

Levy Engagement Plan

November 21, 2025



King County

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II. Proviso Text

P7 PROVIDED FURTHER THAT:

Of this appropriation, \$250,000 shall not be expended or encumbered until the executive transmits levy engagement plan.

The plan shall include, but not be limited to:

A. Detailed information on how the executive will engage with the county council throughout the development of new and renewal levy proposals in the 2026-2027 biennium, including soliciting ideas and feedback, ensuring key dates are provided to allow sufficient time for council questions to be answered and feedback incorporated; and

B. A strategy for robust community engagement in the development of new and renewal levy proposals in the 2026-2027 biennium.

The executive should file the plan by December 31, 2025, in the form of an electronic copy with the clerk of the council, who shall retain an electronic copy and provide an electronic copy to all councilmembers, the council chief of staff, and the lead staff for the budget and fiscal management committee or its successor.

Ordinance [19956](#), Section 6, Office of Performance, Strategy and Budget, P7 ¹

¹ Ordinance 19956 [\[LINK\]](#)

III. Executive Summary

This report provides an overview of King County's six voter-approved property tax levies, along with early plans for the Best Starts for Kids Levy renewal in 2027. King County's voter-approved levies include:

- Best Starts for Kids Levy
- Crisis Care Centers Levy
- Veterans, Seniors, and Human Services Levy
- Parks Levy
- Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Levy
- Automated Fingerprint Identification System (AFIS) Levy

During the 2026-2027 biennium, the only voter-approved levy up for renewal is Best Starts for Kids (BSK), which will expire on Dec. 31, 2027. The Department of Community and Human Services (DCHS) and Public Health, which manage the BSK Levy, are in the early stages of planning for the renewal. Early plans for engagement with the King County Council and community are summarized below.

- **King County Council Engagement:** Best Starts leadership plans to work closely with Councilmembers throughout the renewal process. In addition to transmitting a report on the current levy and plans for the levy renewal, Best Starts leadership also plans to offer opportunities to meet with Councilmembers to share learnings from the first two levies, priorities and recommendations for the next levy, and plans to seek input from all interested parties throughout the process.

If the measure is approved by voters, the Executive Office, DCHS, and Public Health will work with the Council to develop a proposed implementation plan for the Best Starts for Kids Levy (2028-2033) for Council adoption.

- **Community Engagement:** Best Starts for Kids is driven by the foundational value that centering the voices and lived experiences of King County communities most impacted by systemic racism is critical. In 2026, DCHS and Public Health will develop a plan to engage community in the development of the Best Starts for Kids Levy renewal and implementation plan. The plan is expected to build on measurable outcomes and community engagement strategies that informed the 2021 levy renewal.

DCHS and Public Health will continue to refine levy renewal plans, including community and Council engagement plans, in late 2025 and early 2026.

IV. Background

Department Overview: King County’s voter-approved levies are managed by the Department of Community and Human Services, the Department of Natural Resources and Parks, the King County Sheriff’s Office, and Public Health – Seattle & King County. The Office of Performance, Strategy and Budget provides financial oversight for King County’s levies.

Department of Community and Human Services (DCHS): DCHS provides equitable opportunities for people to be healthy, happy, and connected to community. DCHS envisions a welcoming community that is racially just, where the field of human services exists to undo and mitigate unfair structures. The department, along with a network of community providers and partners, plays a leading role in creating and coordinating the region’s human services infrastructure.

Department of Natural Resources and Parks (DNRP): DNRP works to support sustainable and livable communities and a clean and healthy natural environment. Its mission is to foster environmental stewardship and strengthen communities by providing regional parks, protecting the region’s water, air, land, and natural habitats, and reducing, safely disposing of, and creating resources from wastewater and solid waste.

Public Health – Seattle & King County: Public Health works to promote and improve the health and well-being of all people in King County by leading with racial equity and changing systems and structures that impact health. Public Health is one of the largest metropolitan health departments in the United States, with approximately 1,600 employees.

King County Sheriff’s Office (KCSO): KCSO serves the law enforcement needs of more than half a million people in unincorporated areas and 12 contract cities. It is the mission of the King County Sheriff’s Office to deliver compassionate and accountable police services to enhance public safety and community well-being. KCSO’s vision is to be an innovative, trusted, and collaborative agency supporting safe, welcoming, and thriving communities.

Office of Performance, Strategy and Budget (PSB): PSB provides comprehensive planning, management, budgeting, and performance assessment for King County government. PSB’s work is guided by best practices in financial stewardship and performance management, which includes enhancing accountability and transparency, and integrating strategic planning, business planning, resource allocation, and continuous improvement into a systematic approach throughout the County.

Historical Context: A brief history of King County’s voter-approved property taxes levy is below:

- **Veterans, Seniors, and Human Services Levy (VSHSL):** VSHSL was first approved by voters in 2005 as the Veterans and Human Services Levy. The levy was renewed by voters in 2011 and again 2017, when the focus expanded to include seniors. VSHSL was most recently renewed in 2023 for the 2024-2029 levy term.
- **Best Starts for Kids (Best Starts) Levy:** The Best Starts Levy was first approved by voters in 2015 and was renewed in 2021 for the 2022-2027 levy term.
- **Crisis Care Centers (CCC) Levy:** The CCC Levy was first approved by voters in 2023 for the 2024-2032 levy term.

- **Parks Levy:** The Parks Levy was first approved by voters in 2003. The levy was most recently renewed by voters in 2025 for the 2026-2031 term.
- **Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Levy:** The EMS Levy was first approved by voters in 1979. The levy renewal for the 2026-2031 term is on the November 2025 ballot.
- **Automated Fingerprint Identification System (AFIS) Levy:** The AFIS Levy was first passed by voters in 1986. The levy expired at the end of 2024, but the program had enough savings to continue operations through 2025. The AFIS Levy was renewed by voters in April 2025 for the 2026-2032 term.

Current Context: Below is a high-level summary of each voter-approved property tax levy, including current terms, rates, and renewal timelines.

Veterans, Seniors, and Human Services Levy

- **Overview:** VSHSL is a six-year property tax levy that connects veterans, servicemembers, their families, seniors, and individuals in need with essential services such as affordable housing, employment support, behavioral health treatment, and other resources vital for leading fulfilling lives.
- **Current term:** The current term for the VSHSL is 2024-2029.
- **2025 Rate:** The current rate for VSHSL is \$0.10030 per \$1,000 of assessed property value.

Best Starts for Kids Levy (Best Starts)

- **Overview:** Best Starts is a six-year property tax levy that focuses on supporting children, youth, and families from prenatal development through young adulthood.
- **Current Term:** The current term for the BSK Levy is 2022-2027.
- **2025 Rate:** The current rate for the BSK Levy is \$0.17959 per \$1,000 of assessed property value.

Crisis Care Centers Levy (CCC)

- **Overview:** The CCC Levy is a nine-year property tax levy aimed at addressing the region's behavioral health crisis by funding the creation and operation of five regional crisis care centers for behavioral health needs.
- **Current Term:** The current term for the CCC Levy is 2024-2032.
- **2025 Rate:** The current rate for the CCC Levy is \$0.14197 per \$1,000 of assessed property value.

Parks:

- **Overview:** The Parks Levy is a six-year property tax levy that funds maintenance, enhancement, and expansion of regional and local parks, trails, and open spaces.
- **Current Term:** The 2020-2025 Parks Levy will expire on Dec. 31, 2025.
- **2025 Rate:** The current rate for the Parks Levy is 0.19748 per \$1,000 of assessed property value.

EMS Levy

- **Overview:** The EMS Levy is a six-year property tax levy that funds advanced life support and basic emergency medical services across King County.

- **Current Term:** The current term for the Medic One/EMS Levy is 2020-2025. If the levy renewal is approved by voters in November, the levy term will be 2026-2031.
- **2025 Rate:** The current rate for the EMS Levy is 0.22146 per \$1,000 of assessed property value.

AFIS Levy

- **Overview:** The AFIS Levy is a seven-year property tax levy that funds fingerprint identification services and technology used by law enforcement agencies across King County.
- **Current Term:** The AFIS Levy was renewed by voters in April 2025 for 2026–2032 levy term.
- **2025 Rate:** The AFIS Levy expired in 2024. The program used budget savings to cover operations in 2025.

Report Methodology: This report was developed by the Office of Performance, Strategy and Budget, in collaboration with DCHS and Public Health.

V. Report Requirements

King County departments are committed to robust engagement with community, partners, and elected leaders during levy renewal processes. During the 2026-2027 biennium, the only voter-approved levy up for renewal is Best Starts for Kids, which will expire on Dec. 31, 2027. There are currently no new levies planned for the biennium.

A new County Executive will take office on Nov. 25, 2025. Direction from the new Executive will be critical to planning for the renewal of Best Starts for Kids. As such, DCHS and Public Health are developing a planning framework to present to the new Executive in 2026 that will include direction for the Best Starts for Kids levy renewal and plans for engagement with the Council and community groups.

Early plans for engagement with the Council and community for the Best Starts for Kids renewal include:

A. Council Engagement

Best Starts leadership plans to work closely with Councilmembers throughout all the steps of the renewal process. This will likely include transmittal of a report looking back on the second BSK Levy (2026), a report describing at a high level the intended direction of the next levy (2026), and a plan for implementation of the third levy (2027). Best Starts leadership also plans to offer opportunities to meet with Councilmembers to share learnings from the first two levies, priorities and recommendations for the next levy, and plans to seek input from all interested parties throughout the process.

In 2026, the Executive will work with Councilmembers to identify the ballot timing for the Best Starts for Kids renewal. In early 2027, the Executive will transmit a proposed ballot measure ordinance and renewal report to the Council that has been informed by input from Councilmembers and community.

If the measure is approved by voters, the Executive Office, DCHS, and Public Health will work with the Council to develop a proposed implementation plan for the Best Starts for Kids Levy (2028-2033) for Council adoption.

B. Community Engagement

Best Starts for Kids is driven by the foundational value that centering the voices and lived experiences of King County communities most impacted by systemic racism is critical. In 2026, DCHS and Public Health will develop a plan to engage community in the development of the Best Starts for Kids Levy renewal and implementation plan.

The plan is expected to build on measurable outcomes and community engagement strategies that informed the 2021 levy renewal, which include:

- Engaging with the Children and Youth Advisory Board and Communities of Opportunity Governance Group to guide the planning and provide input on the levy renewal and implementation plan.
- Partnering with regionally based coalitions of community organizations and partner groups to host listening sessions and ensure the renewal is responsive to community needs.

- Facilitating workgroups, which may consist of community members, County staff, and Councilmembers, on specific topics to shape the design and focus of the next levy.
- Sharing data to illustrate the impacts of child-care investments and prevention, promotion, and intervention programs.
- Conducting surveys to ensure community voices are incorporated.

VI. Conclusion/Next Actions

DCHS and Public Health will continue to refine levy renewal plans, including community and council engagement plans in late 2025 and early 2026. The departments plan to partner with the County Executive, Councilmembers, and community members determine the proposed scope and timing for the Best Starts for Kids levy renewal during the 2026-2027 biennium.