

Civil Service, PSCSC & Entry Police Testing

Seattle City Council

Public Safety and Human Services Committee

Executive Director Andrea Scheele

March 12, 2024



City of Seattle

Presentation Topics

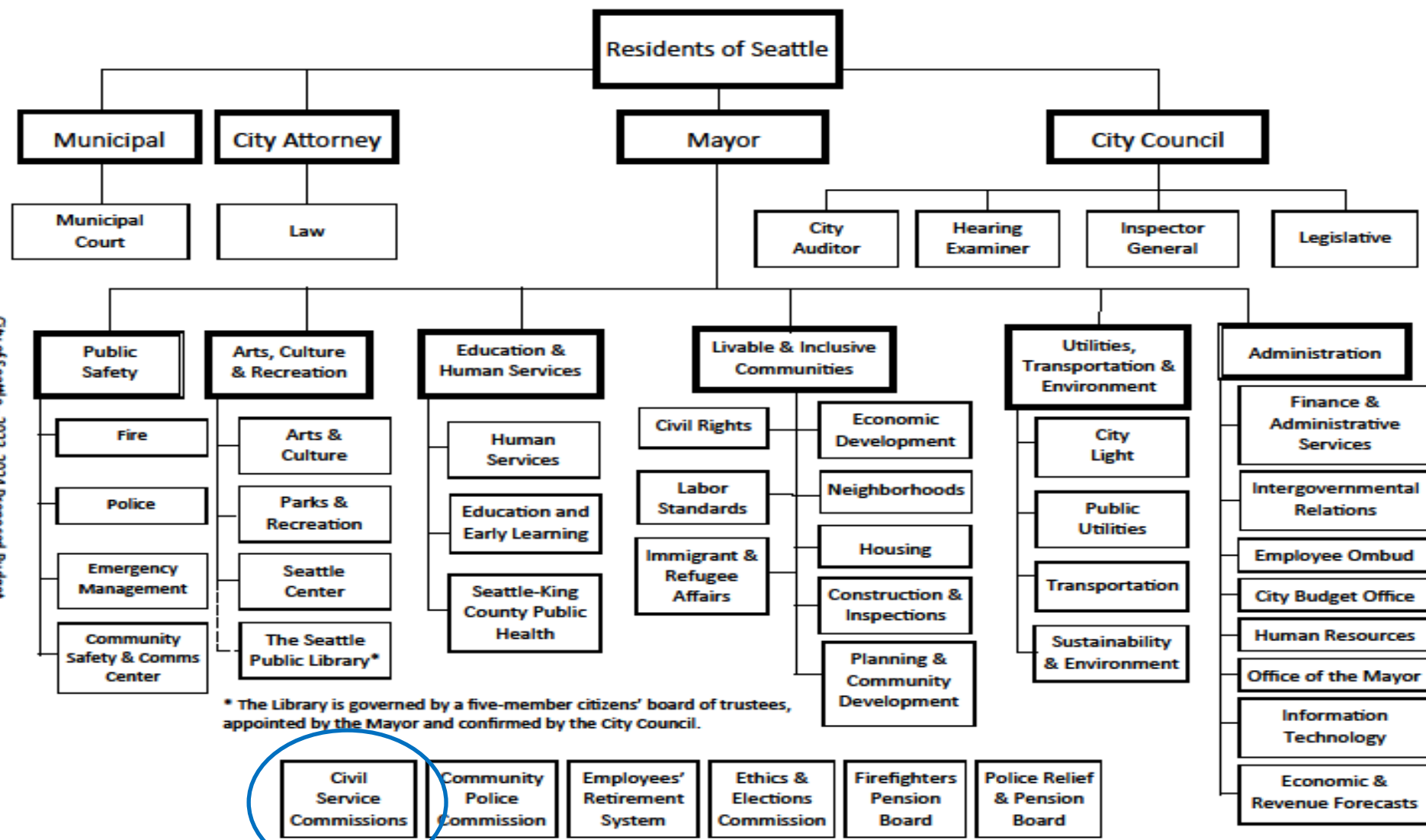
- Civil Service Commissions
- Public Safety Exams
- Entry Police Exam
- Questions



Civil Service Commissions Overview



City of Seattle



Two Civil Service Commissions

Public Safety Civil
Service
Commission
(PSCSC)

Civil Service
Commission
(CSC)

Civil Service Commissions Department (CIV)

Disciplinary
Appeals

Investigates
Political
Influence in
Hiring

Makes Reccom-
mendations re City's
Personnel System

CSC

PSCSC

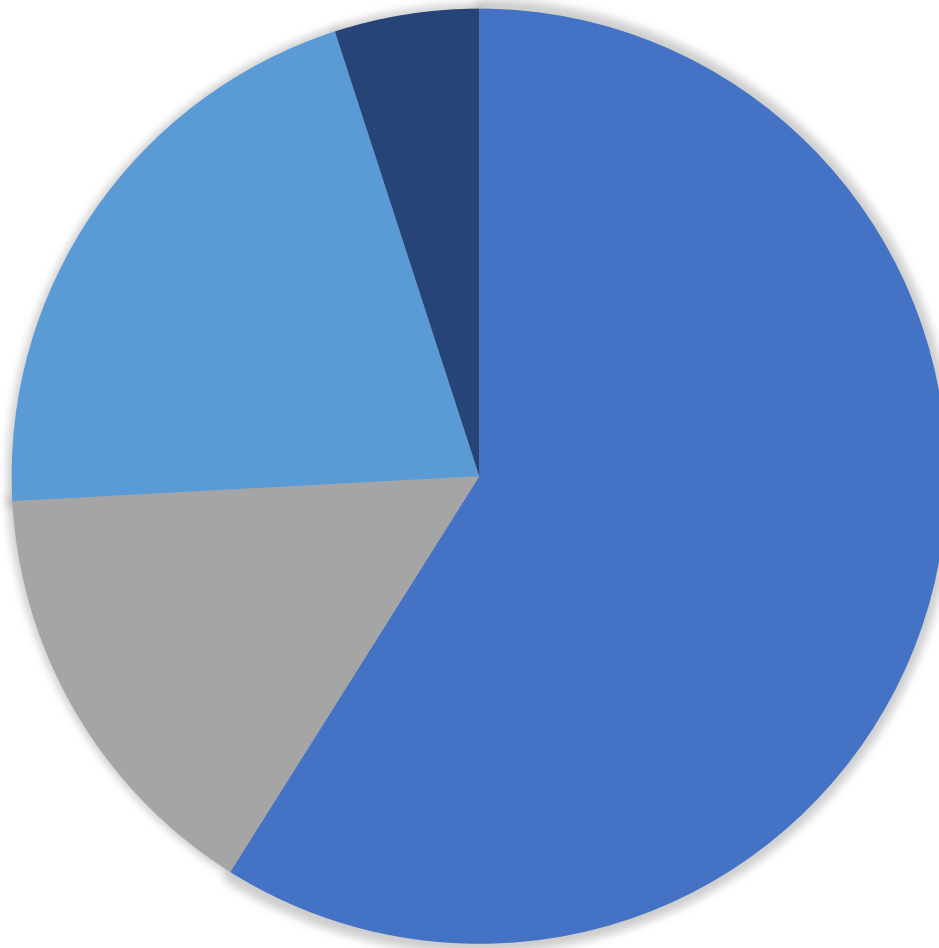
Civil Service
Exams
Entry and
Promotional
SPD and SFD
(with SHR
support)

Disciplinary
Appeals

Oversight of
Public Safety
Civil Service
System

Classification
with SHR
support

COS Employees' Civil Service Status



Total Employees: 13,417

- Civil Service (7,908)
- Public Safety Civil Service (2,041)
- Exempt, regular and temporary employees (2,798)
- SPL, not in civil service system (670)

Source: City of Seattle 1/22/2024

Authority and Mandate

Charter of the City of Seattle, Article XVI, Sec. 3- Personnel System and Civil Service

- Employees shall be members of the civil service
- Merit principles
- Just cause, due process
- Right to appeal to Commission

State law requires Washington cities operate a merit based civil service system for fire and police department employees.

- Civil Service for City Firefighters, [RCW 41.08](#)
- Civil Service for City Police, [RCW. 41.12](#)



Authority, Mandate, cont.

SMC 4.08- Public Safety Civil Service Ordinance

- "Appointments, promotions, removals shall be based on merit.."
- Excludes highest ranks at SPD, SFD
- Established rulemaking, classification, and other duties for the Commission

Vahle v. City of Lakewood, 14 Wn. App. 2d 1068 (2020)

"The fundamental purpose of civil service laws is to require public officials to hire, promote and discharge employees based on merit rather than political affiliation, religion, favoritism or race." City of Yakima, 117 Wn.2d at 664. In other words, "the civil service system was designed to replace the spoils system with a merit system." *Id.*



Civil Service Merit Principles

- Selection and advancement based on fair and open competition
- Fair and equal treatment of applicants and employees
- Exams and hiring processes based on KSAs necessary for the job
- Proper regard for applicant and employees' privacy and constitutional rights
- Right to appeal serious discipline to Commission
- Independence is to insulate employment actions from political influence
- 1-year probationary period



Independent Authority

Seattle Police Officers' Guild v. City of Seattle, 121 Wn.App. 453 (2004)

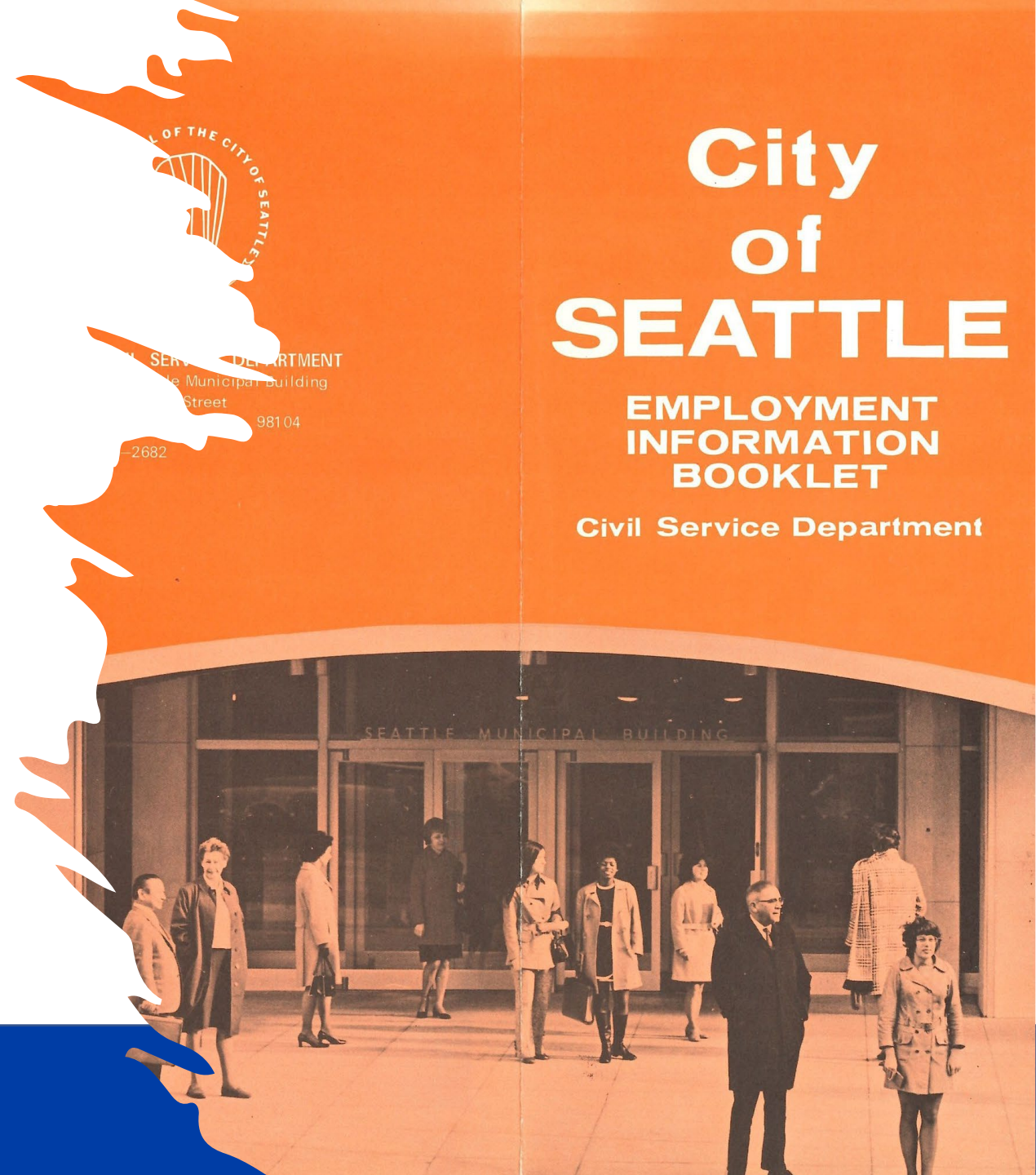
Court of Appeals held that Ordinance was void that transferred powers away from PSCSC to HR Director. Transfer "abridged the independence of the commission" and "did not substantially accomplish the purpose of civil service," as required by RCW.

2017 Police Accountability Ordinance:

- PSCSC is preferred venue for disciplinary appeals.
- Language and Community Service Preference Points for ELPO (Added 2018 , 2022.)



What does the Public Safety Civil Service Commission (PSCSC) do?



City of SEATTLE

EMPLOYMENT INFORMATION BOOKLET

Civil Service Department

Commission Governance

- Three commissioners, terms staggered:
 - Chair Richard Greene (SCC)
 - Commissioner Stacy Connoles (MO)
 - Commissioner Tom Applegate (elected)
- OPMA
- Quasi judicial when conducting disciplinary appeal hearings



Commission Duties

- Monthly meetings to conduct business
- Hear appeals of alleged violations of PSCSC Rules
- Oversee competitive merit-based testing system
- Oversee other aspects of the public safety civil service system, including position classification, probationary periods, calculation of service credit, and more.
- Jointly with CSC commissioners, appoint and supervise the Executive Director



Public Safety Exams Overview



City of Seattle

Exams Overview: 11 Exam Types

Police Exams

Police Officer

Lateral Entry

Sergeant

Lieutenant

Captain

Fire Exams

Firefighter

Lieutenant

Fireboat Engineer

Fireboat Pilot

Fire Captain

Battalion Chief

* Promotional exams are administered every-other year. **Entry and lateral exams** have varying schedules based on need.

Mitigate Risk, Increase Trust, Morale

Discrimination/Adverse Impact

- [Feds: NJ police sergeant exams discriminatory](#)
- [Justice Dept Settles Employment Discrimination Allegations Against City of Austin](#)
- [Minority New York firefighters settle racial bias suit for \\$98 million](#)
- [Washington sues Florida city over firefighter tests](#)

Testing Integrity, Cheating, and Nepotism

- [Chicago Police Sergeant Challenges Testing System as Rigged](#)
- [Richmond Police, Firefighters Question Promotion Process](#)

- [Port Authority police captain accused of e-mailing promotion exam to himself](#)
- [LAFD Hiring Controversy](#)

Other Legal Challenges, Issues, and Errors

- [Washington State Patrol settles veterans preference lawsuit, awards \\$13 million to applicants](#)
- [Glitch Prompts Alliance to offer firefighter test again](#)
- [Boston union wins its case on exam issue](#)
- [Dallas police investigating potential irregularities on promotion exams](#)



Exams Overview: Quality & Integrity



Assessors for promotional exams from external public safety departments



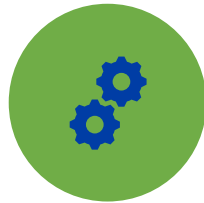
Job Task Analysis and exams are validated by consultants



Exams are reviewed and informed by SFD and SPD development committees



All involved follow strict confidentiality procedures



Continuous process analysis and improvement



Equity lens woven through all components of process

Exams Overview: What we do not do

Recruiting

Physical
Fitness Testing

Drug Testing

Polygraph

Job Offers

Outreach

Background
Investigations

Job Specific
Training

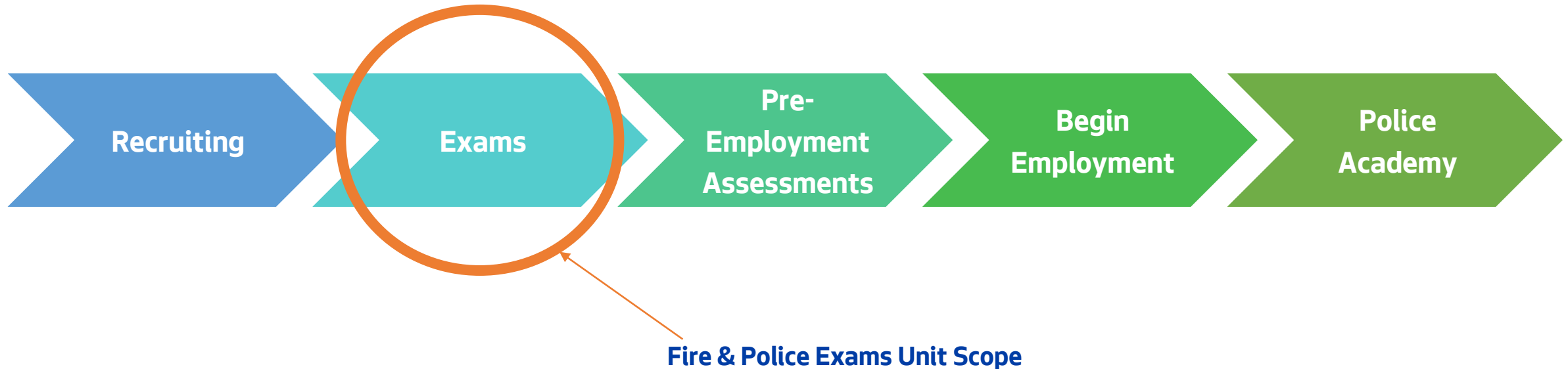
Entry Police Exams



City of Seattle

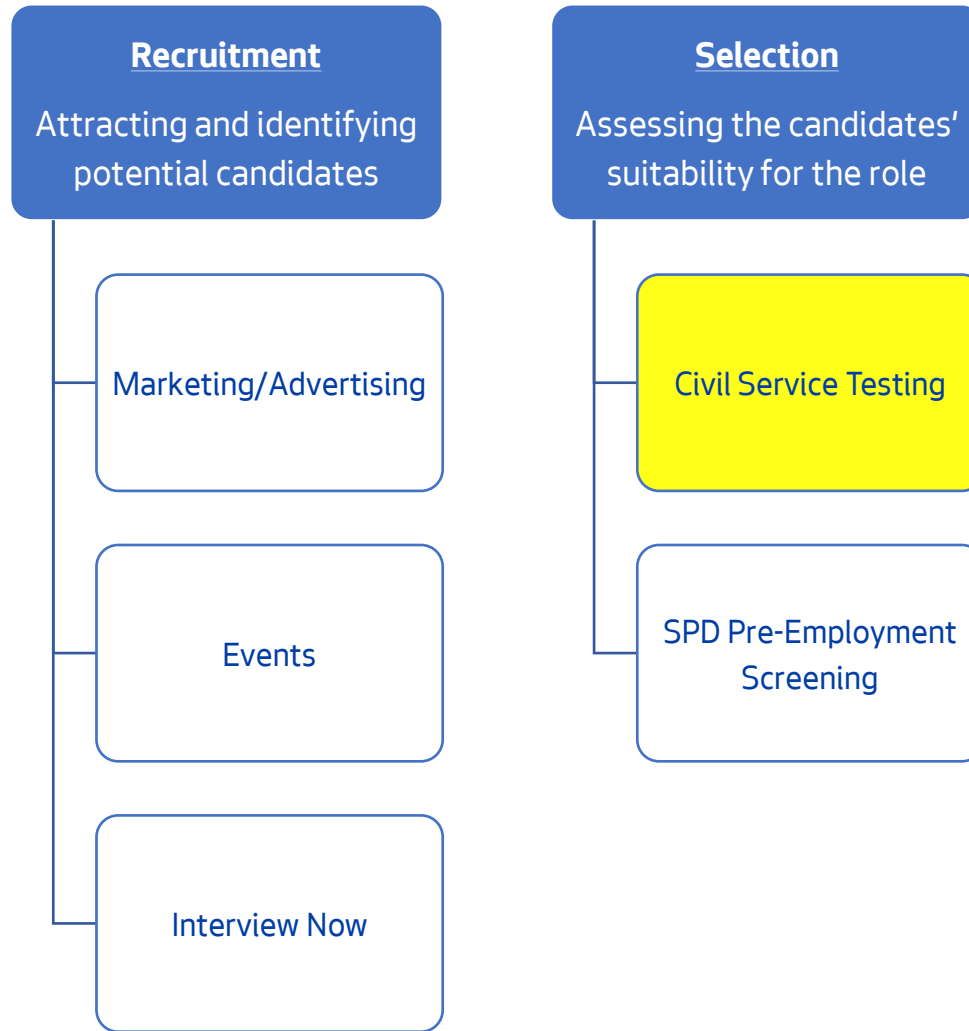
Entry Police Exams: Scope

Entry Level Police Hiring Process



*Promotional exams are truncated versions of the above process, as all applicants are internal [except police command staff]

Entry Police Exams: Scope



Recruitment and Retention Goal #1
To redesign systems to accelerate the recruitment and application process to increase the number of successful applicants **without compromising quality.**

PSCSC's functions : Entry Police Officer

- Handle candidates from application until their name is certified to SPD passing the exam.
- 6+ communications to candidates during exam period
- Candidates can reach out to exam team for help
- Consistent treatment, clear messaging supports a fair process
- Easy “opt in” to Interview Now, attend a workshop, or contact a recruiter
- We notify of pass/fail at end of cycle, transition candidate to SPD for next steps



Entry Police Exam: History

- Seattle developed a new comprehensive police officer civil service exam following the Federal Consent Decree [settlement agreement](#) and [memorandum of understanding](#) (MOU) with the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ).
- **Priorities:** High quality, valid assessment of knowledge, skills, and abilities required of our police officers, especially in areas of [use of force](#), [judgment](#), [integrity](#), and [potential for group bias](#).



Entry Police Exams: Competencies Assessed

Human Relations

Incident Observation &
Report Writing

Reading Comprehension

Integrity

Group Bias, Use of
Force, Commitment to
Equality

Common Questions

Candidate Funnel

- Why don't all applicants schedule or complete the exam?

Confidentiality

- Can applicant data be shared?

Registration Publication Cadence

- Can registers be published more frequently?

Testing Vendor

- Can we use other testing vendors?
- Why don't more people pass the exam?



Key Takeaways



Key Takeaways

- **The PSCSC is an independent body**, charged with a public safety civil service system where personnel decisions are based on merit.
- **The PSCSC continuously uses data** to monitor and improve exams and processes to assess critical competencies for the job, in service to community. We center accessibility, equity, and exam validity.
- **The PSCSC is a committed, collaborative partner in the effort to address** the current police staffing crisis ongoing needs of public safety employees and departments.



**Thank you
&
Questions**



City of Seattle