

Metropolitan King County Council

Position Descriptions



Position: Ombuds Director	FLSA: Salaried, overtime exempt
Department: Office of Public Complaints/Tax Advisor	Salary Grade: 134
Council Approved: 10/31/2016	Revised: 10/4/2022

Series Summary

The King County Office of Public Complaints/Tax Advisor (Office of the Ombuds) is an independent agency established by the King County Charter to promote public confidence in county government by responding to complaints from the public in an impartial, timely and efficient manner, and by contributing to the improved operation of King County government based upon the results of complaint reviews and investigations.

The Ombuds Director serves as the Office of the Ombuds' chief administrator, responsible for the oversight and effective management of complaints and inquiries regarding the administrative conduct by King County agencies (KCC 2.52); alleged violations of the King County Employee Code of Ethics (KCC 3.04); employee reports of improper governmental action and retaliation under the Whistleblower Protection Code (KCC 3.42); and alleged violations of the Lobbyist Disclosure Code (KCC 1.07). In addition, the Office of the Ombuds fulfills the function of Property Tax Advisor for King County in accordance with Revised Code of Washington 84.48.140.

The Ombuds Director is a salaried, overtime exempt classification that reports to the Chair of the Council but is responsive to all nine Councilmembers.

Distinguishing Career Features

The Ombuds Director is an executive-level position accountable for all activity in the King County Office of the Ombuds, providing members of the public and King County employees opportunities to raise concerns and lodge complaints about alleged ethics violations, whistleblower activity, administrative acts, and lobbyist disclosure issues. The Ombuds Director may also offer objective investigations, determinations, and recommendations for improved operations of county government. The Ombuds Director is appointed by the Council for a five-year term that is subject to reappointment in accordance with the King County Charter and King County Code.

Essential Duties and Responsibilities

Strategic Leadership

- Lead the administration and operation of the Office of the Ombuds pursuant to goals, protocols, and objectives as established by King County Code, County Charter, administrative rules, and professional best practices.
- Maintain the integrity and independence of the Office of the Ombuds, ensuring that complainants receive assistance that is equitable, accessible, and confidential. Set

performance standards for timely and appropriate resolution of all matters, including investigations, complaint resolution, and tax advice.

- Where appropriate, direct the development and implementation of action plans or offer recommendations to parties on strategies for complaint remediation or resolution, or the prevention of future complaints. Recommend corrective actions and systemic reforms.
- Direct the analysis of investigative results and preparation of reports of findings and recommendations for agency action and accountability.
- Engage external consultants, subject matter experts, legal counsel, or other assistance when necessary to ensure effectiveness and credibility.

Executive Management

- Assign work and provide guidance and strategic direction to staff on all aspects of complaint investigation and resolution, including intake and review; assessment of jurisdiction and classification; interviewing, factfinding, discovery, and research; data tracking and reporting; prioritization of workload; and implementation of recommendations and action.
- Supervise the work of the Tax Advisor, ensuring that the public receives timely and effective advice about the process for appealing property tax assessments and other matters related to property taxes.
- Develop and establish performance objectives and personal development targets for staff; create and promote an equitable workplace that encourages professional development and outstanding public service.
- Collaborate with staff to implement systems, procedures, and protocols that continuously improve the service the Office of the Ombuds provides to the public.
- Oversee the daily administration and operation of the Office of the Ombuds, including the development and execution of the Office of the Ombuds' budget.

Public Information and Administration

- Represent the Office of Public Complaints/Tax Advisor at public meetings, hearings, and in interactions with other departments and committees.
- Determine the scope and content of communications that will be provided to the Council, Executive, and complainants, taking into consideration the need for confidentiality; issue formal findings and recommendations for improved operations based on administrative acts of county government to the Council and Executive.
- Submit and present biennial reports to the Council regarding the exercise of Director's functions during the preceding six-month period and the status of the whistleblower program; prepare periodic public reports on work activity and performance.
- Prepare, present, and defend ethics findings before the King County Ethics Board and lobbyist disclosure findings before the King County Hearing Examiner; follow appeals to higher judicial processes.
- Make criminal, disciplinary, or interagency referrals (e.g., Washington State Public Disclosure Commission, Washington State Auditor's Office, etc.) as required by the codes authorizing the position.

- Oversee and direct the content for the Office of the Ombuds' public communications, including web pages, brochures, and other communications for public viewing; conduct public outreach to inform and educate the public about the availability of Ombuds services.
- Manage the Office of the Ombuds' responses to public records and discovery requests.

Qualifications

Required Knowledge and Skills

- In-depth knowledge of codes, regulations, administrative, and legal procedures as they apply to the operation and jurisdiction of the Office of Public Complaints/Tax Advisor.
- Knowledge of King County ethics and whistleblower codes, and familiarity with laws relating to property taxation.
- Working knowledge of the principles and practices of public administration and government structures, systems, and operations.
- Knowledge of the principles and practices associated with supervision, leadership style, team building, and performance management.
- Specialized professional knowledge of the principles, methods, and techniques used in the research and investigation of public complaints.
- Advanced human relations skill to gain trust while working with others in extremely difficult, volatile, or at-risk situations; resolve conflict; employ lines of questioning for fact-finding, deliver reports in formal or legal settings; and review performance.
- Familiarity with privacy, public information, and record retention laws, including those involving the handling of information and communications of a confidential and sensitive nature.

Required Abilities

- Ability to plan, organize and manage the activities of an office specializing in the review, investigation and resolution of complaints and allegations of wrongdoing by County officials and employees.
- Ability to develop an effective team and maintain productive and cooperative relationships with those encountered on work-related matters, including elected officials, County employees, representatives of other governmental agencies, and the public.
- Ability to conduct thorough, objective investigations of complaints, reach appropriate neutral, objective, and expert conclusions based on investigation results and maintain confidentiality regarding process and outcomes in accordance with all legal requirements.
- Ability to analyze and define complex and sensitive issues and problems, evaluate alternatives, and develops independent conclusions and recommendations in accordance with policies, codes, and laws, and in consideration of trade-offs and risks.
- Ability to present information, proposals, and recommendations clearly, logically and persuasively in a variety of formats, and effectively handle sensitive and confidential matters.
- Ability to prepare budgets, account for expenditures, and develop and interpret statistical and operating information.

- Ability to propose legislation, amendments, and policies relating to assigned areas of responsibility.
- Ability to conduct investigations.
- Ability to prepare clear, concise, and comprehensive reports and other written materials.

Supplemental Information

This position is appointed by a majority of the King County Council. The King County Council shall consider reappointment of the Ombuds Director at the end of each five-year term. The Ombuds Director may be removed prior to the end of a five-year appointment for cause and upon a majority vote of the King County Council. Among other forms of cause is a determination that the Ombuds Director has become incapacitated or has been guilty of neglect of duty, misconduct, or political activity in accordance with KCC 2.52.050.

Education and Experience

The qualifications for this position are established by King County Code, KCC 2.52.040. The position requires a degree from an accredited college, or its equivalent in service to government; a working knowledge of legal and administrative procedures; and experience and/or knowledge of local government commensurate to the powers of the office. In addition, the incumbent must be a registered voter in the United States.