



OMBUDS DIRECTOR

King County, WA

Recruitment Services Provided By



The Opportunity

One of the largest and most attractive counties in the United States offers a rare opportunity to lead its Office of the Ombuds, an independent office that promotes public confidence in government by investigating complaints, solving problems for the public, and making recommendations for action.



About King County, Washington

King County has a very strong and resilient economy and an environment where people and businesses thrive. Located on Puget Sound in Washington State, and covering 2,307 square miles, King County is nearly twice as large as the average county in the United States. With more than 2 million people, it also ranks as the 12th most populous county in the nation.

Boasting 39 cities and truly an international destination, over 100 languages are spoken in the region and it welcomes more than 30 million visitors annually. It is also home to the City of Seattle, suburban cities, small towns, islands, and rural communities, as well as forests, bodies of water, and farmlands.

Cities within King County frequently appear on “Best Places to Live” lists and it is #4 on the Forbes “The Best Places for Business and Careers” list. Many of its communities have highly rated schools, nationally recognized restaurants, vibrant recreation, and numerous cultural opportunities. Housing options range from easy-to-access islands, downtown high-rises, and distinct Seattle neighborhoods to suburban developments that boast walkable amenities.

King County continues to build an enduring legacy of shared values of equity and social justice, employee engagement, innovative thinking, and continuous improvement. With this commitment, it has adopted a pro-equity agenda aimed at advancing regional change and is developing the systems and standards necessary to achieve better outcomes for its residents, regardless of their race or income.

These qualities make it one of the nation’s best places to live, work, and play.





King County Council

The Metropolitan King County Council oversees the second largest government and the most populous county in Washington State. As the legislative branch of county government, the Council sets policies, enacts laws, and adopts budgets that guide an array of services, including regional services such as bus and wastewater service, as well as acting as the local government for the 250,000 residents in the unincorporated area.

Each of the nine members of the King County Council represents a geographical district of about 250,000 residents. Councilmembers are elected on a non-partisan basis and serve four-year terms.



\$4.6M
Operating Budget

10 FTE
Employees

The Office Of The Ombuds

The Office of the Ombuds was created by the voters of King County in the County Home Rule Charter of 1968 and operates as an independent office within the legislative branch of the King County government. The work of the Office promotes public confidence in King County government by responding to public complaints in an impartial, efficient and timely manner, and contributes to the improved operation of County government by making recommendations based upon the results of complaint investigations.

The Ombuds Office performs the following functions, providing members of the public and King County employees the opportunity to raise concerns and lodge complaints about the following:

- Investigates complaints regarding administrative conduct by King County agencies, alleged ethics violations, whistleblower activity, administrative acts, and lobbyist disclosure issues.
- Reviews possible violations of the King County Employee Code of Ethics.
- Investigates reports of improper governmental action and retaliation under the Whistleblower Protection Code.
- Publishes recommendations for change based on the results of its investigations.
- Fulfills the function of Property Tax Advisor for King County in accordance with the Revised Code of Washington 84.48.140.

The Office of the Ombuds provides its services with 10 full-time employees and an annual budget of \$4.6 million.

The Position

The Ombuds Director is an exempt, executive-level position appointed by the King County Council to an initial five-year term and subject to successive five-year reappointments. The Ombuds Director is a leader responsible for all activity in the Office of the Ombuds, setting the vision for the Office, managing staff and their workload, engaging with community members, and working with other County leaders and managers to resolve complaints. The Ombuds Director reports to the Chair of the Council but is responsive to all nine Councilmembers.

Interested candidates can review the full position description by clicking on the .pdf link labeled 'Job Description' at [King County Ombuds Director](#).





Challenges and Opportunities

The next Ombuds Director will be presented with a few known challenges and opportunities in which to excel, including:

- Maintaining the impartiality and autonomy of the Office requires ongoing effort and focus. Staff are required to work with people at all levels to solve problems with empathy and dedication. Keeping its work timely, impartial and neutral are key ingredients of fostering trust.
- Managing workload and scarce resources effectively is needed to ensure high-quality work that is delivered in timely manner.
- The workload of the Office has limited its ability to be proactive in many aspects, one of which is engaging communities, particularly marginalized communities, on how they can access the Office of the Ombuds and how the Office can help people resolve issues. Although outreach would undoubtedly increase the work of the Office as more people become aware of available services, ideally residents of King County would know they have the Office of the Ombuds as a resource.
- There is a real opportunity to work with a group of highly talented and dedicated staff to continue teambuilding efforts to build capacity and cohesiveness, as well as other investments in staff development.
- The position can contribute in a meaningful way to improving the quality of service provided by King County to its residents and increasing trust in government.

Ideal Candidate

In addition to being ethical, well-qualified, and experienced, the next Ombuds Director for King County should possess certain traits that will be essential for success.

- The Office of the Ombuds uniquely squares its investigative role with its other core mission components to resolve concerns through problem-solving and mediation. As such, the Ombuds Director should have an abundance of empathy and a solution-oriented outlook, while also possessing the requisite ability to oversee complex and sometimes politically sensitive investigations.
- Effective people leadership and communication skills will be essential in all aspects of this position, to include leading and valuing staff, managing relationships with other County departments (which it may at times investigate), and assisting members of the King County community. However, the relationships that are developed must never encroach on the autonomy of the Office.
- The ability to manage workload and resources in such a way that staff can perform at their highest level and receive the intrinsic satisfaction derived from doing meaningful work.
- A high level of attention to detail is essential, as is a familiarity with law. While the next Ombuds Director need not be an attorney, their work often interacts with law and a number of staff are attorneys.
- A proven ability to build and nurture an effective team will help the office to capitalize on the contributions of talented staff.





Qualifications

The following are the minimum qualifications for the position of Ombuds Director:

Education: A degree from an accredited college or its equivalent in service to government.

Experience: A working knowledge of legal and administrative procedures. Experience and/or knowledge of local government commensurate to the powers of the office.

Residency: King County requires that its employees reside in Washington State and within a “reasonable distance” to their regularly assigned county workplace. Reasonable distance is determined on a case-by-case basis.

Other: Must be a registered voter in the United States.

Compensation & Benefits

The salary range for the Ombuds Director is **\$159,272 to \$214,202**, depending upon qualifications. King County offers an excellent benefits package including the following major areas:

- **Retirement:** Retirement is provided through the Public Employees' Retirement System (PERS), offered through the Washington State Department of Retirement Systems.
- **Insurance:** Excellent insurance options are available to employees, including medical, dental, vision, life, as well as short- and long-term disability.
- **Holiday and Leave:** King County provides paid vacation and sick leave, as well as 12 paid holidays per year, plus 2 personal holidays.
- **Hybrid Work Schedule:** The Office uses a hybrid model of work with staff primarily working from home and in the office on a limited basis.
- **Relocation:** King County will reimburse up to \$15,000 in relocation expenses.
- **Additional Benefits:** Additional benefits provided include free wellness resources and an ORCA transit pass.





The Recruitment Process

Interested candidates should submit a comprehensive résumé and compelling cover letter online at mosaicpublic.com/careers no later than **Tuesday, January 17, 2023**.

Confidential inquiries are welcomed to Greg Nelson or Bryan Noblett at (916) 550-4100.

References will not be contacted until mutual interest has been established.

King County is an Equal Opportunity Employer.