



San Francisco Ethics Commission

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Date: January 2, 2026
To: Members of the Ethics Commission
From: Patrick Ford, Executive Director
Subject: **Agenda Item 4 – Executive Director’s Report**

Summary and Action Requested

This report provides various programmatic and operational highlights since the last report.

No action is required by the Commission, as this item is for informational purposes only.

Staff Update

I am pleased to announce that Alvin Situ began work as the Commission’s new Senior IS Engineer on December 22. Alvin has been serving as the Commission’s IS Business Analyst since 2021. Alvin replaces Tyler Field, who moved out of state in December.

Alvin is a graduate of UC Davis, where he earned a bachelor's degree in computer science and a minor in statistics. Before joining the Commission, he worked at the UC Davis Institute of Transportation Studies and a tech startup. Since that time, Alvin has made substantial contributions to the Commission’s technology systems and services. He has been responsible for much of the development of the complaint system, numerous improvements to our website, and a comprehensive rewrite of our local e-filing process. He also developed several of our more recent electronic forms, including the Gifts to Department Form. His work has significantly improved the reliability, usability, and efficiency of our systems. In his new role, Alvin will help lead development of the campaign finance dashboards, continue updates to our open datasets, and advance a number of automation projects.

Streamlining Legislation Project

In September, the Commission voted unanimously to approve two ordinances as part of the Commission’s current project to streamline and update various programs and policies. This includes an ordinance amending the City’s campaign finance rules that would strengthen and simplify how expenditure ceilings function with the Public Financing Program and adjust the campaign contribution limit for inflation ([File #250868](#)). The other ordinance would discontinue outdated and unnecessary reporting requirements regarding campaign consultants, recusals, and major developers ([File #250867](#)).

Both ordinances have been criticized by certain advocacy organizations and are still awaiting consideration by the Board of Supervisors. Staff have held multiple meetings with these advocacy organizations to better understand their concerns and have proposed several amendments based on those concerns.

Staff are continuing to engage regularly with members of the Board of Supervisors and hope that both ordinances will move forward in 2026.

Form 700 Filing

April 1 is the deadline for all City officers and thousands of City employees to file the Form 700 disclosing their personal financial interests during calendar year 2025. Details about the Commission's Form 700 compliance and technical assistance work will be provided in the Engagement and Compliance Report and EDDA Report, respectively, as part of the Commission's February meeting.

Unfortunately, the California Fair Political Practices Commission has not yet addressed the implications of its implementation of AB 1170 whereby local elected officials and other top City leaders are now required to file the Form 700 through the FPPC's online system, in addition to their requirement to file with the Ethics Commission. Commission staff have been working extensively all year with the FPPC to resolve the double filing requirement. Those efforts have thus far not resulted in any changes to the FPPC's interpretation or implementation of the new state law. Staff will continue these efforts into 2026, including pursuing state legislation that would resolve the double filing requirement. This work is essential to reduce the new, added burden on high-level officials while also ensuring that San Francisco City government maintains the administration of and full access to the crucial information contained on the Form 700s filed by City officials.

New Annual Ethics Training Module

The Engagement and Compliance Division and EDDA Divisions are in the final stages of launching the City's all new annual ethics training module. This training is required each year for the City's 6,000 Form 700 filers. The module will be launched during the month of January. More details about the contents of the training module and the process of its creation will be provided as part of the Engagement and Compliance Report at the Commission's February meeting.

User Research

One of the Commission's top goals for FY26 has been the expansion of user research methods to better engage with stakeholders who use the Commission's products and services and to better understand how to tailor our programs to best serve the needs of users. An example of how the Commission has successfully used user research in the past is the new annual ethics training described above. The past version of the training included a survey through which trainees could leave feedback about how the training could be made more accessible and informative. The survey had a high response rate, and Staff were able to operationalize many of the points of feedback when creating the new training module discussed above.

Staff are working to deploy more research methods throughout the Commission's work. The Policy Division is helping to organize and lead this work. The Policy Division recently completed a series of

meetings with the Commission's other divisions to discuss what aspects of their work would benefit from additional user research. Through process, Staff have identified three initial user testing projects for the coming year and are currently in the planning stages for each project. These user testing cases focus on the experience of:

- campaign committees undergoing audit,
- users of the campaign finance dashboard, and
- users of the Commission's website.

Staff will update the Commission on these efforts in coming months.

Key Performance Indicators

As discussed in previous reports, another of the Commission's top goals in FY26 has been the expansion and standardization of key performance indicators (KPIs) and how they are tracked and reported. KPIs monitor progress on core programs, and they allow commissioners, managers, and staff to understand the volume, timing, and nature of the Commission's work. This information is crucial to planning and operational effectiveness.

In early January, managers will finalize the KPIs for the first half of FY26. The Operations Division will present this information at the February meeting, either as part of the budget agenda item or as a separate discussion.

Budget

The FY27–FY28 budget process is now underway. The Mayor's Budget Office issued its initial budget instructions on December 12. City law requires that each department hold two public meetings to discuss the department's budget prior to submission of the department's budget proposal. The first of those two discussions will take place as part of Agenda Item 7. The materials attached to Agenda Item 7 provide more information about the Ethics Commission's budget.

Council on Government Ethics Laws (COGEL) Conference 2025

Each year, the Commission participates in the annual conference of the Council on Government Ethics Laws (COGEL). COGEL is an association of regulators and other ethics and campaign finance professionals. The annual conference is an important way to learn about emerging trends, share updates, and identify areas for improvement in the Commission's programs and operations. This year, Staff representing the Enforcement Division, Policy Division, Engagement and Compliance Division, and Audits Division attended the conference. Staff also participated in discussions about ethics training, policymaking, public financing programs, and other key areas of the Commission's work. Staff who attended also reported back to the full Commission staff on programs, compliance strategies, and laws other agencies have implemented.

Senior Investigator Bertha Cheung spoke as a panelist as part of a session exploring effective enforcement strategies. Bertha shared updates about the Commission's SARP program, as well as major cases that the Commission has recently concluded. The Commission is regarded as a leader in ethics and campaign finance enforcement, and the Enforcement Division is frequently in communication with other COGEL members to discuss best practices.