

Becoming a Qualified Candidate

In November 2015 Seattle voters passed Initiative 122, the “Honest Elections Seattle” initiative. I-122 included several campaign finance reforms including, a “democracy voucher” program providing public financing of campaigns for candidates seeking the office of Mayor, City Attorney, or City Council. On the first business day of the municipal election year, registered voters in the City of Seattle will receive four vouchers valued at \$25 each. The voucher holder can assign the vouchers to a qualified candidate or candidates of their choice. Once the SEEC has validated the assigned voucher, the voucher dollars will be released to the campaign.

This guide is intended to inform interested candidates on how to qualify to participate in the **Voucher Program** and receive vouchers.

Step 1. Register as a candidate. Candidates are encouraged to contact the SEEC at 206-684-8500 for complete training on Seattle’s campaign disclosure rules and regulations.

Within two weeks of becoming a candidate, file the following reports:

PDC Form C-1	Campaign Registration	PDC (e-file or paper file) and SEEC (e-file)
PDC Form F-1	State Personal Financial Affairs Statement	PDC
SEEC Form F-1	City Personal Financial Affairs Statement	Seattle City Clerk

PDC – WA State Public Disclosure Commission
SEEC – Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission

Program registration begins July 1, the year prior to the election year and ends two weeks after the candidate files the Declaration of Candidacy in May of the election year. In 2017, the last day to register for the Program is June 2.

Step 2. Collect qualifying contributions and signatures.

Candidates will obtain a **Qualifying Contributions Petition** form from the SEEC. The candidate collects contributions of at least \$10 from residents in the City who are eligible to contribute to campaigns along with that contributor’s signature. Minimum signature and contribution requirements per office are below.

Item	Mayor	City Attorney	City Council At-large	City Council District
Number of Approved Signatures with Minimum \$10 Contribution	600	150	400	150/75 in-district

The Democracy Voucher Program is public and transparent. The names of individuals who sign qualifying contribution petitions, or democracy vouchers, or who make campaign contributions are public. Addresses of those who contribute to political campaigns are subject to public disclosure pursuant to state and city campaign disclosure reporting laws (RCW 42.17A and SMC 2.04).

Step 3. Register for the Democracy Voucher Program and submit a sufficient number of petitions to the SEEC.

File campaign contributions on PDC Form C-3 reporting qualifying contributions. Qualifying contributions must be itemized on the C-3. The filer must note that the C-3 contains qualifying contributions at the time it is filed. C-3s are filed electronically with the PDC and the SEEC.

Candidates can begin collecting qualifying contributions at the start of the Election Cycle in January of the year before the election. Qualifying contributions and signatures must be filed and submitted no later than two weeks after the candidate files a Declaration of Candidacy in May of the election year. For candidates on the ballot in 2017, the period is January 1, 2016 – June 2, 2017.

The SEEC will submit petitions to King County Elections to review signatures and confirm the address is in the City or the candidate's district if applicable. The SEEC will review C-3 filings to ensure timely and accurate reporting, and to confirm contributions correspond to names and addresses the candidate has gathered. If either process is found insufficient, and the time for registering for the Program has not expired, the candidate will be notified and given the opportunity to provide additional information.

Upon completion, the candidate is certified as qualified to participate in the Democracy Voucher Program and a public notice will be displayed on the SEEC website.

Step 4. Collect Democracy Vouchers.

The SEEC will mail Democracy Vouchers to all registered voters in January of the election year. The SEEC will make vouchers available to eligible residents on request.

The voucher holder assigns the voucher to a candidate by writing in the name of the candidate and signing the voucher. Vouchers may only be collected by the SEEC, the candidate, or a candidate's agent whom the candidate has registered with the SEEC.

Democracy Vouchers are available on the first business day of the election year and may be assigned through the last business day in November of the election year. In order to be redeemed, the assigned vouchers must be submitted to the SEEC no later than December 1 after the election. Democracy Vouchers are available to any person who is registered to vote in the City of Seattle, or has resided in the City for more than 30 days and is eligible to contribute to campaigns under federal law.

Step 5. Meet ongoing program requirements.

In addition to complying with campaign disclosure reporting requirements in SMC 2.04, the participating candidate must honor campaign spending limits by adhering to the limits per election and position. Limits include qualifying contribution amounts but do not include the value of a Democracy Voucher.

Democracy Voucher Program Contribution and Expenditure Limits	Mayor	City Attorney	City Council At-large	City Council District
Individual Contribution Limit	\$500	\$250	\$250	\$250
Campaign Expenditure Limits Primary Election Only	\$400,000	\$75,000	\$150,000	\$75,000
Campaign Expenditure Limits Primary and General Election Combined or General Election only	\$800,000	\$150,000	\$300,000	\$150,000

Contributions other than vouchers cannot be solicited or accepted from contractors who have received more than \$250,000 in the last two years through a City contract.

Contributions other than vouchers cannot be accepted if a contributor has spent, or has paid someone, more than \$5,000 to lobby the City in the last 12 months. A list of lobbyist employers and their spending can be found on the SEEC's Lobbying website here:

<http://web6.seattle.gov/ethics/lobbying/lobbyistEmployers.aspx>.

Contributions other than vouchers cannot be accepted from any political action committee, political party, or any organization that will make an independent expenditure for a City candidate during the election cycle.

Candidates must participate in three public debates for the Primary and the General elections each.

Candidates may be released from the program spending limits for reasons such as the participating candidate's opponent exceeds the spending limit, or the sum of Independent Expenditures made against the candidate or in support of his opponent, plus the opponent's spending exceeds program spending limits.

Step 6. Redeem Democracy Vouchers.

Each candidate committee shall submit to the SEEC assigned Democracy Vouchers it has received within five business days of receipt. The SEEC will validate the assigned vouchers and verify the committee's eligibility to receive proceeds. The SEEC may employ King County elections to verify the voucher holder's signature and address.

A candidate can submit vouchers for redemption in excess of the Primary spending limit, but those vouchers will not be redeemed unless the candidate advances to the General Election.

At least twice a month beginning in January of the election year, the SEEC will release voucher proceeds to campaigns.

The SEEC will use its best efforts to project and ensure that adequate program funds are available. If the SEEC believes it will receive Democracy Vouchers in excess of the Available Program Funds Limit for that year, the SEEC shall announce that funds are no longer available.

Step 7. Close out your campaign.

A candidate who has redeemed a Democracy Voucher, then withdraws, dies, becomes ineligible, loses qualification, or is eliminated in any primary or general election or wins a general election will return all unspent voucher proceeds to the SEEC.

This guide is intended for candidates and their campaign committees. Further assistance is available by contacting the Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission at 206-684-8500 or visiting the Commission's web site: <http://www.seattle.gov/elections>