

Metropolitan King County Council

Position Descriptions

Council unit:	Ombuds/Tax Advisor
Job description:	Deputy Ombuds
Salary range:	166 Unique Squared Table

Classification Summary

The Ombuds series is a three-level career progression. The primary responsibilities of this classification include performing initial screening and preliminary investigation of complaints involving King County government. The work of the Deputy Ombuds is governed by the King County Charter Section 270, King County Code 2.52, King County Employee Ethics Code KCC 3.04, and Whistleblower Protection Code in KCC 3.42. This classification provides investigative and dispute resolution services, giving access and opportunity to members of the public and County employees to raise concerns and voice complaints about administrative acts, and offering objective resolutions and remedies.

Distinguishing Features of the Position

Deputy Ombuds plans, conducts, and communicates work under the guidance of the King County Ombuds Director or designee(s). Deputy Ombuds investigates and makes determinations on routine complaints about the County's operations, including some ethics, whistleblower, and lobbyist disclosure allegations. Case volume for the Deputy Ombuds is assigned by the Ombuds Director or designee(s); typical caseload begins at fewer than ten projects and increases with skill level and experience in the role. Case completion must meet statutory timeframes. These projects may require managing medium to large amounts of information, quantitative and qualitative analyses, synthesizing multi-faceted findings, and—with support from senior ombuds staff—participation in public meetings and interfacing with county leaders and staff. Deputy Ombuds generally require a moderate amount of supervisory support, coaching, and editing of written products. This is a salaried, represented, overtime-exempt position that reports to the Ombuds Director.

Career Progression

Deputy Ombuds is the first level within a three-level Ombuds professional classification series. The primary differences between Deputy Ombuds and Senior Deputy Ombuds are the volume and complexity of complaints assigned, the maturity with which staff apply skills, efficiency with which staff complete work, level of independent judgment used to make recommendations, and amount of supervision required.

Advancement to Senior Deputy Ombuds requires that the Deputy Ombuds establish a strong understanding of the principles of ombuds work, including office policy/process, objectivity, professional ethics, professional judgement, workload management, application of equity principles, and teamwork/culture. In addition, to advance the Deputy Ombuds must have demonstrated strong competency in intake, investigations, complaints and/or assistance, scoping, case research, investigative plans, evidence collection and review, and analyses. Finally, the Deputy Ombuds must have demonstrated very effective skills in building positive relationships with internal and external parties and navigating sensitive situations.

Essential Duties and Responsibilities

The Deputy Ombuds will:

- Conduct or participate in routine intake, investigations, complaints, and/or assistance. May work in conjunction with Principal or Senior Principal Deputy Ombuds as assigned by the Ombuds Director.

- Complete work in alignment with standards, policies, procedures, objectivity, independence, ethics, and professional judgement.
- With support, keep complex project work organized, on scope and schedule, and identify and elevate impediments. Complete assigned tasks within supervisory expectations and/or statutory timeframes.
- Apply equity principles in planning, execution, and communication of work. Bring equity issues to supervisor or team for consideration.
- For routine assignments, develop multi-faceted preliminary case research, define scope of inquiry, conduct equity analyses, and develop investigative plans for review by the Ombuds Director or designee.
- For routine assignments, execute investigative plans, collect and review evidence, conduct analyses, apply appropriate legal and evidentiary standards. Research and evaluate issues, policies, laws, and procedures.
- Develop communications to complainants and others about the outcome of complaints for review by the Ombuds Director or designee and distribute to the appropriate parties.
- Draft formal written reports for review and issuance by the Ombuds Director or designee that include well-supported findings, conclusions, and recommendations.
- Provide problem-solving and system-navigation assistance, referrals, and conflict management support as assigned.
- Provide input on officewide products and participate in officewide initiatives, or other activities as assigned.
- Apply Legislative Branch Code of Conduct principles, building and maintaining effective professional internal and external relationships. Apply an anti-racist mindset relating to individual and interpersonal racism in the workplace. Identify and address implicit bias. Support and contribute to positive office culture.
- Participate in developing and maintaining effective relationships external to the work group.
- Perform other duties as assigned that support the overall objective of the position.

Qualifications

Required Knowledge and Skill

- Working knowledge of the principles and practices in one or more of the following areas: government ombuds, administration, management analysis, research, planning, social work, or the equivalent that can aid investigation and complaint resolution work.
- Working knowledge of codes, regulations, administrative, and legal procedures as they apply to the operation and jurisdiction of the Office of the Ombuds/Tax Advisor.
- Basic knowledge of the ethics, whistleblower, and lobbyist disclosure codes.
- Professional knowledge of the principles, methods, and techniques used in the research and investigation of complaints.
- Working knowledge of local government operations and services provided.
- Well-developed quantitative and qualitative analysis skills, including sufficient math skills to develop and interpret statistical and operating information.

Attachment B

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- An understanding of the concepts of institutional and structural racism and bias and their impact on underserved and underrepresented communities, especially related to King County government.
- Excellent organization, project management, and communication skills.
- Advanced knowledge of office applications, including word processing, databases, spreadsheets, presentation, and working knowledge of other applications used by the office.
- Advanced knowledge of English usage, grammar, and written frameworks for the purpose of writing investigative and complaint reports.
- High emotional intelligence and public relations skills to adapt to diverse and sometimes challenging personalities and styles, gain trust while working with others in sensitive and difficult situations, resolve conflict, and employ lines of questioning for fact finding.
- Understanding of trauma-informed interviewing or comparable skills in working with people experiencing high emotion and/or mental health crises.

Required Ability

- Work independently and manage workload with multiple, concurrent cases and tight deadlines.
- Set up and sequence steps in conducting investigations.
- Use logic and reasoning to analyze and organize data.
- Listen, consider, and respond with composure to people who may be experiencing and/or expressing strong emotions.
- Analyze and define sensitive issues and problems, evaluate alternatives, and develop independent conclusions and recommendations in accordance with policies, codes, and laws, and the public interest.
- Understand and apply principles of objectivity, independence, professional skepticism, and professional ethics including appropriate applications of confidentiality.
- Present facts and information in a clear, concise, logical, and objective manner, both orally and in writing.
- Conduct observations and analyses in the field at remote sites, with varying schedules.
- Travel throughout King County or surrounding areas in a timely manner.

Education and Experience

The position typically requires a degree in public administration, government, law, or a related discipline, plus four years of experience performing professional-level investigative, analytical, legal, dispute resolution or related capacity; an equivalent combination of education and experience that clearly demonstrates the ability to perform the job duties of the position may be substituted. A master’s degree or juris doctor degree is preferred. Investigative experience with a focus on writing detailed analytical findings is strongly desired.

Levels Within the Same Series

- Deputy Ombuds
- Senior Deputy Ombuds
- Principal Deputy Ombuds