



Board of Election Commissioners BGA Policy 2026 Budget Snapshot

Description

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The Board of Election Commissioners is established under state elections law and technically is part of the judicial branch, but receives operational funding from the City of Chicago. BoEC oversees Chicago’s polling places and ballot processes, including vote-by-mail.

Departmental Highlights

Snapshot: Appropriation & Staffing Changes from 2025 Budget

	2025 Budgeted	2026 Proposed	Net Change	Percent Change	Average Annual Rate of Change (2011-2025)	Inflation- adjusted Rate of Change (2011-2024)
Appropriations	\$28,507,734	\$27,867,404	-\$640,330	-2.2%	3.5%	2.6%
Positions & FTEs	122	122	0	0.0%	-0.1%	NA

- BoEC’s net headcount remained unchanged, with two additional positions budgeted in the Assistant Supervisor of Redistricting title and one position each removed in the Principal Clerk and Senior Supervisor titles.

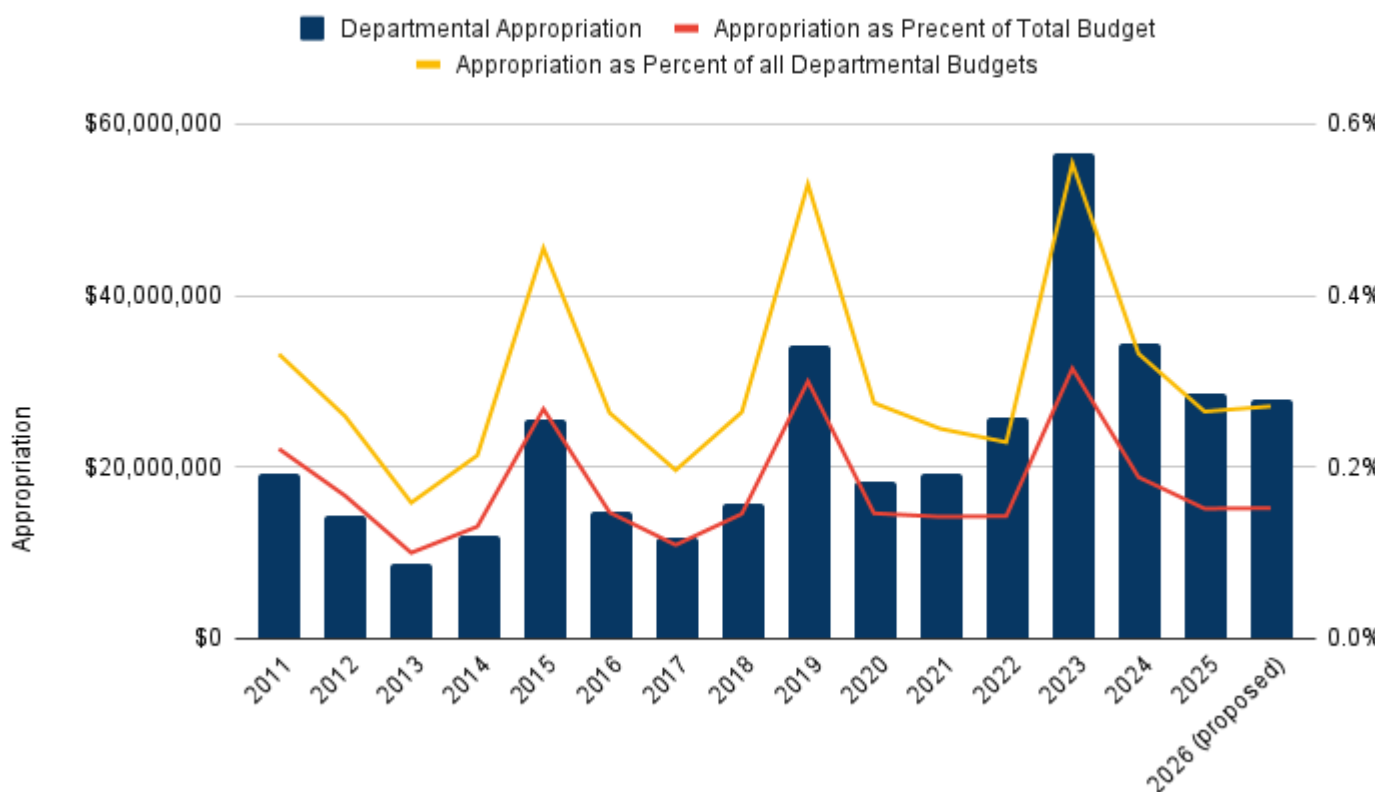
- In 2024, the most recent complete budget year for which local fund actuals and encumbrances data is available, BoEC spent only 54.8% of its locally-funded budget, the second-lowest rate of any department and the lowest of entirely locally-funded departments. The bulk of the underspend came from contractual services appropriations, where BoEC spent only 44.5% of its budget, and commodities, with only 20.2% expended.
- BoEC's largest increases in the 2026 budget anticipate election-year expenses: a \$1.4 million (87.9%) increase in the legal expenses category, roughly \$811,000 (544.8%) in the extra hire category used for temporary workers, and \$685,000 (595.7%) in overtime.
- Professional and technical services (outside contracting) was down -\$2.9 million (-51.4%), the largest budget decrease.

Historical Context

Board of Election Commissioners appropriations are cyclical, with expenses rising in preparation for election years and dropping off after. A significant portion of the department's election-year workforce is temporary hires, while permanent staff levels stay relatively consistent year-to-year.

Overall, BoEC appropriations have increased at an average rate of 3.5% annually from 2011-2025, or 2.6% adjusted for inflation, compared to a citywide average rate of 8.3% (inflation-adjusted 4.4%).

BoEC Appropriation, Chicago City Budgets 2011-2026 (proposed)

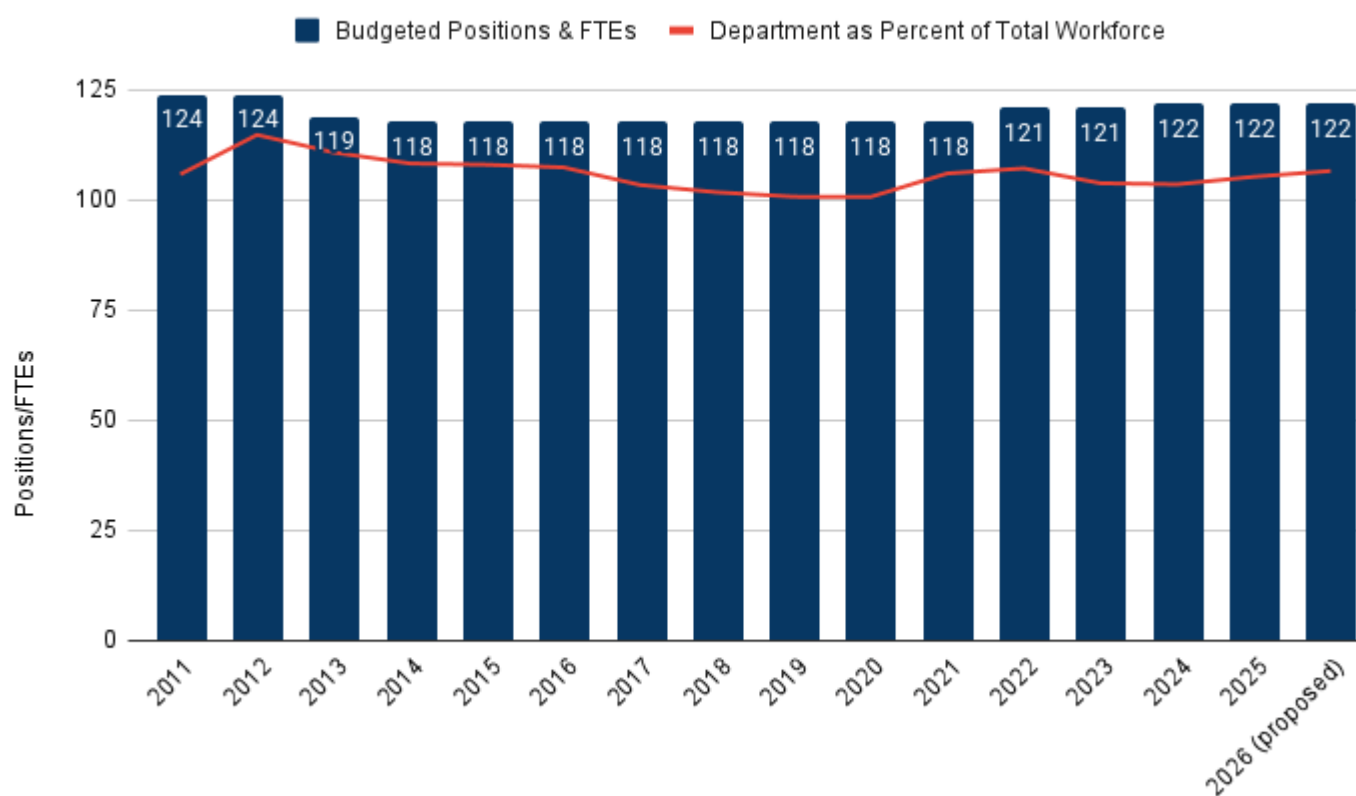


Over the past three complete budget years for which local fund actuals/encumbrances data is available, BoEC spent on average 66% of its locally funded budget, considerably less than the citywide average

86.4% local fund spend. BoEC spent the second-lowest percentage of its total budgeted funds in 2024, with only the Department of Planning and Development further under budget.

Because BoEC hires temporary staff for election cycles, the budgeted full-time headcount of the office has remained relatively unchanged year-over-year. Slight position cuts over the years have resulted in an average annual rate of change for BoEC’s headcount of -0.1% from 2011-2025, the same as the citywide average for the same period.

BoEC Budgeted Workforce, 2011-2026 (proposed)



From February through September of 2025, the months for which the city released full-time position vacancy data, BoEC averaged a 15.4% vacancy rate, compared to the citywide average of 11.2%.

12 of the department’s budgeted full-time positions were persistent vacancies, meaning that the same title/division/section/subsection combination was vacant for all eight months of available data:

Budgeted Position Changes

BoEC’s net headcount remained unchanged, with two additional positions budgeted in the Assistant Supervisor of Redistricting title and one position each removed in the Principal Clerk and Senior Supervisor titles.

Net and Percent Position/FTE Changes, 2025 to 2026 (proposed) Budgets

Title	2025 Positions	2026 Positions	Net Change	Percent Change
Assistant Supervisor of Redistricting â?? Board of Elections	2	4	2	100.0%
Principal Clerk â?? Board of Elections	18	17	-1	-5.6%
Senior Supervisor â?? Board of Elections	3	2	-1	-33.3%

Appropriations

BoEC is entirely locally-funded in this yearâ??s budget proposal, with all appropriations drawn from the Corporate FUnd.

Largest Appropriations

As with most departments, personnel costs make up the bulk of BoECâ??s appropriations, with salaries and wages on payroll by far the largest expense category. Legal expenses and outside contracting via the professional and technical services category are the next-largest.

In 2024, the most recent complete budget year for which local fund actuals and encumbrances data is available, BoEC spent only 54.8% of its locally-funded budget, the second-lowest rate of any department and the lowest of entirely locally-funded departments.

The bulk of the underspend came from contractual services appropriations, where BoEC spent only 44.5% of its budget, and commodities, with only 20.2% expended.

(Because the appropriation categories used in the 2022-2024 actuals datasets from the Department of Finance do not correspond exactly to the appropriation accounts used in the budgets presented by the Office of Budget and Management, an exact line-by-line comparison of real spend to budget within these broader categories is not possible.)

Change from Previous Year

BoEC was the only department this year with at least some change in every appropriations category.

BoECâ??s largest increases anticipate election-year expenses: a \$1.4 million (87.9%) increase in the legal expenses category, roughly \$811,000 (544.8%) in the extra hire category used for temporary workers, and \$685,000 (595.7%) in overtime.

Professional and technical services (outside contracting) was down -\$2.9 million (-51.4%), the largest budget decrease.