

Whenever a City employee leaves the workforce, even if that's due to a reduction in force, the Ethics Code's post-employment restrictions apply. Here's a breakdown of those rules:

- After you've gone, you can never divulge or use confidential information that you gained through your employment at the City of Seattle.
- For the first year after you leave, you cannot communicate with anyone at your old department on behalf of someone involved in a matter with the City.
- Also for the first year, you cannot participate in the competitive selection process for a city contract if while you were with the city you helped design the contract, the scope of work, or the process to be used in the selection of the contractor.
- Finally, for two years after you leave City employment, you cannot assist anyone on a **matter** in which you **participated** while with the City.

Participate means to consider, investigate, advise, recommend, decide, approve, disapprove or take other similar action. It's important to remember that you don't have to make the final decision to potentially violate the Code. Even making a recommendation counts as participating.

Matter means an application, submission, request for ruling, or other determination, permit, contract, claim, proceeding, case, decision, rulemaking, legislation or other similar action. It includes the preparation, consideration, discussion or enactment of administrative rules or legislation, but it does not include advice or recommendations regarding broad policies and goals.

Note that the definition of "matter" is a narrow one, focused on specific actions instead of on projects or subject areas. For example, "affordable housing" is not a "matter." If you worked on the Roosevelt upzone but never touched the University District upzone, for example, you could assist your new employer with the University District upzone.

There are two important exceptions to these rules. First, if you go to work for the Federal, State, County or another City government, these rules don't apply unless that government's interests are adverse to the City's interest. And second, if you contract directly with the City, you can still work on matters in which you participated and communicate with your former department.

Here is what you can do for a new employer from day one:

- Assist on City matters in which you did not participate, provided that you don't communicate with your former department for the first year. You can deal with employees of other City departments.
- Assist on matters involving private clients, other municipalities, or the County, State or Federal government.

It's also important to keep in mind that **while you are with the City**, you've got obligations under the Ethics Code to stay away from City matters involving companies with whom you are seeking employment. If you're simply networking, these rules don't apply, but once you've submitted an application to a company, or told someone at the company that you'd like to be considered for employment, you'll need to avoid dealing officially with that prospective employer.

Finally, in the wake of I-122, elected officials, department heads, and the highest paid individual reporting to a department head or an elected official, cannot for three years after leaving the City participate in paid lobbying of the City.

Don't hesitate to call the SEEC at 684-8500 with any questions about how the post-employment rules apply to your specific situation.