



Senior Center Funding

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Why This Discussion is Needed Now

- Senior nutrition services are transitioning away from County administration July 1, 2026.
- Historic city contributions bundled **nutrition + senior centers**, masking true operating costs.
- Upcoming contract renegotiations require a clearer, more equitable framework.



Purpose

- Overview of senior center funding and operations
- Peer county comparisons
- Funding model options
- Staff recommendation



Separating Senior Centers from Nutrition Services

Senior Centers

facilities, programming,
staffing, community activities

Nutrition Services

congregate meals, Meals on Wheels,
eligibility-based





Senior Centers in Skagit County

- County-operated: Burlington, Mount Vernon, Sedro-Woolley
- City-operated: Anacortes
- Non-profit operated: Concrete
- County-funded services: La Conner

Mount Vernon Senior Center Model

City Responsibilities

Contributes funding to County (\$65K).

County Responsibilities

Operates and manages all senior programs and nutrition programs.

Provides facility, utilities, cleaning and maintenance.



Burlington/Sedro-Woolley Senior Center Model

City Responsibilities

- Provides facility, utilities, cleaning, maintenance.
- Payment to County for staff and nutrition programs (~\$15k and \$23k).

County Responsibilities

- Manages and operates nutrition programs and all senior programs.



Anacortes Senior Activity Center Model

City Responsibilities

- Operates and manages all senior programs (except nutrition).
- Daily center operations.
- Offers space, internet, phone for nutrition staff.
- Pays County \$44,600.



County Responsibilities

- Manages and operates nutrition programs:
 - Congregate Meals: Weekday lunches at the Center
 - Home-Delivered Meals: Meals on Wheels for eligible seniors
- Recruits, trains and manages volunteers for meal prep, delivery, and service.
- Pays City \$104,805.

City Financial Contributions

CITY	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Anacortes	\$38,200	\$38,970	\$39,750	\$43,725	\$44,600
Burlington	\$13,327	\$13,526	\$13,728	\$15,100	\$15,402
Concrete	\$7,986	\$8,105	\$8,226	\$9,048	\$9,229
Mount Vernon	\$56,304	\$57,148	\$58,005	\$63,805	\$65,080
Sedro-Woolley	\$21,369	\$21,689	\$22,014	\$22,014	\$22,791

* Anacortes, Burlington and Sedro-Woolley also provide the facilities (including utilities, cleaning and maintenance)



County Investments in Senior Centers

- Total funding: \$670,536 (General Fund)
- Supports staffing and operations.
- Does not include facility or capital costs.

Peer Comparisons

Kitsap County (Population: 277,658)

- **Kitsap County does not fund or operate senior centers.**
- 3 cities host centers in city-owned buildings.
- Senior centers function as membership clubs, with members determining their support fees. **City governments offer public space and general funding (often through Parks & Rec) for local centers.** Area Agencies on Aging can provide funding for programs/services at senior centers, but these centers must have the necessary infrastructure, including liability insurance and formal processes, to accept public funds.

Whatcom County (Population: 231,919)

- **Whatcom County provides \$540,000 annually to support 8 senior centers.**
- 4 large centers, 4 smaller centers with limited hours

Peer Comparisons cont.

Cowlitz County (Population: 112,864)

- **Cowlitz County does not fund or operate senior centers.**

Lewis County (Population: 86,154)

- **Lewis County leases 5 senior center buildings to a non-profit for \$1 annually and covers major maintenance** (e.g., roofing).
- Ownership transfer to nonprofits has been discussed but not implemented.

Key Takeaways

- No single model.
- Many counties do not fund or operate centers.
- Skagit County's role is comparatively high.



Full Cost to Operate a Senior Center

- County staffing: \$152,400
- Facilities, utilities, janitorial: \$243,000
- Estimated total: \$395,400 per center

Funding Model Options

- Equal cost-share
- County-funded FTE
- Per capita funding
- County funds, cities employs staff
- Phase out County funding





Option 1: Equal Cost-Share Model

- County and cities share 50% each of total operating costs.
- In-kind credit for facilities, utilities, janitorial services.
- Reflects full cost of operations.



Option 2: County-Funded FTE Model

- County funds one FTE per city (County employee).
- Cities provide facilities and cover additional operational costs.
- Simple approach linking County funding directly to staffing.



Option 3: Per Capita Funding Model

- Funding allocated based on city population proportion.
- Easy to calculate, explain, and adjust with funding changes.
- Does not account for service use by residents outside city limits.



Option 4: County Funds, Cities Staff

- County provides funding.
- Cities employ and supervise staff.
- Implemented via interlocal agreements.



Option 5:

Phase Out County Funding

- Gradually withdraw operational funding for senior centers.
- Aligns with statewide practice; cities/nonprofits assume responsibility.
- Requires transition planning and communication with stakeholders.



Staff Recommendation

Option 4: County Funds, Cities Staff

- County provides funding subject to Board direction and budget.
- Cities employ and supervise Senior Center Coordinators.
- Implemented via interlocal agreements.

Recommended Next Steps

- Board provides policy direction.
- Clarify contribution parameters and timing.
- Engage city partners for feedback.



Thank you!