

Administrative Office of the Courts



2015-2017 Biennium Budget Development And Submittal Instructions

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Introduction

In December 2007, the Washington Supreme Court officially adopted the first budget development and approval schedule for the judicial branch. During the fall of 2011 the Chief Justice called on judicial branch leaders to revisit, refine and strengthen the judicial branch budget process. The process was modified to include additional review points and thus ensure wider branch participation.

The process was modified to include review and comment by the Board for Judicial Administration (BJA) for those requests that impact the Administrative Office of the Courts' (AOC) budget. In addition, the presentation process has been expanded to include all interested parties and if necessary additional presentation meetings will be scheduled as volume dictates.

The purpose of the schedule and the associated procedures remains the same: to ensure that the budget development, review and submittal process is consistent, transparent and objective, providing several opportunities for review and discussion.

As we endeavor to maintain and even grow the Judicial Branch resource base, the use of a number of review and assessment processes becomes imperative, especially during times of economic stress or slight economic recovery, as is currently happening. Accordingly, we continue to strengthen our budget process by enhancing transparency and inviting input to ensure the development of funding requests that more closely align with judicial branch policy objectives and priorities.

While it appears that revenue collections have somewhat stabilized, there remain a number of risk factors that could adversely impact Washington's economy and associated revenue. As of the November 2013 forecast the economic risk factors include weak Asian and European economies and disappointing growth in Washington jobs. Because of the slow recovery, our budget submittal should be thoughtful and driven by priorities that benefit the public first and the branch second.

With the exception of budget requests for the Judicial Conduct Commission, all state judicial branch budget requests, whether for new funding or increases to existing funding, shall be subject to this process for final approval or endorsement by the Supreme Court as appropriate. The Supreme Court may approve, modify, suggest an alternative approach or deny funding proposals that are included in the AOC or Supreme Court budget requests. The Supreme Court may endorse and provide feedback regarding funding proposals brought forth by the independent judicial branch agencies.

Process Overview

Preliminary Budget Submission

As in previous years, submission of a preliminary budget request is required. The preliminary budget request is a high-level description of the way funds being requested will be used, the estimated cost for the request, and information regarding associated staffing.

Preliminary requests that impact the AOC budget are due to AOC on March 21, 2014. All other requests are due to AOC on April 11, 2014. The preliminary budget submittal form and instructions can be found in Appendix B.

The Administrative Office of the Courts' Management Services Division (MSD) will provide assistance as needed, review preliminary packages and prepare them for submission, and will brief the Budget Committee regarding all preliminary budget requests received.

All requests will be submitted to the Supreme Court Budget Committee. Requests that impact the AOC budget but for which no support is sought from the Board for Judicial Information will be forwarded directly from AOC to the Budget Committee for consideration.

Additional Information for Proponents Seeking Support from the Board for Judicial Administration

The Administrative Office of the Courts' Management Services Division (MSD) will provide assistance as needed, review preliminary packages and prepare them for submission. In addition,

- Requests affecting the AOC budget from proponents seeking support of the Board for Judicial Administration (BJA) will be forwarded to the BJA in April, 2014, for discussion. Requesting entities [have the option](#) to more fully develop budget requests for further review and comment by BJA. Requesting entities seeking BJA support for requests that impact AOC will present their requests to the BJA on May 16, 2014.
- In June, the BJA will identify and prioritize those requests impacting AOC that will move forward through the remainder of the process. The Supreme Court Budget Committee will give substantial deference to the recommendations offered by the BJA regarding each budget request. If an entity chooses not to follow recommendations offered by the BJA, the entity shall notify the BJA of its intended actions.
- BJA comments, recommendations and priorities will be forwarded to the Budget Committee for consideration during the decision making process.

Detailed Budget Request Documentation

Prior to the development of detailed decision packages, requesting entities should consider feedback provided by the BJA and the Supreme Court Budget Committee. Preliminary budget proposals that entities deem critical will require the completion of a detailed decision package, which are due to the AOC on **June 30, 2014**. The detailed decision package form and AOC contact information can be found in Appendices B and D respectively. The detailed budget development, review and submittal schedule can be found in Appendix A.

Requesting entities will be invited to attend and present their requests to the Supreme Court Budget Committee. The presentation meetings are tentatively scheduled for **July 28, 2014 and July 30, 2014**. Detailed information will be distributed at a later date. AOC budget staff will be available to assist with the development of the detailed decision packages.

The Supreme Court Budget Committee will use input from BJA, the current and projected economic outlook, and the policy objectives and priorities as the context for evaluating the detailed budget decision packages as well as evaluating the proposed budget submittal as a whole.

A recommendation for the final content of the 2015-2017 biennial budget request will be submitted by the Budget Committee to the full Court in late September or October. The full Court will then endorse or suggest modifications to those budget requests that would not modify the AOC budget. For those requests that would modify the AOC budget the full Court may approve, modify, suggest an alternative approach or deny each proposal. The finalized package will then be submitted to the legislature in October.

Detailed Decision Packages

Each decision package is a building block for constructing the budget request and the starting point for making a persuasive case for proposed change. The Supreme Court and Washington State Legislature will rely upon the information presented in the decision package when evaluating the request.

Decision packages organize and describe proposed cost changes, highlighting budget decisions and impacts. The decision package consolidates financial information, supporting justification, and the statement of impact for a specific action or policy proposed for inclusion in the budget.

Decision packages are required for any proposed change that will impact funding or staffing levels.

Please contact the Administrative Office of the Courts' Management Services Division if you have questions about decision packages. Contact information can be found in Appendix D. Templates for the Preliminary Budget Submittal and for the detailed Decision Package can be found in Appendix B.

Decision package writing tips

Items to consider or remember while developing a decision package include:

- **Consider your audience.**
When developing the decision package, remember that the Supreme Court and Washington State Legislature are the ultimate audiences to whom you are writing. Both will need clear and concise information, not only to make funding recommendations and decisions, but also to communicate the recommendations and decisions to others who can influence the process.
- **Use plain English.**
Jargon and acronyms should be avoided. The narrative should be clear to an audience that may not be familiar with the issue being discussed.
- **Use peer review.**
Ask others to read, review and critique the narrative. Often those not immersed in the issue can identify areas in the narrative that could be strengthened or eliminated.
- **Emphasize the results and outcomes.**
The Supreme Court and the legislature need to understand not only what is being purchased (goods and services) they also need to understand the benefits that will be derived.
- **The title of the decision package is part of the sales pitch.** Avoid titles like "*FTE Increase.*"
- **Graphs and tables may be useful.**
If a graph and/or table will add value, include it in the decision package.
- **Legislative staff has limited time; legislators have even less.**
The decision package should contain clear and concise language that addresses the issue, recommends a solution, and identifies the benefits.

The questions below should also be considered when developing a decision package

- What do you want the reader to know?
- What do you want the reader to retain?
- Does the narrative emphasize facts, statistics and sources that are respected?
- Does the narrative fully and thoroughly explain assumptions?
- Does the narrative include sufficient (but not too much) background and explanation?
- Is the narrative convincing?
- Is the proposed solution congruent with the agency's mission?
- Why will the public be better off as a result of the proposed solution?

- How will you know you are getting the benefits? Are the benefits measurable?
- Is there a non-budgetary way to deal with the problem? Will changes to administrative policy, court rule or law suffice?
- Is the amount being requested too small?
- Is the problem currently visible to the public or policymakers? Are there newspaper articles, letters from the public, surveys or complaint tracking systems that can help support the proposal?
- Does the proposed solution address an urgent problem? How serious are the risks if action is not taken? Can existing fund sources be used or re-programmed to address the issue?
- Is the amount requested reasonable, considering the problem to be addressed? Are the details of what is being requested reasonable?
- Is there a way to accomplish it without adding FTEs?
- What is the economic outlook?

A sample decision package can be found in Appendix C.

Judicial Branch Principle Policy Goals

The Judicial Branch Principle Policy Goals (Goals) noted below will be used to assess and prioritize budget requests submitted for consideration by the Washington Supreme Court. All budget requests should be linked to an overall direction or set of goals and objectives. Accordingly, the Goals are provided as anchor points for potential budget requests.

The Goals should be used as the guiding principles or strategic framework upon which the budget request is built. The budget request narrative should provide a clear picture of how the new or enhanced program or activity will directly enhance or move towards fulfillment of one or more of the Goals.

PRINCIPLE POLICY GOALS OF THE WASHINGTON STATE JUDICIAL BRANCH¹

“Justice in all cases shall be administered openly, and without unnecessary delay.”

Washington State Constitution, Article I, Section 10.

- 1. Fair and Effective Administration of Justice in All Civil and Criminal Cases.**
Washington courts will openly, fairly, efficiently and effectively administer justice in all criminal and civil cases, consistent with constitutional mandates and the judiciary’s duty to maintain the highest level of public trust and confidence in the courts.
- 2. Accessibility.** Washington courts, court facilities and court systems will be open and accessible to all participants regardless of cultural, linguistic, ability-based or other characteristics that serve as access barriers.
- 3. Access to Necessary Representation.** Constitutional and statutory guarantees of the right to counsel shall be effectively implemented. Litigants with important interest at stake in civil judicial proceedings should have meaningful access to counsel.
- 4. Commitment to Effective Court Management.** Washington courts will employ and maintain systems and practices that enhance effective court management.
- 5. Appropriate Staffing and Support.** Washington courts will be appropriately staffed and effectively managed, and court personnel, court managers and court systems will be effectively supported.

Measures

Measurement--whether considering output, outcome or performance--is an important tool that decision makers use when weighing the priority and impact of a proposed budgetary change.

¹ Approved En Banc June 5, 2008

The decision package template contains a section for the inclusion of measurement information. Every effort should be made to quantify the change that would occur as a result of new or increased funding.

Measures should illustrate how the budget request would impact statewide strategies or objectives and allow the reader or decision maker to easily understand the direct impact of the funding request on statewide objectives or strategies.

A good measure:

- Indicates whether the activity is achieving its purpose or is contributing to statewide results.
- Is reliable, accurate, and verifiable.
- Is understandable and relevant to decision makers and stakeholders who may have little or no knowledge of the new or enhanced activity.
- Is stated in positive terms (or in terms of the desired outcome).
- Can be obtained at a reasonable cost and effort.
- Can stand alone and be understood.

Comparison of Outcome, Output and Efficiency Measures

What They Do	Examples
Outcome Measures	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show the impact of new or enhanced activities on problems/issues they are designed to address • Answer the question “What is different about the world?” • Capture societal impact, changes in behavior, knowledge or attitude, customer satisfaction, or technical quality, or vital signs of a process • Measure goals and objective attainment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall employment rate • Employment rate for job training participants • Percentage of employers rating job training program placements as “good” or “excellent” • Percentage of children who get a communicable disease that is preventable by vaccination • Job training application processing time
Output Measures	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show how much more or less of something was produced • Answer the question “What was done?” and “How did we get there?” • Measure success of strategies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of vehicle licenses issued • Number of vaccinations given • Number of students attending school • Number of offenders housed in correctional facilities
Efficiency or Effectiveness (Process) Measures	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show relationship between inputs and outputs (efficiency measures), or inputs and outcomes (effectiveness measures) • Answer the question, “What are the unit costs?” • Can also be used to track timeliness of service delivery • Usually expressed as a ratio, such as cost per unit, or units per FTE 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost per training class delivered • Investigations per FTE • Average cost per offender per day supervised • Administrative cost per retirement benefit provided • Time to process a permit
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Definitions

Recommendation Summary - A brief description of the purpose of a decision package. Text should be limited to a 100 words or less.

Appropriation — A legal authorization to make expenditures and incur obligations for specific purposes from a specific account over a specific time period. Appropriations typically limit expenditures to a specific amount and purpose within a fiscal year or biennial timeframe. Only the Legislature can make appropriations in Washington State.

Biennialization — Converting expenditures that occurred for only part of a biennium into the amount needed for a full biennium of implementation.

Biennium—A two-year fiscal period. The Washington State biennium runs from July 1 of an odd-numbered year to June 30 of the next odd-numbered year.

Budget Drivers — Caseload, economic, or demographic factors that have a significant effect on the state budget. Examples include inflation rate changes and state population changes in certain age groups.

Efficiency Measure — A measure that shows the relationship between inputs (dollars or FTEs) to output or outcome.

Funds — A term that generally refers to moneys or resources.

Fund Balance — Fund balance represents the excess of beginning balance and estimated revenues for the period over liabilities, reserves, and appropriations for the period.

General Fund-State (GF-S) — Refers to the basic account that receives revenue from Washington's sales, property, business and occupation, and other general taxes; and is spent for operations such as public schools, social services, and corrections.

Objectives — Measurable targets that describe specific results a service or program is expected to accomplish within a given time period.

Outcome Measure — A measure of the result of a service provided. This type of measure indicates the impact on the problem or issue the service or program was designed to achieve.

Output Measure — An indicator of how much work has been completed.

Performance Measure — A quantitative indicator that can be used to determine whether the activity is achieving or making progress toward some objective.

Proviso — Language in budget bills that places a condition on the use of appropriations. Example: "Up to \$500,000 of the General Fund-State

appropriation is provided solely for five additional inspectors in the food safety program.”

Strategic Plan — A long-term comprehensive plan that represents an integrated set of decisions and actions designed to ensure that the intended goals and objectives of an agency are met.

Appendix A

2015-2017 Budget

Development, Review and Submittal Schedule

MONTH	TASK	DUE DATE
January	AOC distributes budget instructions	January 10, 2014
February	AOC staff assist with preliminary budget request development as necessary Budget Instruction letter from Chief Justice distributed	February 2014 February 2014
March	Preliminary budget <u>requests that impact AOC are due</u> Preliminary requests must include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brief description of request • Brief description of benefit to be gained • Estimated dollar amount and staffing 	March 21, 2014
April	Preliminary budget <u>requests that do not impact AOC are due</u> Preliminary requests must include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brief description of request • Brief description of benefit to be gained • Estimated dollar amount and staffing BJA review and comment on preliminary <u>requests that impact the AOC budget (summary list only)</u> JISC review and approve IT budget request (summary list only)	April 11, 2014 April 11, 2014 April 25, 2014
May	Proponents invited to present preliminary <u>requests that impact AOC</u> at the BJA meeting	May 16, 2014
June	BJA prioritize <u>requests that impact AOC</u> JISC approve detailed decision packages All final detailed budget requests are due	June 20, 2014 June 27, 2014 June 30, 2014
July	Supreme Court Budget Committee Briefing/Presentation-all budget requests Revised final detailed budget requests due to AOC	July 28, 2014 July 30, 2014 July 31, 2014
July	Supreme Court Budget Committee meeting (additional information, presentation and recommendation)	Late July/Early Aug.
August	Supreme Court Budget Committee meeting (additional information, presentation and recommendation)	August 2014
September	Supreme Court Budget Committee meeting (additional information, presentation and recommendation)	September 2014
October	Supreme Court En Banc: final approval & submission to Legislature	October 2014

Appendix B-Templates

Instructions for completing the decision package templates may be found here: [Instructions for Decision Package Templates](#)

The Preliminary Decision Package Template can be found here: [Preliminary Decision Package Template](#)

Packages that impact the AOC budget are due to AOC March 21, 2014.

All other preliminary packages are due to AOC April 11, 2014.

Send completed preliminary budget forms to Ramsey Radwan at ramsey.radwan@courts.wa.gov

The Detailed Decision Package Template can be found here: [Detailed Decision Package Template](#)

All detailed/final decision packages are due to AOC June 30, 2014

Send detailed decision package(s) to Ramsey Radwan at ramsey.radwan@courts.wa.gov

Appendix C-Decision Package Example

Example Decision Package

[Example Decision Package](#)

Appendix D-Contact Information

Administrative Office of the Courts Management Services Division

For assistance with the development of the preliminary budget submission, detailed decision package narrative and cost figures, or questions regarding process or procedure, please contact:

- Mai Vu – Budget
(360) 705-5237
Mai.Vu@courts.wa.gov
- Renee Lewis – Comptroller
(360) 704-4012
Renee.Lewis@Courts.wa.gov
- Ramsey Radwan – Director, Management Services Division
(360) 357-2406
Ramsey.Radwan@Courts.wa.gov