

2027–2028 Biennial Budget Conversation

Snohomish County Boards & Commissions Briefing

*Understanding the County's fiscal challenges,
community priorities, and engagement process*



Planning for Snohomish County's Future

- Snohomish County continues to grow, evolve, and invest in the future of its communities.
- Residents rely on strong public systems, infrastructure, safety, health, and community services every day – including many county functions that operate behind the scenes to support schools, utilities, businesses, and communities.
- County leadership is working to maintain essential services while planning responsibly for long-term sustainability and future community needs.



Roads &
Infrastructure



Law & Justice



Housing &
Community Services



Environment and
Resilience



Economic Vitality &
Workforce



Health & Well-Being

2027-2028 Biennial Budget Goals



Create a strong, sustainable foundation for the County's future.

Build financial stability today to support essential services and our community for years to come.



Transparent, responsive and strategic budget process.

Engage openly, listen actively and make thoughtful decisions with our community.



Balanced approach to revenue and spending.

Use a balanced mix of revenue strategies and responsible spending to protect core services and long-term stability.



Look to maintain and complete projects and efforts that have started.

Focus on finishing what we've started and delivering on existing commitments.



This budget process is about stewardship, priorities, and preserving the County's ability to serve residents over time.

2027-2028 Budget Development & Community Engagement Timeline

APRIL–MAY

Early Budget Planning & Public Engagement Launch

- Fiscal Sustainability Task Force recommendations submitted
- Initial budget planning and revenue discussions
- Community engagement process begins
- Outreach to Boards & Commissions, partners, and community stakeholders

JUNE–JULY

Community Input & Priority Discussions

- Boards & Commissions conversations
- Community and partner engagement activities
- Public input gathered on priorities, impacts, and tradeoffs
- Ongoing budget development

AUGUST–SEPTEMBER

Budget Development & Public Rollout

- Community feedback synthesized and shared
- Executive budget proposal finalized and released
- Additional public communication and engagement opportunities

OCTOBER

Council Review & Community Forums

- County Council deliberations
- Community forums to hear from residents and gather public input
- Continued opportunities for community engagement and feedback

NOVEMBER

Budget Adoption & Next Steps

- Final Council deliberations, hearing, and budget vote
- Post-adoption communications and partner engagement
- Implementation planning begins



Boards & commissions



Stakeholder interviews



Focus groups



Public forums



Survey/input opportunities

The County is Facing Fiscal Pressure



Inflation and Labor Costs

Inflation and rising labor costs are increasing faster than available General Fund revenue.



Population Growth and Service Demand

Snohomish County continues to grow, and demand for many services and programs continues to rise.



State and Federal Funding Uncertainty

Changes and uncertainty in state and federal funding add additional pressure to County resources.



Costs to Provide County Services

The cost of delivering services, maintaining infrastructure, and supporting operations has increased significantly over time.



Property Tax Revenue Limits

Washington State's 1% annual cap on property tax growth limits how quickly General Fund revenue can grow, even as costs and demand increase.



Restricted and Dedicated Funding

Some County revenues are legally restricted or dedicated to specific purposes and cannot be used to support all General Fund services.



Over time, these factors have created a structural gap between ongoing revenues and the cost of maintaining current service levels.

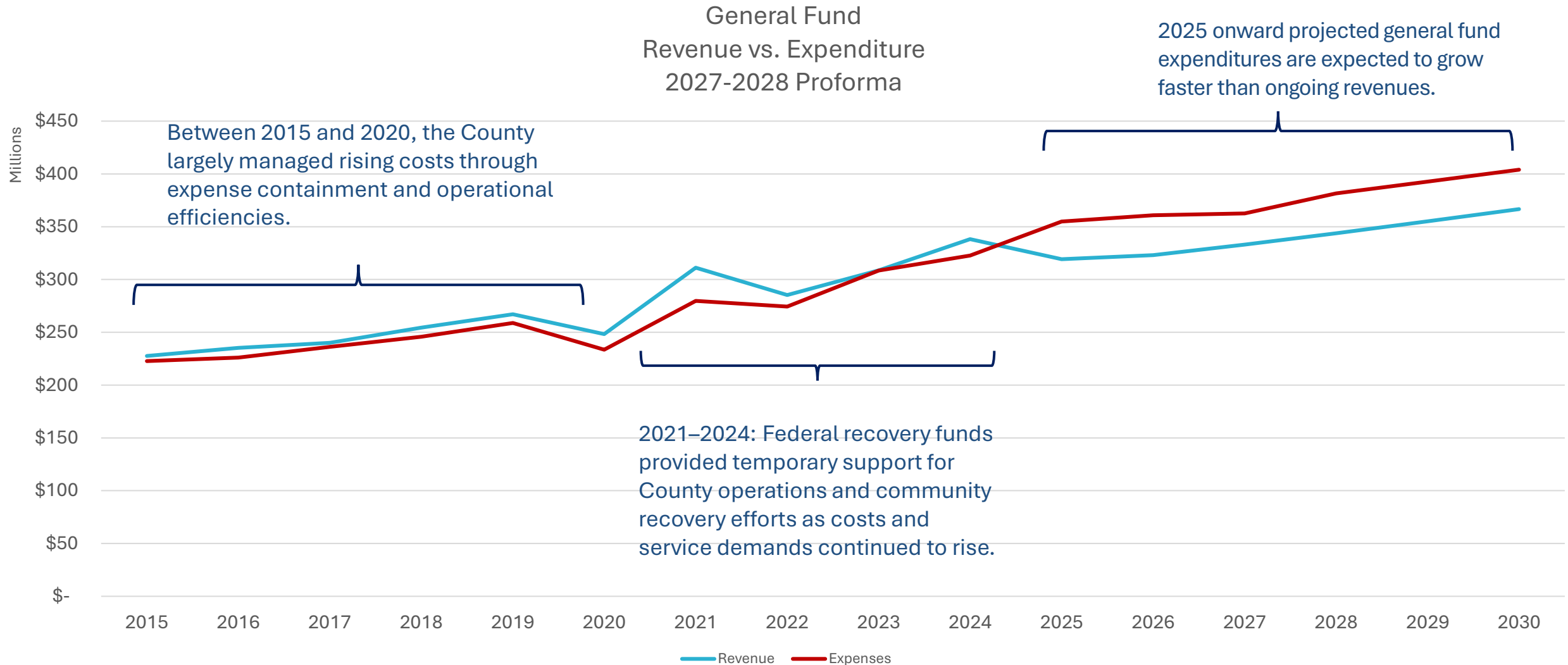
Property Tax Share of Total Bill



Snohomish County

Who Gets It	What It Funds	Approximate Share of Total Bill
School Districts	Local schools, capital bonds, and levies	62.88%
Fire District / Regional Fire Authority	Fire and emergency medical services	13.12%
City or Town (if inside city limits)	Police, fire, parks, libraries, streets, city operations	7.91%
Snohomish County (General Fund)	Sheriff, courts, jail, public health, parks, planning, administration	6.13%
Snohomish County (Roads)	Roads, bridges, traffic control, sidewalks	4.21%
Library Districts	Local public libraries (e.g., Sno-Isle Libraries)	3–5%
Port Districts	Economic development, ports, airports, and trade infrastructure	2–3%
Hospital, Other Special Districts	Varies by area	1–3%

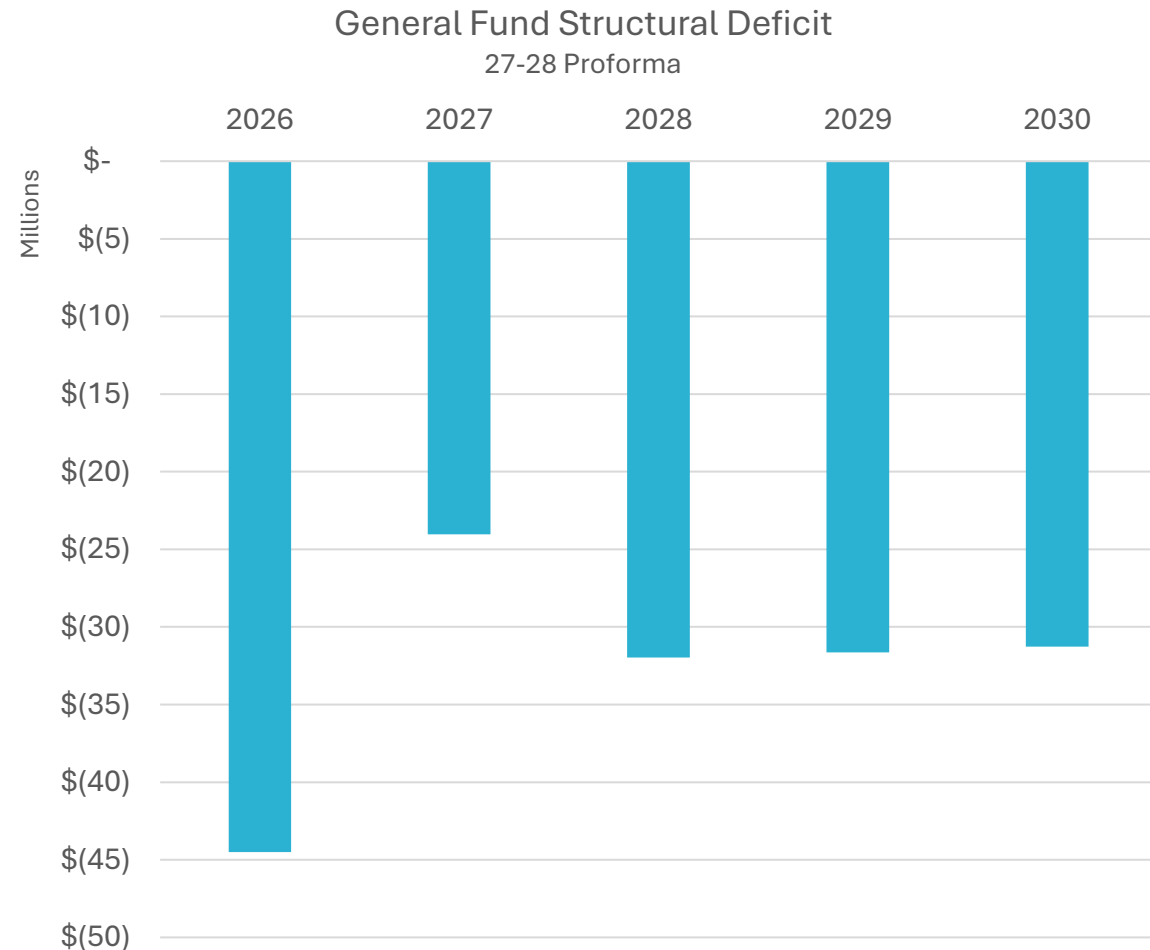
Snohomish County's Fiscal Challenge (General Fund)



Snohomish County's Fiscal Challenge (General Fund)



Without changes, the General Fund structural deficit between revenues and expenditures continues to grow.



Why Decisions Are Needed Now

Snohomish County cannot sustainably continue spending at current projected levels without making adjustments.

County leadership is evaluating a balanced approach that includes:

- Spending reductions
- Operational changes
- Revenue Options
- Strategic prioritization
- Long-term sustainability planning

Not acting is not an option.

Every option carries real impacts and tradeoffs. The goal of this process is to make thoughtful, informed decisions that preserve essential services and long-term County stability.

Not All County Funding Can Be Used the Same Way



The General Fund supports a variety of County services.

Current projections indicate the County needs to reduce at least 3% of General Fund expenditures to help address the structural budget gap.

What We're Asking From You



As we discuss potential service impacts as part of the General Fund spending reductions, we are asking for your perspectives on:

- **Community priorities** | Which services do residents rely on most?
- **Potential community impacts** | Where would cuts fall hardest, and on whom?
- **Tradeoffs and service levels** | Where could service be reduced without losing what matters most?
- **Long-term considerations** | Which services, if cut, create bigger costs later?

Public Safety, Law & Justice



What this area supports

This area supports emergency response, public safety operations, investigations, corrections, and the justice system.

Important considerations

Some public safety and court functions are legally required or tied to minimum operational standards. Staffing reductions may affect response times, service availability, and system capacity across multiple areas simultaneously.

Some local public safety funding may support grant matching requirements or partnerships that help bring additional state or federal resources into the County.

Examples of services potentially affected

- Longer response times for emergency and non-emergency calls
- Reduced patrol coverage and fewer available deputies
- Delays or reduced capacity for criminal investigations
- Reduced corrections staffing and inmate support services
- Longer wait times for court proceedings and charging decisions; fewer cases forwarded to the courts
- Delays in death investigations and death certificate processing
- Potential reductions in specialized programs such as search and rescue

Roads, Infrastructure & Transportation



What this area supports

This area supports road maintenance, transportation infrastructure, traffic safety, and the County's ability to maintain and improve public infrastructure systems

Important considerations

Infrastructure investments often require long-term planning and ongoing maintenance. Delays in maintenance can increase future repair costs and affect long-term system conditions.

Some local transportation funding is used to unlock larger state and federal transportation investments. Reductions in local match funding could reduce access to outside funding opportunities.

Examples of services potentially affected

- Decreased transportation projects (e.g. paving, corridor and intersection improvements, ADA ramps, culverts)
- Delayed road maintenance
- Deferred bridges and fish passages
- Reduced ability to provide matching funds for transportation grants (\$1 local dollar returns \$3 in grants)
- Reduced pothole repair
- Delayed and only reactive mowing, brush cutting and litter removal

Health & Community Wellbeing



What this area supports

This area supports public health, disease response, community health programs, human services, housing stability supports, and services for vulnerable populations.

Important considerations

Many of these services focus on prevention, stabilization, and early intervention. Reductions may increase pressure on other emergency and crisis-response systems over time.

Examples of services potentially affected

Human Services

- Reduced support for senior centers
- Reduced funding for Family Resource Centers that help households avoid crisis situations
- Reduced emergency assistance for low-income households
- Reduced veterans support services

Public Health

- Delays in restaurant permitting and food safety inspections
- Reduced disease investigation and outbreak response capacity
- Reduced support for long-term care facilities responding to disease outbreaks

Parks, Environment & Community Spaces



What this area supports

This area supports parks maintenance, environmental stewardship, recreation spaces, youth and community programming, and public access to outdoor spaces.

Important considerations

Parks and community programs contribute to quality of life, public health, recreation access, environmental stewardship, and community connection.

Some local funding is used to meet matching requirements for state and federal grants that support broader public health and human services systems.

Examples of services potentially affected

- Reduced park maintenance and restroom cleaning
- Reduced trash pickup and facility upkeep
- Reduced ballfield maintenance and mowing
- Reduced hazard tree removal
- Reduced operation of spray pads and seasonal amenities
- Reduced community programming such as:
 - 4H
 - Master Gardeners
 - Beach Watchers
 - Parks Naturalists
 - Office of Agriculture programs

Planning, Permitting & Neighborhood Safety



What this area supports

This area supports code enforcement, permitting, neighborhood safety, environmental protections, and land use compliance.

Important considerations

These functions often operate behind the scenes but play an important role in neighborhood conditions, environmental safety, and community quality of life.

Examples of services potentially affected

- Reduced code enforcement and investigations
- Slower response to nuisance property complaints
- Reduced capacity to address environmental hazards
- Delays in enforcement and compliance activities
- Delayed fire inspections

Overview & Discussion



Public Safety,
Law & Justice



Roads, Infrastructure &
Transportation



Health & Community
Wellbeing



Parks, Environment &
Community Spaces



Planning, Permitting &
Neighborhood Safety

What county services do you think are easy to overlook, but become highly visible when they are reduced or unavailable?

As the County weighs difficult tradeoffs, what principles or values should guide decision-making?

Share Your Feedback



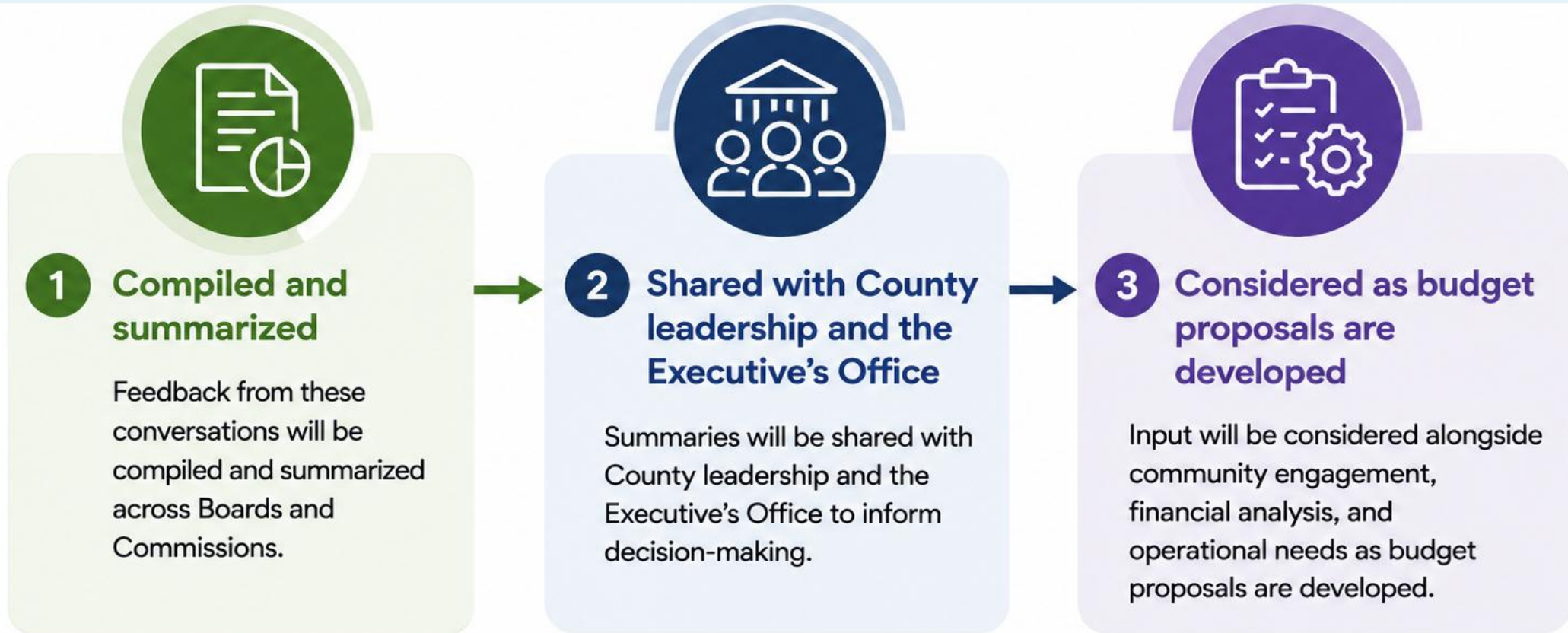
We strongly encourage all Board and Commission members to complete the follow-up survey.

The survey provides an opportunity to:

- Share additional thoughts and perspectives
- Reflect on priorities and potential impacts
- Identify concerns, tradeoffs, and community considerations
- Provide input that may not have surfaced during discussion

The survey link will be circulated after today's discussion. Please note this survey is limited to participating Boards and Commissions to help gather more detailed feedback connected to this engagement process.

What Happens Next



Snohomish County is engaging with multiple Boards, Commissions, stakeholder groups, and community members to better understand priorities, concerns, and potential impacts.



Thank you

Kara Main-Hester, Ph.D.

Chief Budget Officer

kara.main-hester@snoco.org

425-422-0632