a possible future ~~((council bill))~~ Council Bill, ordinance, resolution, ~~((clerk file))~~

Clerk File, ballot ((measure)) proposition, or ((charter)) Charter amendment, if the possible future matter has been discussed on the public record at an open public meeting of the City Council or one of its committees.

* * *

“Person” means an individual, association, corporation, or other legal entity.

“Political consultant” means a person that provides political consulting services to: an elected official; a candidate for City office; or the authorized campaign committee registered with the Washington Public Disclosure Commission for a City ballot proposition. “Political consultant” does not include: a City employee; an accountant, attorney, pollster, or professional fundraiser who provides only accounting, legal, polling, or fundraising services, respectively; or a vendor or subvendor who supplies goods or services other than political consulting services for an election campaign.

“Political consulting services” means actions in City campaign management and political strategy services, including but not limited to: advocacy and strategy; political polling; advising or assisting in voter contact strategies and services; advising in media strategy, buying, and advertisement; providing candidate development, policy training, political image consulting, and designing, implementing, and analyzing polls and surveys; performing issues research and opposition research; developing and assisting in strategic communication such as news releases, talking points, and speech writing; and advising on negative information handling and political crisis management.

“Quarter” has the meaning as in Section 2.06.010.

Section 3. A new Section 4.16.072 is added to the Seattle Municipal Code as follows:

4.16.072 Political consultants

A. The purpose of this Section 4.16.072 is to prevent conflicts of interest and enhance transparency by prohibiting political consultants from engaging in certain activities and otherwise requiring political consultants to comply with registration and reporting requirements. This Section 4.16.072 does not regulate the content and viewpoint of services provided regarding an election campaign.

B. Within 15 days after providing any political consulting services, a political consultant shall register with the Executive Director. The registration shall include at least:

1. If the political consultant is an individual, the name, address, and contact information of both the individual and any of the individual's associated entities;
2. If the political consultant is an entity, the names, addresses, and contact information of its principals, employees, and contractors;
3. The name of the candidate or elected official to whom the political consultant provided political consulting services, or, if the political consultant services were provided to the principal campaign committee for a ballot proposition, the identity of the proposition; and
4. The date when services commenced.

If any information in the registration changes, the political consultant shall update that information within 15 days of the change.

C. When a political consultant who is required to register under this Section 4.16.072 later terminates all political consulting services provided regarding an election campaign, the political consultant shall file a termination statement with the Executive Director within 15 days of termination.

D. Within 15 days after the end of a quarter, an elected official shall file a statement with the Executive Director identifying for that quarter any political consultant that provides or provided political consulting services to that official, and the date when services commenced. This statement is required whether the services were during an election campaign, or during the quarter when the elected official either received certified election results or an appointment to the position, as applicable. If an elected official uses political consulting services regarding a ballot proposition, the elected official shall identify the proposition and the political consultant that will provide or provided political consulting services for the proposition. If any information in the registration changes, the elected official shall update that information within 15 days of the change.

E. All information submitted in any statement or registration required by this Section 4.16.072 will be

posted on the Commission's website within five days after receipt.

F. A political consultant shall not:

1. Provide political consulting services without reporting as required by this Section 4.16.072;

2. Perform compensated work on both an election campaign and perform consulting services with the City at the same time; or

3. Perform compensated political consulting services for an election campaign within one year after the termination of any consulting services contract between the City and a political consultant or the political consultant's principals, employees, or contractors.

G. An elected official shall not knowingly use a political consultant that is in violation of this Section 4.16.072.

H. A person shall not submit false, fraudulent, or misleading information in any statement or registration, including but not limited to misrepresenting the scope or nature of services provided or the identity of clients to whom services are provided.

I. The Commission's rulemaking powers for this Section 4.16.072 include but are not limited to prescribing forms for registration and reporting, determining the method for filing, conducting appropriate inquiry and review of reports or statements for completeness and accuracy, and establishing fees for late filing or non-filing.

J. In addition to other enforcement provisions in this Chapter 4.16:

1. A person that fails to report as required by this Section 4.16.072 is subject to a civil penalty or other administrative sanctions until the registration or reporting is complete and in compliance with this Section 4.16.072.

2. A contract with the City that is in violation of this Section 4.16.072 is void. Upon determination by the Executive Director that such a contract is void, the Executive Director is authorized to pursue collection of payments made by the City related to the contract.

3. A person that violates subsection 4.16.072.F.2 shall not contract with the City for five years after the date the person is found to be in violation. Pursuant to Section 20.70.030, the Director of Finance and Administrative Services may issue an order of debarment that prevents a person from entering into any contract with the City or from acting as a subcontractor on any contract with the City.

Section 4. The provisions of this ordinance are declared to be separate and severable. The invalidity of any clause, sentence, paragraph, subdivision, section, or portion of this ordinance, or the invalidity of its application to any person or circumstance, does not affect the validity of the remainder of this ordinance or the validity of its application to other persons or circumstances.

Section 5. This ordinance shall take effect as provided by Seattle Municipal Code Sections 1.04.020 and 1.04.070.

Passed by the City Council the _____ day of _____, 2025, and signed by
me in open session in authentication of its passage this _____ day of _____, 2025.

President _____ of the City Council

Approved / returned unsigned / vetoed this ____ day of _____, 2025.

Bruce A. Harrell, Mayor

Filed by me this _____ day of _____, 2025.

Scheereen Dedman, City Clerk

(Seal)

SUMMARY and FISCAL NOTE

Department:	Dept. Contact:	CBO Contact:
Legislative	Ben Noble	NA

1. BILL SUMMARY

Legislation Title:

AN ORDINANCE relating to the Ethics Code; establishing reporting and disclosure requirements for political consultants; prohibiting political consultants from concurrently performing consulting work with the city; establishing a cooling-off period for political consultants; adding a new Section 4.16.072 to the Seattle Municipal Code; and amending Section 4.16.030 of the Seattle Municipal Code.

Summary and Background of the Legislation:

This legislation would:

- Create a new section in Seattle Municipal Code Chapter 4.16, Code of Ethics;
- Create reporting and disclosure requirements for political consultants contracted with elected officials or election campaigns;
- Prohibit individuals from working with the City in a consulting capacity while concurrently providing services for an election campaign for city office or ballot measure;
- Establish a one year cooling-off period after termination of a city consulting contract before the consultant can provide political consulting services;
- Authorize the SEEC to enforce the provisions, with the civil penalties of the Code of Ethics applicable to anyone found in violation of the legislation.

2. CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

Does this legislation create, fund, or amend a CIP Project?

☐ Yes ☒ No

If yes, please fill out the table below and attach a new (if creating a project) or marked-up (if amending) CIP Page to the Council Bill.
Please include the spending plan as part of the attached CIP Page. If no, please delete the table.

Project Name:	Master Project I.D.:	Project Location:	Start Date:	End Date:	Total Project Cost Through 2030:

3. SUMMARY OF FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Does this legislation have financial impacts to the City?

☒ Yes ☐ No

If there are no projected changes to expenditures, revenues, or positions, please delete the table below.

Expenditure Change (\$);	2025	2026 est.	2027 est.	2028 est.	2029 est.
General Fund			\$248,000	\$152,000	\$157,000

Expenditure Change (\$); Other Funds	2025	2026 est.	2027 est.	2028 est.	2029 est.
			\$248,000	\$152,000	\$157,000

Revenue Change (\$); General Fund	2025	2026 est.	2027 est.	2028 est.	2029 est.
			\$0	\$0	\$0
Revenue Change (\$); Other Funds	2025	2026 est.	2027 est.	2028 est.	2029 est.
			\$0	\$0	\$0

Number of Positions	2025	2026 est.	2027 est.	2028 est.	2029 est.
			1.0	1.0	1.0
Total FTE Change	2025	2026 est.	2027 est.	2028 est.	2029 est.
			1.0	1.0	1.0

If there are no changes to expenditures, revenues, or positions, please delete Sections 3.a, 3.b, and 3.c and answer the questions in Section 4.

The costs summarized in the table above include: (1) \$100,000 for the one-time expense associated with developing the IT system needed to track compliance and support enforcement of new registration and reporting requirements; (2) one Strategic Advisor II (SA II) position to staff and implement these new regulations. The duties of this position would include such things:

- Creating and administering an online system of registration and reporting;
- Collecting reporting forms quarterly from political consultants;
- Monitoring political consulting activities for code of ethics and election law violations;
- Publishing political consultant reporting data or otherwise answering PDRs requesting the reported data;
- Investigating complaints derived from conduct of City consultants and political consultants; and
- Enforcing the legislation, including rendering any civil penalties, participation in appeals, and performing related enforcement duties.

The cost estimate presented here assumes that this will require a dedicated full-time staff, but at this stage the volume of work is not known. Costs could vary somewhat if marginally more or less staff time is needed to support the new work. In any case, this legislation does not appropriate the funding needed for the IT system, nor does it provide authority to create a new

position. Subsequent legislation will be needed to provide sufficient funding and the required position authority.

3.a. Appropriations

☐ This legislation adds, changes, or deletes appropriations.

Fund Name / Number	Dept	Budget Control Level Name/Number*	2025 Appropriation Change	2026 Estimated Appropriation Change
TOTAL				

*See budget book to obtain the appropriate Budget Control Level for your department.

Appropriations Notes: This authorizing legislation does not appropriate the resources needed to implement the proposed regulatory structure. Separate legislative action, through a supplemental budget amendment, will be needed to create the required position and appropriate the funding needed for that position and the other attendant costs.

3.b. Revenues/Reimbursements

☐ This legislation adds, changes, or deletes revenues or reimbursements.

Anticipated Revenue/Reimbursement Resulting from This Legislation:

Fund Name / Number	Dept	Revenue Source	2025 Revenue	2026 Revenue Est.
TOTAL				

Revenue/Reimbursement Notes:

3.c. Positions

☐ This legislation adds, changes, or deletes positions.

Total Regular Positions Created, Modified, or Abrogated through This Legislation, Including FTE Impact:

Position # for Existing Positions	Position Title & Department*	Fund Name & Number	Program & BCL	PT/FT	2025 Positions	2025 FTE	Does it sunset? (If yes, explain below in Position Notes)
TOTAL							

* List each position separately.

Position Notes: As described above, the legislation does not create the position needed to implement the proposed regulatory structure. Subsequent legislation will be needed to create and fund this new position.

3.d. Other Impacts

Does the legislation have other financial impacts to The City of Seattle, including direct or indirect, one-time or ongoing costs, that are not included in Sections 3.a through 3.c?

It does not.

Please describe any financial costs or other impacts of *not* implementing the legislation.

There are none.

4. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Please describe how this legislation may affect any departments besides the originating department. The legislation could reduce the number of potential consultants available to other departments, due to the disqualification of political consultants performing consulting work simultaneously to any campaign work.

- a. **Does this legislation affect a piece of property? If yes, please attach a map and explain any impacts on the property.** No
- b. **Please describe any perceived implication for the principles of the Race and Social Justice Initiative.** No analysis conducted.
- c. **Climate Change Implications** None
- d. **If this legislation includes a new initiative or a major programmatic expansion: What are the specific long-term and measurable goal(s) of the program? How will this legislation help achieve the program's desired goal(s)? What mechanisms will be used to measure progress towards meeting those goals?** See legislative summary on the first page.

5. CHECKLIST

Please click the appropriate box if any of these questions apply to this legislation.

- ☐ **Is a public hearing required?** No
- ☐ **Is publication of notice with *The Daily Journal of Commerce* and/or *The Seattle Times* required?** No
- ☐ **If this legislation changes spending and/or revenues for a fund, have you reviewed the relevant fund policies and determined that this legislation complies?** N/A

☐

Does this legislation create a non-utility CIP project that involves a shared financial commitment with a non-City partner agency or organization? No

If yes, please review requirements in Resolution 31203 for applicability and complete and attach “Additional risk analysis and fiscal analysis for non-utility partner projects” form.

6. ATTACHMENTS

Summary Attachments:



Political Consultant Ethics bill

LAUREN HENRY, LEGISLATIVE LEGAL COUNSEL

GOVERNANCE, ACCOUNTABILITY, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
DECEMBER 4, 2025

Overview of the bill

- Amends SMC 4.16 Code of Ethics to define and regulate political consultants and political consulting services.
- Modeled after Reporting Regulations in Portland and San Francisco.
- Political consultants would be required to register and report on political consulting services to the SEEC.
- CB 121130 would prohibit political consultants from performing compensated work on an election campaign and being under contract with the City at the same time.
- The SEEC would be empowered to enforce the bill's regulations with civil penalties.

Definitions

Political Consultant

- A person that provides political consulting services to: an elected official; a candidate for City office; or the authorized campaign committee registered with the Washington Public Disclosure Commission for a City ballot proposition. “Political consultant” does not include: a City employee; an accountant, attorney, pollster, or professional fundraiser who provides only accounting, legal, polling, or fundraising services, respectively; or a vendor or subvendor who supplies goods or services other than political consulting services for an election campaign.

Definitions

Political Consulting Services

- Actions in City campaign management and political strategy services, including but not limited to: advocacy and strategy; political polling; advising or assisting in voter contact strategies and services; advising in media strategy, buying, and advertisement; providing candidate development, policy training, political image consulting, and designing, implementing, and analyzing polls and surveys; performing issues research and opposition research; developing and assisting in strategic communication such as news releases, talking points, and speech writing; and advising on negative information handling and political crisis management.

Registration Requirements

1. Who registers?

- A political consultant (individual or business entity)

2. When does registration occur?

- Within 15 days after providing any political consulting services.

3. When is registration updated?

- Within 15 days of a change in registration information; or
- A termination statement is filed within 15 days of the termination of all political consulting services provided regarding an election campaign.

Elected Official Reporting Requirements

- Within 15 days after the end of a quarter, an elected official must file a statement with SEEC Executive Director identifying for that quarter any political consultant that provides or provided political consulting services to that official and the date when services commenced.
- An elected official must update the information within 15 days of a change to the reporting information.

SEEC Website Publishes Reported Info

- The Commission must post on its website all information submitted in any statement or registration within 5 days of receipt.

Review of Portland's Reporting Law

The reporting aspects of CB 121130 closely track Portland's political consulting reporting law (Portland Code Chapter 2.14), with some differences:

Scope:

- Portland's law applies to political consultants for elected officials, *successful* candidates for City elected office, or *successful* campaign committees. Also only applies to political consultants that make the work their trade or profession.
- CB 121130 would apply to elected officials, *any* candidate for office, and *any* authorized campaign committee for ballot measures, but *not* campaign committees for candidates.

Review of Portland's Reporting Law (cont.)

Registration:

- Portland requires a political consultant to report the names and contact info of principals, employees, and contractors *that provide political consulting services to a City elected official*.
- CB 121130 would require a political consultant to register the name and contact info of *all* their business principals, employees, and contractors regardless of their work on a campaign.

Review of San Francisco's Reporting Law

Like Portland's regulations, San Francisco's law focuses on reporting and transparency.

- San Francisco's political consulting law applies to political consultants that earn \$1,000 or more from political consulting in a calendar year.
- The reporting information collected is more detailed, including how much the political consultant was paid.
- The political consultants file quarterly reports instead of the elected officials. They also include information about any City contract obtained by the political consultant during the reporting period if the contract was approved by a client.

Prohibited Conduct of Political Consultants

In addition to reporting requirements, CB 121130 would prohibit certain specific actions by political consultants.

In particular, political consultants could not:

1. Provide political consulting services without reporting as required by Section 4.16.072;
2. Perform compensated work on both an election campaign and perform consulting services with the City at the same time; or
3. Perform compensated political consulting services for an election campaign within one year after the termination of any consulting services contract between the City and a political consultant or the political consultant's principals, employees, or contractors.

Enforcement Provisions

CB 121130 would use the existing enforcement provisions in SMC 4.16 and apply them to the requirements for political consultants.

- Elected officials would be prohibited from knowingly using a political consultant that is in violation of the bill's provisions.
- No person could submit false, fraudulent, or misleading info in any statement or registration to the SEEC.
- If a person fails to report as required by the bill, they would face potential civil penalties.

Enforcement Provisions (cont.)

- Contracts that violate the provisions of the bill would be considered void.
- A person who violates subsection F.2 (working for both a campaign and a City contract at the same time) would be precluded from contracting with the City for 5 years.
- Under SMC 4.16.100.B, enforcement penalty options include a monetary fine of up to five thousand dollars (\$5,000) per violation or three (3) times the economic value of any thing sought or received in violation of Chapter 4.16, whichever is greater.
- The Executive Director of the SEEC would establish the fine amount and other available code sanctions, and violations are subject to appeal.

Sponsor's Substitute Bill

- The bill sponsor has linked a substitute bill for briefing and consideration. It makes 3 changes to the introduced version:
 - Defines political consultant only as someone PAID to perform political consulting services.
 - Amends the quarterly reporting section to require the political consultant to file reports instead of the elected official.
 - Adds a 4th prohibited action to provide a cooling off period between the end of a political campaign and beginning of a consulting contract with the City

Questions?

CITY OF SEATTLE

ORDINANCE _____

COUNCIL BILL 121130

..title

AN ORDINANCE relating to the Ethics Code; establishing reporting and disclosure requirements for political consultants; prohibiting political consultants from concurrently performing consulting work with the city; establishing a cooling-off period for political consultants; adding a new Section 4.16.072 to the Seattle Municipal Code; and amending Section 4.16.030 of the Seattle Municipal Code.

..body

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1 D. City elected officials, specifically the Mayor, City Councilmembers, and the City
2 Attorney, must uphold the public trust and confidence in government by being ethical and
3 transparent in policy decisions. Candidates for City elected offices, City elected officials, and
4 campaigns for City ballot propositions engage political consultants as advisors.

5 E. In providing political consulting services, which include campaign management and
6 political strategy services, a political consultant or consulting business has access to nonpublic
7 information related to elected official clients.

8 F. Registered lobbyists must file reports pursuant to Chapter 2.06 SMC, which makes
9 their relationships with elected officials more publicly transparent than the elected officials'
10 unreported relationships with their political consultant(s). Given consultants' access and
11 potential influence over the City's decisionmakers, it is important to expand transparency by
12 establishing registration and reporting requirements for political consultants and City elected
13 officials and prohibiting certain concurrent consulting activities.

14 G. In SMC 4.16.075, those leaving City employment, including City contractors and
15 consultants, are restricted from certain types of activities or from using confidential information
16 gained from the City; likewise, this legislation creates a cooling off period wherein those
17 performing consulting services for the City must wait one year before providing political
18 consulting services to an election campaign.

19 H. The new regulations in this ordinance build on similar regulations in Portland and San
20 Francisco.

21 I. The new regulations do not regulate the content and viewpoint of the services provided
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“Election campaign” means any campaign in support of or in opposition to a candidate for election to public office of the City and any campaign in support of or in opposition to a City ballot proposition.

“Employee member of an advisory committee” means a paid City officer or employee who serves on an advisory committee by virtue of their paid position with the City.

“Executive Director” means the Executive Director of the Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission or designee.

* * *

“Legislative matter” means any enacted or introduced ~~((council bill))~~ Council Bill, ordinance, resolution, ~~((clerk file))~~ Clerk File, ballot ~~((measure))~~ proposition, or ~~((charter))~~ Charter amendment. A legislative matter may include a possible future ~~((council bill))~~ Council Bill, ordinance, resolution, ~~((clerk file))~~ Clerk File, ballot ~~((measure))~~ proposition, or ~~((charter))~~ Charter amendment, if the possible future matter has been discussed on the public record at an open public meeting of the City Council or one of its committees.

* * *

“Person” means an individual, association, corporation, or other legal entity.

“Political consultant” means a person that provides compensated political consulting services to: an elected official; a candidate for City office; or the authorized campaign committee registered with the Washington Public Disclosure Commission for a City ballot proposition.

“Political consultant” does not include: a City employee; an accountant, attorney, pollster, or professional fundraiser who provides only accounting, legal, polling, or fundraising services, respectively; or a vendor or sub-vendor who supplies goods or services other than political consulting services for an election campaign.

1 “Political consulting services” means compensated actions in City campaign management
2 and political strategy services, including but not limited to: advocacy and strategy; political
3 polling; advising or assisting in voter contact strategies and services; advising in media strategy,
4 buying, and advertisement; providing candidate development, policy training, political image
5 consulting, and designing, implementing, and analyzing polls and surveys; performing issues
6 research and opposition research; developing and assisting in strategic communication such as
7 news releases, talking points, and speech writing; and advising on negative information handling
8 and political crisis management.

9 “Quarter” has the meaning as in Section 2.06.010.

10 Section 3. A new Section 4.16.072 is added to the Seattle Municipal Code as follows:

11 **4.16.072 Political consultants**

12 A. The purpose of this Section 4.16.072 is to prevent conflicts of interest and enhance
13 transparency by prohibiting political consultants from engaging in certain activities and
14 otherwise requiring political consultants to comply with registration and reporting requirements.
15 This Section 4.16.072 does not regulate the content and viewpoint of services provided regarding
16 an election campaign.

17 B. Within 15 days after contracting with the City to provide any political consulting
18 services, a political consultant shall register with the Executive Director. The registration shall
19 include at least:

20 1. If the political consultant is an individual, the name, address, and contact
21 information of both the individual and any of the individual’s associated entities;

22 2. If the political consultant is an entity, the names, addresses, and contact
23 information of its principals, employees, and contractors;

1 3. The name of the candidate or elected official to whom the political consultant
2 provided political consulting services, or, if the political consultant services were provided to the
3 principal campaign committee for a ballot proposition, the identity of the proposition; and

4 4. The date when services commenced.

5 If any information in the registration changes, the political consultant shall update that
6 information within 15 days of the change.

7 C. When a political consultant who is required to register under this Section 4.16.072
8 later terminates all political consulting services provided regarding an election campaign, the
9 political consultant shall file a termination statement with the Executive Director within 15 days
10 of termination.

11 D. Within 15 days after the end of a quarter, a political consultant shall file a statement
12 with the Executive Director identifying for that quarter any political consulting services that the
13 political consultant provides or provided to an elected official, and the date when services
14 commenced. This statement is required whether the services were during an election campaign,
15 or during the quarter when the elected official either received certified election results or an
16 appointment to the position, as applicable. If an elected official uses political consulting services
17 regarding a ballot proposition, the political consultant shall identify the proposition. If any
18 information in the registration changes, the political consultant shall update that information
19 within 15 days of the change.

20 E. All information submitted in any statement or registration required by this Section
21 4.16.072 will be posted on the Commission's website within five days after receipt.

22 F. A political consultant shall not:

1 1. Provide political consulting services without reporting as required by this
2 Section 4.16.072;

3 2. Perform compensated work on both an election campaign and perform
4 consulting services with the City at the same time; or

5 3. Perform compensated political consulting services for an election campaign
6 within one year after the termination of any consulting services contract between the City and a
7 political consultant or the political consultant's principals, employees, or contractors.

8 4. Perform work under a consulting services contract with the City within one
9 year after the termination of any political consulting services for an election campaign.

10 G. An elected official shall not knowingly use a political consultant that is in violation of
11 this Section 4.16.072.

12 H. A person shall not submit false, fraudulent, or misleading information in any statement
13 or registration, including but not limited to misrepresenting the scope or nature of services
14 provided or the identity of clients to whom services are provided.

15 I. The Commission's rulemaking powers for this Section 4.16.072 include but are not
16 limited to prescribing forms for registration and reporting, determining the method for filing,
17 conducting appropriate inquiry and review of reports or statements for completeness and
18 accuracy, and establishing fees for late filing or non-filing.

19 J. In addition to other enforcement provisions in this Chapter 4.16:

20 1. A person that fails to report as required by this Section 4.16.072 is subject to a
21 civil penalty or other administrative sanctions until the registration or reporting is complete and
22 in compliance with this Section 4.16.072.

2. A contract with the City that is in violation of this Section 4.16.072 is void.

Upon determination by the Executive Director that such a contract is void, the Executive Director is authorized to pursue collection of payments made by the City related to the contract.

3. A person that violates subsection 4.16.072.F.2 shall not contract with the City for five years after the date the person is found to be in violation. Pursuant to Section 20.70.030, the Director of Finance and Administrative Services may issue an order of debarment that prevents a person from entering into any contract with the City or from acting as a subcontractor on any contract with the City.

Section 4. The provisions of this ordinance are declared to be separate and severable. The invalidity of any clause, sentence, paragraph, subdivision, section, or portion of this ordinance, or the invalidity of its application to any person or circumstance, does not affect the validity of the remainder of this ordinance or the validity of its application to other persons or circumstances.

Section 5. This ordinance shall take effect as provided by Seattle Municipal Code
Sections 1.04.020 and 1.04.070.

Passed by the City Council the _____ day of _____, 2025,
and signed by me in open session in authentication of its passage this _____ day of
_____, 2025.

President _____ of the City Council

Approved / returned unsigned / vetoed this ____ day of _____, 2025.

Bruce A. Harrell, Mayor

Filed by me this _____ day of _____, 2025.

Scheereen Dedman, City Clerk

(Seal)



Legislation Text

File #: CB 121131, **Version:** 1

CITY OF SEATTLE

ORDINANCE _____

COUNCIL BILL _____

AN ORDINANCE relating to City employment, commonly referred to as the Pay Zone Ordinance; adjusting the pay zone structures for 2026 for the City's discretionary pay programs; and ratifying and confirming certain prior acts.

WHEREAS, the Accountability Pay for Executives Program is set forth in Seattle Municipal Code (SMC)

Section 4.20.380, which provides for adjustments to the pay zones based on a biennial labor market analysis of selected benchmark titles as recommended by the Seattle Human Resources (SDHR)

Director; and

WHEREAS, the Manager and Strategic Advisor Compensation Program is set forth in SMC Section 4.20.390,

which provides for adjustments to the pay zones based on a biennial labor market analysis of selected benchmark titles as recommended by the SDHR Director; and

WHEREAS, the Electric Utility Executive Compensation Program is set forth in SMC Section 4.20.401, which

provides for adjustments to the pay zones at least every two years as recommended by the SDHR

Director; and

WHEREAS, the Information Technology Professional Compensation Program is set forth in SMC Section

4.20.430, which provides for adjustments to the pay zones based on a biennial labor market analysis of selected benchmark titles as recommended by the SDHR Director; and

WHEREAS, the Investments/Debt Director Compensation Program is set forth in SMC 4.20.450, which

provides for adjustments to the pay band at least every two years as recommended by the SDHR

Director; and

WHEREAS, Ordinance 118851, Ordinance 119954, Ordinance 120119, Ordinance 120819, and Ordinance 126193 provide that the SDHR Director shall act on behalf of the Legislative Department's appointing authority to recommend all future adjustments to pay bands in the Legislative Department Broadbands; and

WHEREAS, the Power Marketing Compensation Program was established by Ordinance 119351, which provides for adjustments to the pay band at least every two years as recommended by the SDHR Director; and

WHEREAS, the City Light General Manager and Chief Executive Officer Compensation Program was established by Ordinance 121176 and Ordinance 124507, which together provide for adjustments to the pay band at least every two years as recommended by the SDHR; and

WHEREAS, Ordinance 121787 established the Mayoral Staff Assistant Discretionary Pay Program and provides for future adjustments to the pay zones to be consistent with cost-of-living adjustments awarded to non-represented City Step Pay Program titles; and

WHEREAS, the Assistant City Attorney Discretionary Pay Program was established by Ordinance 122007, which provides for adjustments to the pay band at least every two years as recommended by the SDHR Director; and

WHEREAS, the Seattle Police Chief Compensation Program was established by Ordinance 124510, which provides for adjustments to the pay band at least every two years as recommended by the SDHR Director for approval by the City Council; and

WHEREAS, the Magistrate Compensation Program was established by Ordinance 124586, which provides for adjustments to the pay band at least every two years as recommended by the SDHR Director; and

WHEREAS, the Seattle Public Utilities General Manager and Chief Executive Officer Compensation Program was established by Ordinance 125164, which provides for adjustments to the pay band at least every two years as recommended by the SDHR Director; and

WHEREAS, the Seattle Information Technology Chief Technology Officer Compensation Program was established by Ordinance 126029, which provides for adjustments to the pay band at least every two years as recommended by the SDHR Director; and

WHEREAS, the Seattle Fire Chief Compensation Program was established by Ordinance 126513, which provides for adjustments to the pay band at least every two years as recommended by the SDHR Director for approval by the City Council; NOW, THEREFORE,

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY OF SEATTLE AS FOLLOWS:

Section 1. Adjusting the pay zones in the Accountability Pay for Executives (APEX) Program. As recommended by the Seattle Human Resources Director, the pay zones in the APEX Program will be adjusted as shown below. The rates for 2026 shall be effective December 31, 2025.

<u>APEX Titles</u>	<u>2026 Pay Zone Rates</u>
Executive 1	\$56.60 - \$93.41
Executive 2	\$66.88 - \$110.35
Executive 3	\$78.96 - \$130.31
Executive 4	\$93.16 - \$153.70

Section 2. Adjusting the pay zones in the Manager and Strategic Advisor Compensation Program. As recommended by the Seattle Human Resources Director, the pay zones in the Manager and Strategic Advisor Compensation Program will be adjusted as shown below. The adjustments to each pay zone shall encompass all occupational groups that constitute the class series. The rates for 2026 shall be effective December 31, 2025.

<u>Manager Titles</u>	<u>2026 Pay Zone Rates</u>
Manager 1 (all classes)	\$51.88 - \$77.82
Manager 2 (all classes)	\$56.57 - \$84.88
Manager 3 (all classes)	\$61.90 - \$92.84
<u>Strategic Advisor Titles</u>	<u>2026 Pay Zone Rates</u>
Strategic Advisor 1 (all classes)	\$51.88 - \$77.82
Strategic Advisor 2 (all classes)	\$56.57 - \$84.88

Strategic Advisor 3 (all classes)	\$61.90 - \$92.84
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Section 3. Adjusting the pay zones in the Electric Utility Executive (EUE) Compensation Program. As recommended by the Seattle Human Resources Director, the pay zones for titles in the EUE Compensation Program shall be adjusted as shown below. The rates for 2026 shall be effective December 31, 2025.

<u>EUE Titles</u>	<u>2026 Pay Zone Rates</u>
Electric Utility Executive 1	\$68.04 - \$108.83
Electric Utility Executive 2	\$78.22 - \$125.14
Electric Utility Executive 3, Director	\$101.99 - \$163.19
Electric Utility Executive 3, Officer	\$116.65 - \$186.65

Section 4. Adjusting the pay zones in the Information Technology Professional (ITP) Compensation Pay Program. As recommended by the Seattle Human Resources Director, the pay zones in the ITP Compensation Program will be adjusted as shown below. The rates for 2026 shall be effective December 31, 2025.

<u>ITP Titles</u>	<u>2026 Pay Zone Rates</u>
Information Technology Professional A, Exempt (Non-represented)	\$62.26 - \$93.41
Information Technology Professional B (Non-Represented)	\$54.52 - \$81.84
Information Technology C (Non-Represented)	\$47.69 - 71.53

Section 5. Adjusting the pay zones in the Investments/Debt Director Compensation Program. As recommended by the Seattle Human Resources Director, the pay zones for the following titles shall be adjusted as shown below. The rates for 2026 shall be effective December 31, 2025.

<u>Investments/Debt Director Titles</u>	<u>2026 Pay Zone Rates</u>
Investments/Debt Director	\$62.50 - \$124.95
Assistant Investments/Debt Director	\$62.50 - \$124.95

Section 6. Adjusting the pay zones in the Legislative Department and associated titles in the City Auditor's Office. As recommended by the Seattle Human Resources Director, the pay zones for the following titles shall

be adjusted as shown below. The rates for 2026 shall be effective December 31, 2025.

<u>Legislative Titles</u> <u>2026 Pay Zone Rates</u>	
Executive Manager-Legislative	\$56.60 - \$153.70
Executive Manager-City Auditor	\$56.60 - \$153.70
Hearing Examiner	\$65.00 - \$149.38
Hearing Examiner, Deputy	\$65.00 - \$149.38
Legislative Assistant	\$22.48 - \$76.53
Strategic Advisor-Audit	\$51.88 - \$92.84
Strategic Advisor-Legislative	\$51.88 - \$92.84
Manager-Legislative	\$51.88 - \$92.84

Section 7. Adjusting the pay zone for titles in the Power Marketing Compensation Program. As recommended by the Seattle Human Resources Director, the pay zones for the Power Marketing Compensation Program shall be as shown below. The rates for 2026 shall be effective December 31, 2025.

<u>Power Marketer</u> <u>2026 Pay Zone Rates</u>	
Power Marketer (non-represented)	\$60.36 - \$105.03

Section 8. Adjusting the pay zone in the City Light General Manager and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Compensation Program. As recommended by the Seattle Human Resources Director, the pay zone for the City Light General Manager and CEO Compensation Program shall be as shown below. The rates for 2026 shall be effective December 31, 2025.

<u>City Light General Manager & CEO</u> <u>2026 Pay Zone Rates</u>	
City Light General Manager & CEO	\$162.94 - \$260.73

Section 9. Adjusting the pay zones in the Executive Department - Mayor's Office. As recommended by the Seattle Human Resources Director, the pay zones for the following titles shall be adjusted consistent with cost-of-living adjustments awarded to non-represented City Step Pay Program titles. The rates for 2026 shall be effective December 31, 2025.

<u>Mayoral Staff Assistant Titles</u> <u>2026 Pay Zone Rates</u>	

Mayoral Staff Assistant 1	\$22.89 - \$44.77
Mayoral Staff Assistant 2	\$39.37 - \$78.75

Section 10. Adjusting the pay zone in the Assistant City Attorney (ACA) Discretionary Pay Program. As recommended by the Seattle Human Resources Director, the pay zone for the Assistant City Attorney Compensation Program shall be adjusted as shown below. The rates for 2026 shall be effective December 31, 2025.

<u>ACA Title2026 Pay Zone Rates</u>	
City Attorney, Assistant	\$45.77 - \$109.87

Section 11. Adjusting the pay zone in the Seattle Police Chief Compensation Program. As recommended by the Seattle Human Resources Director, the pay zone for the Seattle Police Chief Compensation Program shall be as shown below. The rates for 2026 shall be effective December 31, 2025.

<u>Seattle Police Chief2026 Pay Zone Rates</u>	
Seattle Police Chief	\$112.21 - \$179.55

Section 12. Adjusting the pay zone in the Magistrate Compensation Program. As recommended by the Seattle Human Resources Director, the pay zone for the Magistrate Compensation Program shall be as shown below. The rates for 2026 shall be effective December 31, 2025.

<u>Magistrate2026 Pay Zone Rates</u>	
Magistrate	\$59.16 - \$88.76

Section 13. Adjusting the pay zone in the Seattle Public Utilities (SPU) General Manager and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Compensation Program. As recommended by the Seattle Human Resources Director, the pay zone for the SPU General Manager and CEO Compensation Program shall be as shown below. The rates for 2026 shall be effective December 31, 2025.

<u>SPU General Manager & CEO2026 Pay Zone Rates</u>	
SPU General Manager & CEO	\$136.59 - \$218.54

Section 14. Adjusting the pay zone in the Chief Technology Officer Compensation Program. As recommended by the Seattle Human Resources Director, the pay zone for the Chief Technology Officer shall be as shown below. The rates for 2025 shall be effective December 31, 2025.

<u>Chief Technology Officer2026 Pay Zone Rates</u>	
Chief Technology Officer	\$103.78 - \$171.23

Section 15. Adjusting the pay zone in the Seattle Fire Chief Compensation Program. As recommended by the Seattle Human Resources Director, the pay zone for the Seattle Fire Chief Compensation Program shall be as shown below. The rates for 2026 shall be effective December 31, 2025.

<u>Seattle Fire Chief2026 Pay Zone Rates</u>	
Seattle Fire Chief	\$112.21 - \$179.55

Section 16. Any act consistent with the authority of this ordinance taken prior to its effective date is ratified and confirmed.

Section 17. This ordinance shall take effect as provided by Seattle Municipal Code Sections 1.04.020 and 1.04.070.

Passed by the City Council the _____ day of _____, 2025, and signed by
me in open session in authentication of its passage this _____ day of _____, 2025.

President _____ of the City Council

Approved / returned unsigned / vetoed this ____ day of _____, 2025.

Bruce A. Harrell, Mayor

Filed by me this _____ day of _____, 2025.

Scheereen Dedman, City Clerk

(Seal)

SUMMARY and FISCAL NOTE

Department:	Dept. Contact:	CBO Contact:
Seattle Department of Human Resources	Shane Eubank	Alyssa Ha

1. BILL SUMMARY

Legislation Title: AN ORDINANCE relating to City employment, commonly referred to as the Pay Zone Ordinance; adjusting the pay zones for titles in the City’s discretionary pay programs; and ratifying and confirming certain prior acts.

Summary and Background of the Legislation: This legislation proposes the adjustments to the pay structures for various discretionary pay programs, including the Accountability Pay for Executives (APEX) Program; Manager and Strategic Advisor Compensation Program; Electric Utility Executive (EUE) Compensation Program; Information Technology Professional (ITP) Compensation Program; Investments/Debt Director Compensation Program; Legislative Department’s Broadbands; Power Marketing Compensation Program; Seattle City Light General Manager and Chief Executive Officer Compensation Program; Mayoral Staff Assistant Discretionary Pay Program; Assistant City Attorney Discretionary Pay Program; Seattle Police Chief Compensation Program; Magistrate Program; Seattle Public Utilities General Manager and Chief Executive Officer Compensation Program; Seattle Information Technology Chief Technology Officer Compensation Program; and the Seattle Fire Chief Compensation Program.

Various pay programs, collectively known as discretionary pay programs, provide for annual or biennial review of the salary structures to remain competitive in the labor market. These adjustments do not automatically create additional costs. However, the Executive’s 2026 Proposed Budget grants all City departments the appropriate authority to increase compensation rates consistent with the percentage increases associated with the legislated changes in the discretionary pay programs.

2. CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

Does this legislation create, fund, or amend a CIP Project? ☐ Yes ☒ No

3. SUMMARY OF FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Does this legislation have financial impacts to the City? ☐ Yes ☒ No

3.d. Other Impacts

Does the legislation have other financial impacts to The City of Seattle, including direct or indirect, one-time or ongoing costs, that are not included in Sections 3.a through 3.c? If so, please describe these financial impacts.

While this legislation provides adjustments to the pay structures for the various discretionary pay programs, it does not set individual employee pay rates or provide additional appropriation authority. Fiscal impacts on employee pay resulting from these pay band changes are included in the 2026 Proposed Budget.

If the legislation has costs, but they can be absorbed within existing operations, please describe how those costs can be absorbed. The description should clearly describe if the absorbed costs are achievable because the department had excess resources within their existing budget, or if, by absorbing these costs, the department is deprioritizing other work that would have used these resources.

N/A

Please describe any financial costs or other impacts of *not* implementing the legislation.

If this legislation were not implemented, the pay zones for the City's various discretionary pay programs would remain at the 2025 pay zones, despite cost-of-living increases in 2026.

Please describe how this legislation may affect any City departments other than the originating department.

This legislation provides adjustments to the pay structures for the various discretionary pay programs. The discretionary pay programs include positions across all City departments.

4. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

a. Is a public hearing required for this legislation?

No.

b. Is publication of notice with The Daily Journal of Commerce and/or The Seattle Times required for this legislation?

No.

c. Does this legislation affect a piece of property?

No.

d. Please describe any perceived implication for the principles of the Race and Social Justice Initiative.

i. How does this legislation impact vulnerable or historically disadvantaged communities? How did you arrive at this conclusion? In your response please consider impacts within City government (employees, internal programs) as well as in the broader community.

N/A

ii. **Please attach any Racial Equity Toolkits or other racial equity analyses in the development and/or assessment of the legislation.**

iii. **What is the Language Access Plan for any communications to the public?**
N/A

e. Climate Change Implications

i. **Emissions: How is this legislation likely to increase or decrease carbon emissions in a material way? Please attach any studies or other materials that were used to inform this response.**

N/A

ii. **Resiliency: Will the action(s) proposed by this legislation increase or decrease Seattle's resiliency (or ability to adapt) to climate change in a material way? If so, explain. If it is likely to decrease resiliency in a material way, describe what will or could be done to mitigate the effects.**

No.

f. **If this legislation includes a new initiative or a major programmatic expansion: What are the specific long-term and measurable goal(s) of the program? How will this legislation help achieve the program's desired goal(s)? What mechanisms will be used to measure progress towards meeting those goals?**

N/A

g. **Does this legislation create a non-utility CIP project that involves a shared financial commitment with a non-City partner agency or organization?**

No.

5. ATTACHMENTS

Summary Attachments: None



2026 Citywide Pay Zone Ordinance

AMANDA ALLEN, LEGISLATIVE ANALYST

GOVERNANCE, ACCOUNTABILITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

12/4/2025

Purpose of the Pay Zone Ordinance

- Complies with the rule that all proposed changes to the City's compensation and classification structures must be approved by City Council.
- Increases the pay band ranges by 3.6%, the previously adopted Annual Wage Increase (AWI), for the City's discretionary pay programs impacting positions like executives, managers, strategic advisors, and other discreet titles like Police and Fire Chief.
- For example:

Classification Title	2025 Pay Zone Rate	2026 Pay Zone Rate Increased by 3.6%
Strategic Advisor 1	\$50.08 - \$75.12	\$51.88 - \$77.82

Compensation Structure Maintenance

- This process is completed every year.
- The Seattle Municipal Code grants Seattle Human Resources the responsibility to maintain the City's compensation and classification structures.
- This ordinance provides routine system maintenance functions that implements other Council-approved legislation.

Implementation of 2026 Pay Zones

- This maintenance legislation allows City departments to process the AWI's previously approved in the budget and collective bargaining agreements.
- Pay rates for 2026 shall be effective December 31, 2025, to ensure implementation January 1, 2026.

Questions?

December 2, 2025

MEMORANDUM

To: Governance, Accountability and Economic Development Committee
From: Amanda Allen, Legislative Analyst
Subject: CB 121131 – 2026 Pay Zone Ordinance

On December 4, 2025, the Governance, Accountability and Economic Development Committee of the City Council will discuss and possibly vote on Council Bill (CB) 121131 which would adjust pay bands for City of Seattle (City) discretionary pay programs. This memo provides a summary of the bill and identifies next steps.

Overview

This legislation would increase the pay bands for discretionary pay programs with an annual wage increase (AWI) of 3.6 percent in 2026 to support the City to maintain competitiveness in the labor market. This adjustment was legislated by the City Council via [Ordinance \(ORD\) 127161](#) on December 13, 2024, where the amount of the 2025 AWI and the calculation for the 2026 AWI were identified. The increment is benchmarked with the AWI previously bargained with the Coalition Collective Bargaining Agreements.

Summary

The City's discretionary pay programs include:

1. Broad categories of job titles that are filled by many employees, such as the Accountability Pay Executives Program (APEX) for department executives, the Strategic Advisor and Manager Compensation (SAM) Programs for various titles of strategic advisors and managers, the Information Technology Professionals (ITP) and others; and
2. Individual compensation programs for the City Light General Manager & CEO, Police Chief, Chief Technology Officer, Fire Chief, and others.

Discretionary pay programs differ from the step progression pay programs in that the appointing authority (i.e., head of department) can set a staff member's salary within a defined broad salary range or zone. Pay decisions can be based on skills, experience, performance, or market conditions and changes in pay are decided by the appointing authority. Alternatively, step progression pay programs are structured and predictable. Employees receive automatic raises at set intervals in fixed amounts. Salary increments are awarded based on tenure and appointing authorities have very little discretion available to increase or decrease wages.¹

¹ For more information on the discretionary pay program and step progression pay program, see the [City of Seattle 2023 Salary Schedule and Compensation Plan](#) (page 3).

The Seattle Department of Human Resources (SDHR) Director periodically recommends adjustments to the pay bands to ensure compliance with discretionary pay program requirements in the Seattle Municipal Code and to establish competitive salary structures. The last adjustment to these pay bands was made via the 2025 Pay Zone Ordinance ([ORD 127162](#)).

The SDHR Director recommends increasing the pay bands by 3.6 percent to align with the 2026 AWI for employees represented by the Coalition. Historically, the City has provided the same benefits and other conditions of employment, including opportunities for wage increases, for employees represented by Coalition unions as for non-represented employees.

Currently, there are 2,600 employees in discretionary pay programs, including 1,000 represented employees and 1,600 non-represented employees. Represented employees in these pay programs will receive a salary increase subject to the terms of their collective bargaining agreement (e.g., Coalition members will also receive a 3.6 percent increase). Non-represented employees in these pay programs will be eligible for a salary increase subject to the discretion of their appointing authority.

Financial Impacts

Pay band adjustments do not automatically create additional costs. Compensation changes for employees in discretionary pay programs are subject to the terms of collective bargaining agreements or an appointing authority's discretion. The City's 2026 Adopted Budget grants all City departments the appropriate authority to increase compensation rates consistent with the percentage increases associated with the legislated changes in the discretionary pay programs. The Six-year Financial Plans in the 2026 Adopted Budget assume ongoing impacts of wage increases in planning reserves.

Next Steps

If the Committee votes to approve CB 121131, this bill will be sent to the full Council for final approval. With the final vote, appointing authorities would be authorized to provide discretionary wage adjustments for employees within the increased pay bands. For the discretionary pay programs identified, the pay zone adjustment would be effective January 1, 2026, due to the ratify and confirm clause included in the legislation.

Please contact Amanda Allen if you have questions about the proposed legislation.

cc: Ben Noble, Director
Lish Whitson, Lead Analyst