

2026-2027 PUBLIC HEALTH – SEATTLE & KING COUNTY BUDGET

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King County Board of Health
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The current budget is for 2025.

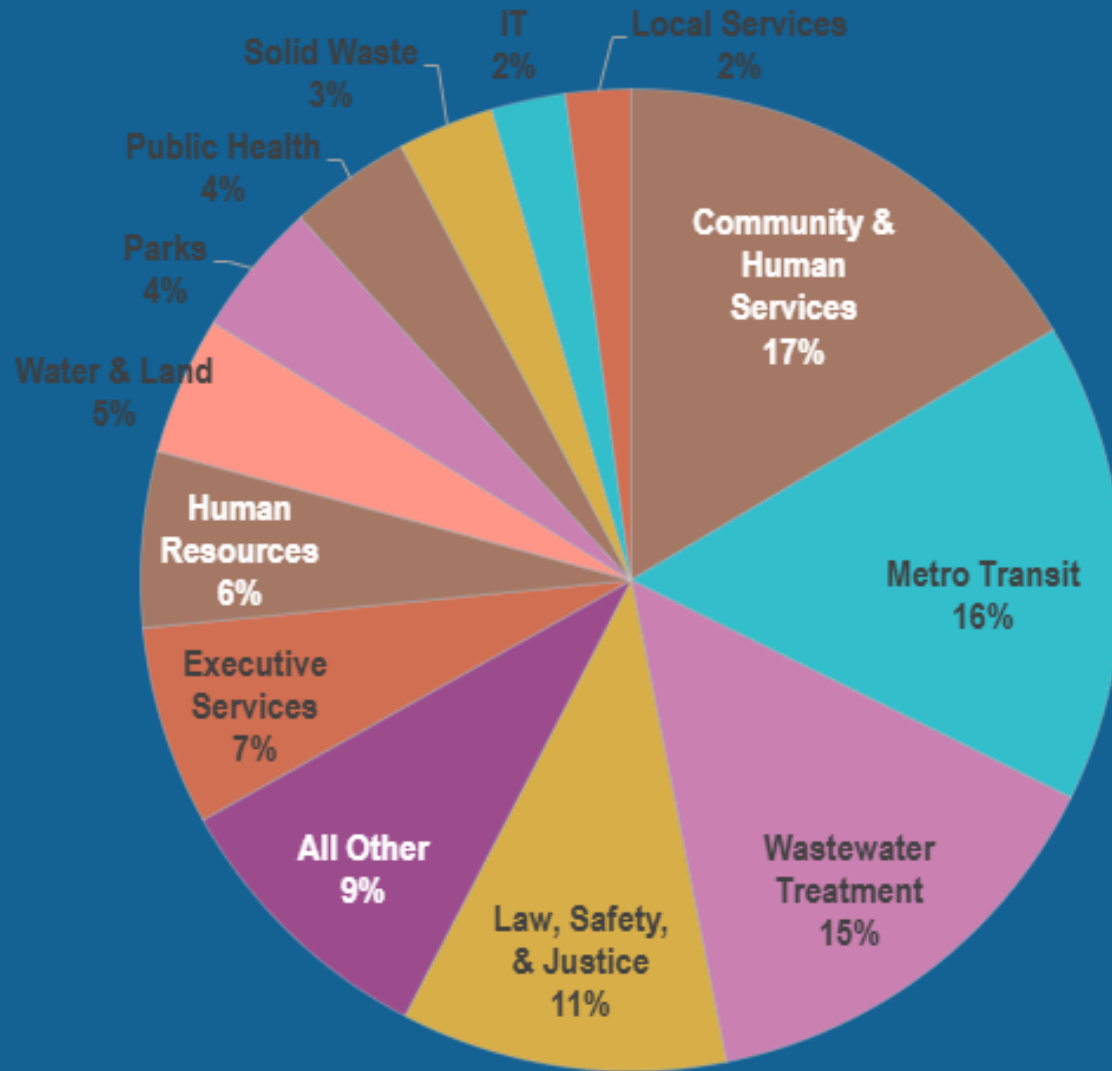
Other than 2025, King County has used a biennial (two-year) budget for over a decade.

In November 2022, voters approved a Charter amendment moving County elections from odd-numbered to even-numbered years to increase voter participation and turnout.

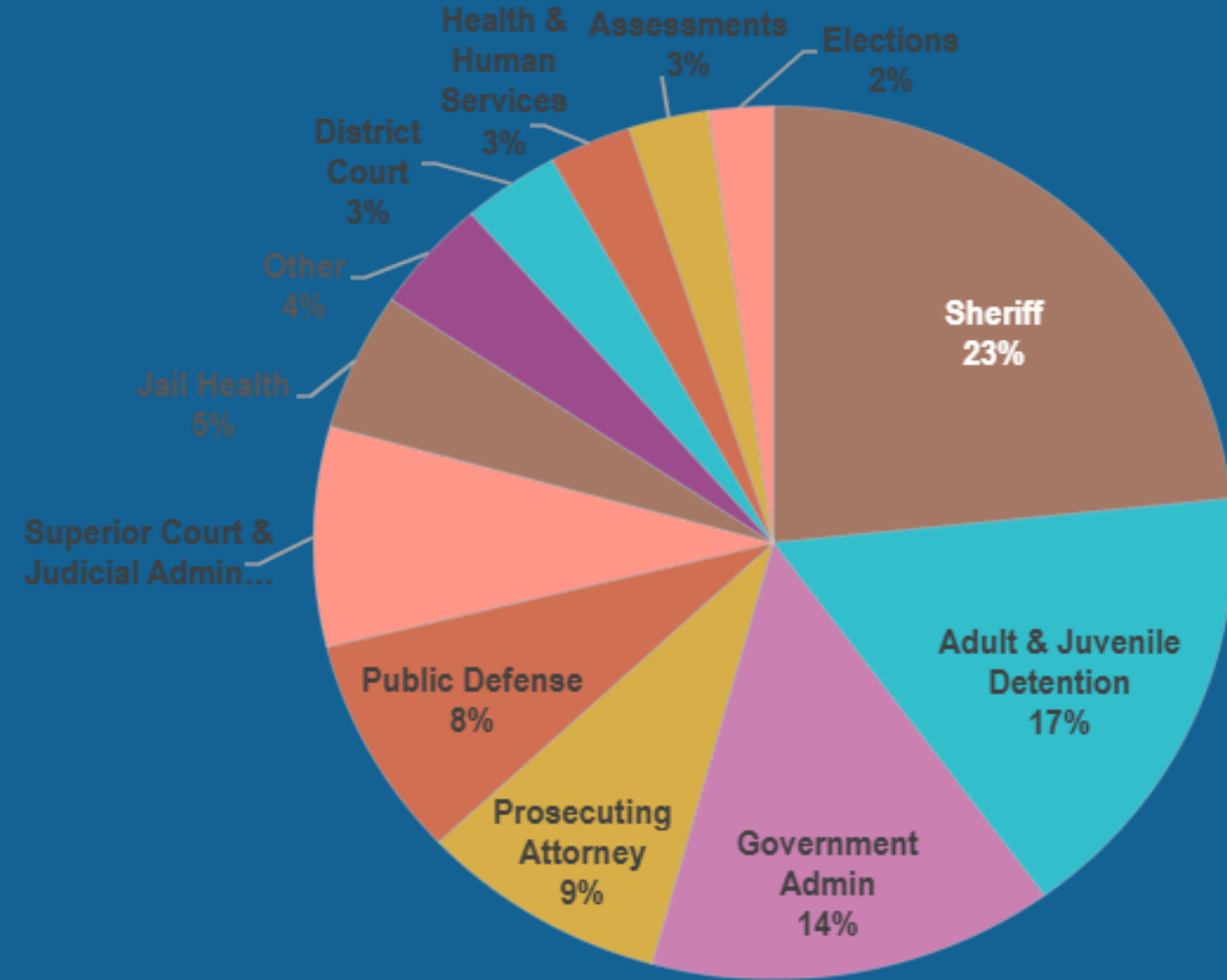
To reset the budget cycle to the new election cycle, the County did an annual budget for 2025 and will resume biennial budgeting for 2026-2027.

BUDGET STRUCTURE & TIMING


2026-2027 PROPOSED APPROPRIATIONS (\$19.7 BILLION)



2026-2027 PROPOSED GENERAL FUND APPROPRIATIONS (\$2.7 BILLION)



2026-2027 BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

- ▶ The Proposed Budget includes a new 0.1% sales tax that is projected to generate \$203 million. About \$175 million was used to avoid devastating budget cuts, including over \$20 million to Public Health. The remainder covers new or expanded criminal justice, homelessness, and behavioral health services.
 - ▶ Some County revenue was used to replace lost federal grants, especially in emergency management.
 - ▶ The budget is accompanied by legislation revising the Harborview Hospital Services Agreement, which provides \$28 million annually for Public Health clinics from 2025 through 2027.
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2026-2027 PUBLIC HEALTH BUDGET

- ▶ The Proposed Budget is essentially status quo for 2026-2027 and totals \$631 million.
- ▶ The budget includes staffing reductions in vacant positions in the clinic system that will have no effect on services.
- ▶ However, 2026-2027 revenue is projected to be only \$585 million, with the difference covered by fund balance. The fund balance grew in recent years as the pandemic and hiring challenges led to spending that was substantially below budgeted levels.
- ▶ Under current forecasts, Public Health faces a deficit in 2028-2029 even if Harborview payments to support clinics continue. This deficit becomes catastrophic by 2030-2031.
- ▶ The principal causes of the deficit are flat State funding and limited increases in County General Fund support due to State-imposed limits on property tax revenue growth. The financial challenge affects many parts of Public Health, including prevention, chronic diseases, and community health services.

FEDERAL FUNDING SITUATION

- ▶ The Proposed Budget includes reserves for potential federal cuts to behavioral health services and Medicaid payments to Harborview. These reserves would quickly be exhausted if federal cuts are of the magnitude currently forecast.
- ▶ Public Health has lost some small federal grants that have led to modest program and staffing reductions. No further grant reductions are assumed in the 2026-2027 budget.
- ▶ Public Health could be affected by reductions in the federal fiscal year 2026 budget, if it is ever approved.
- ▶ Existing law substantially reduces subsidies through the Affordable Care Act in January 2026. This will lead some people to drop coverage, potentially creating more demand for Public Health services.
- ▶ HR 1 makes major reductions to Medicaid in 2027. Projections suggest that 75,000 to 100,000 King County residents will lose coverage.

QUESTIONS?

Contact:

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