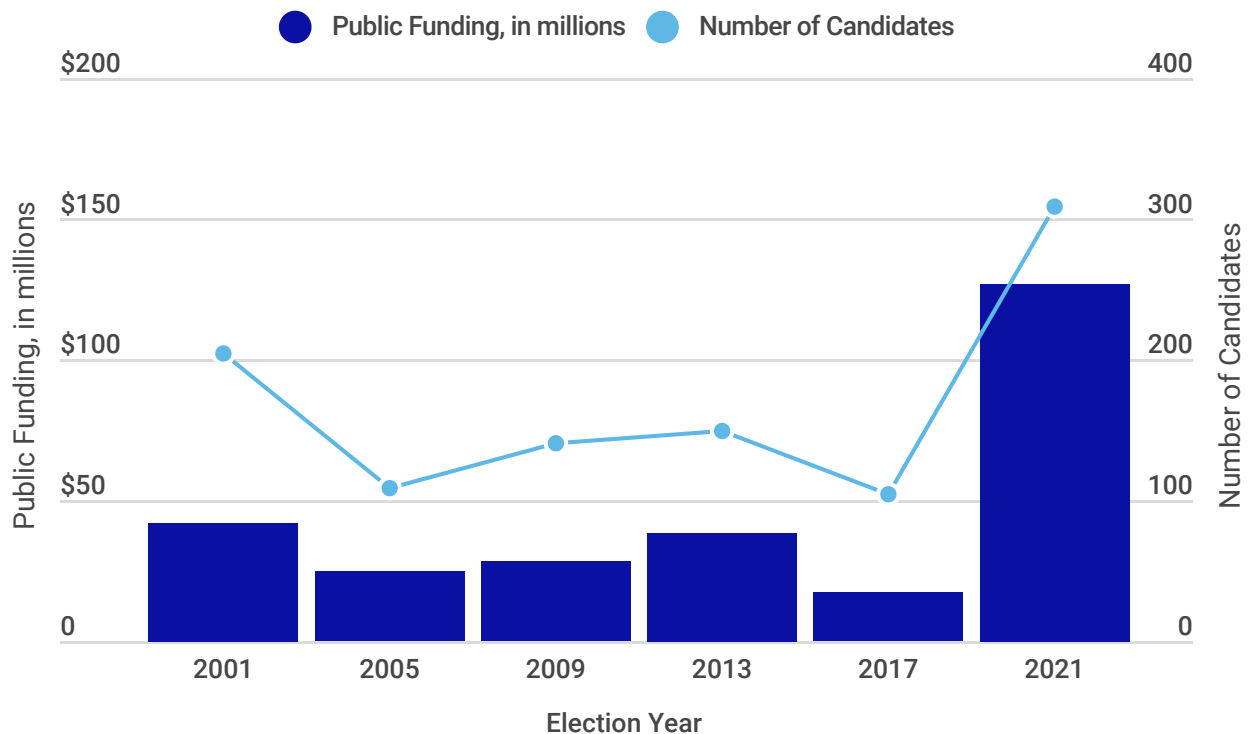


How Much Did the City's Public Campaign Financing Program Provide to Candidates in 2021 & How Does It Compare With Past Years?

With a majority of the city's public offices up for grabs in 2021, and the city's ranked choice voting system making its debut, the most recent election cycle was an exceptional one for New York City. It was also a notable year for spending by the city's Campaign Finance Board (CFB). The CFB is an independent, nonpartisan city agency that provides public funding to candidates running for local office. The 2021 election cycle was the first in which it implemented recent changes to increase public financing to campaigns.

The city's Campaign Finance Program is voluntary and it matches contributions made to participating candidates by city residents.¹ To be eligible, a candidate must show a sufficient level of support by first raising a minimum number of donations from would-be constituents. They then must follow public disclosure rules and expenditure limits, along with other rules enforced by the CFB. IBO examined how much campaign funding the CFB paid in 2021, and how it compared to past years.

Large Jump in Recipient Candidates and Public Funds Paid Out in 2021



As of January 21, 2022, the CFB reported payments of \$127.1 million during the 2021 election cycle to candidates for Mayor, Public Advocate, Comptroller, Borough President, and City Council. This preliminary total is roughly four times the average amount disbursed during the past five election cycles.¹

Average Amount of Public Funds Received By Candidates

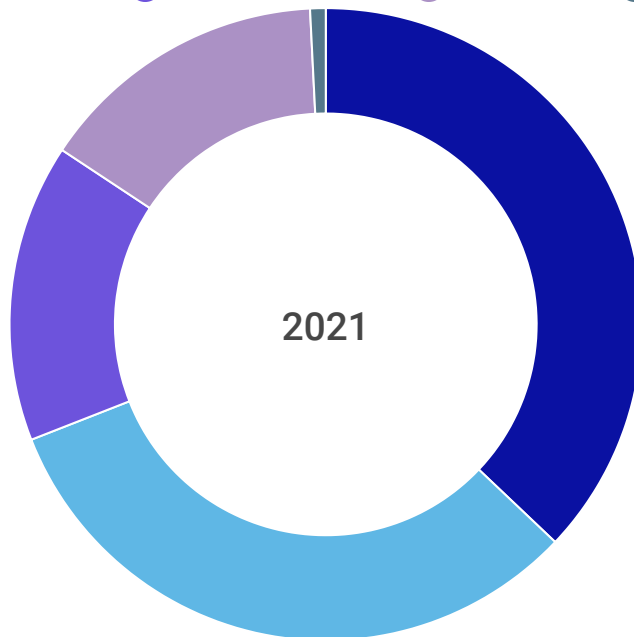
	2001	2005	2009	2013	2017	2021
Mayor	\$2,572,533	\$2,504,469	\$3,709,091	\$2,832,270	\$2,986,668	\$5,237,719
Public Advocate	1,087,050	895,000	1,493,903	1,686,027	756,486	1,010,572
City Comptroller	1,336,610	-	1,324,834	1,952,350	-	2,368,966
Borough President	504,540	429,669	391,010	525,900	296,967	717,458
City Council	79,426	73,946	89,873	88,194	98,775	153,982

The substantial increase in total funds paid out in 2021, however, was not simply a byproduct of a greater number of participating candidates. The increase also stems in part from a voter-approved increase in the matching formula, which was passed in 2018, but first implemented in this election cycle. It raised the city’s matching amount from 6:1 to 8:1. A qualified \$100 contribution by a city resident now generates \$800 in public funding, rather than \$600, as was previously the case.

Voters in 2018 also approved an increase of the cap on public funds payments, and then the City Council, in enacting Local Law 128 of 2019, raised the cap again. The maximum amount of public funds available to council candidates for the primary or general election, for example, increased from \$104,500 in 2017 to \$168,888 in the June 2021 primaries. Over 100 City Council candidates this year qualified for the new maximum. Taken together, these increases themselves have been credited with raising the number of candidates seeking election.²

Mayoral Candidates Received More than One-Third of 2021 Public Campaign Funds

● Mayor ● City Council ● Borough President ● Comptroller ● Public Advocate





\$10.4 Million

Public Campaign Funds
received by Eric Adam's
Mayoral campaign



\$4.2 Million

Public Campaign Funds
received by Curtis Sliwa's
Mayoral campaign

Prepared by Bernard O'Brien
New York City Independent Budget Office

SOURCE: Campaign Finance Board

Endnotes

¹The CFB matches up to \$250 for a contribution to a candidate for Mayor, Public Advocate, or Comptroller and up to \$175 for a candidate for Borough President or City Council.

²Payments yet to be processed and post-election campaign audits may ultimately alter the amount of funds provided to candidates during the 2021 election cycle. The CFB is required to issue a postelection report concerning the 2021 election cycle by August 2022.

³Another important change to the city's campaign finance system since 2017 includes reforms aimed at diminishing the role of big contributions in city elections by lowering the total amount of money contributors can donate to candidates. The limits apply regardless of whether a given candidate has elected to participate in the public financing program. For more details on the recent changes see: [What's New in the Campaign Finance Program | New York City Campaign Finance Board \(nyccfb.info\)](https://www.nyc.gov/cfb/what-s-new-in-the-campaign-finance-program)



New York City
Independent Budget Office
George Sweeting, Acting Director

110 William St., 14th floor
New York, New York 10038

Tel. (212) 442-0632
Fax (212) 442-0350
iboenews@ibo.nyc.ny.us
www.ibo.nyc.ny.us

