

Washington State Judicial Branch 2025-27 Biennial Budget Writing/Helpful Tips

HELPFUL TIPS GENERAL

Have this guidance ready when filling in the decision package template.

Answer all questions using complete sentences.

Please ensure the text flows from one question to the next and there is no avoidable redundancy.

If you have questions about the template or these tips, please contact Angie Wirkkala at (360) 704-5528 or angie.wirkkala@courts.wa.gov

Prior budget requests requests: If this is a recurring operating budget request please reference the last prior final version as a starting point for drafting this request.

Answers can include bullets, numbering, charts, graphs, images, and italicized and bold fonts. Do not change font style, size or the document's underlying formatting.

HELPFUL TIPS TIPS AND GUIDANCE FOR DECISION PACKAGE SECTIONS

Agency Recommendation Summary Text:

Write this last. This should be a brief description of the proposal written in complete sentences – an “elevator pitch”. A suggested limit is 100 words. Clearly and concisely state the problem, what is being done to address it (what this actually buys), justify the need, and explain what outcome to expect as a result. Use succinct, precise, and non-technical words. Do not repeat references to cost or FTEs, which are displayed below in the fiscal detail.

Package Description:

Please read this portion of the guidance fully – this is the most substantive portion of the Decision Package.

Detailed description of the proposal including background or context for the proposed change, the current state, what is proposed, and how it will improve the lives of Washingtonians. Please use high quality narrative descriptions, informative tables, charts, logic models, graphs, timelines, flowcharts, maps, or other graphics to thoroughly and completely describe the package and its justification.

High quality descriptions will contain the following information:

- *What is the pertinent history or context in which the decision package request is being made?*
- *Problem Statement or Current Situation: What is the problem, opportunity, or priority being addressed with this request? This description should allow the Legislature to understand the nature of the request, including what is driving it, why it is important, who is affected by it, and how they are affected.*
- *Proposed Solution: How does the agency propose to address this problem, opportunity, or priority?*
- *Purchase Description: What will this request actually buy? What services and/or materials will be provided, when, and to whom? How will the purchases achieve the desired outputs, efficiencies, and outcomes?*

Fully describe and quantify expected impacts on state residents.

Who will be affected by the decision package and how? How many customers will/will not be served? Include annual estimates when a service is expected to grow or decline over time.

Explain what alternatives were explored by the agency and why this was the best option chosen.

Include the pros and cons of alternatives, why they were not selected, and why the recommended alternative was chosen.

What are the consequences of not funding this request?

Describe the consequences, but don't be hyperbolic. If the consequences sound too extreme to be believable, the package will likely not be funded.

Is this an expansion or alteration of a current program or service?

If the budget request is an expansion or alteration of a current program or service, provide a detailed description. Please provide 2023-25 funding and FTE levels for this program for context.

Decision Package expenditure, FTE and revenue assumptions:

Agencies must clearly articulate the workload or policy assumptions. AOC Budget Staff will use the information when calculating expenditure changes proposed. Additional notes accompany each expenditure category.

Staffing Assumptions

List by fiscal year the FTE and job classification. If there are important workload assumptions, describe those in detail – either in the table or narratively below. Clearly identify one-time versus ongoing costs.

For costs in addition to standard costs, include them in the table and/or provide additional details as narrative Contracts

Will this package require contracts to implement? What types and at what cost? Describe your contracting assumptions in detail. Clearly identify one-time versus ongoing costs and relevant dates.

Goods and Services

Standard costs will be applied to include a standard goods and services amount per FTE. If there are special and unique goods or services that are needed to make this work successful, note them here. Describe in detail. Clearly identify one-time versus ongoing costs and relevant dates.

Travel

Standard costs will be applied to include a standard travel amount per FTE. If there is special and unique travel that is needed to make this work successful, note that here. Describe in detail. Clearly identify one-time versus ongoing costs and relevant dates.

Equipment

Standard costs applied will be applied to include a standard equipment amount per FTE. If there is special and unique equipment that is needed to make this work successful, note that here. Describe in detail. Clearly identify one-time versus ongoing costs and relevant dates. Equipment is typically a one-time expense.

Grants or Pass-Through Funding

Will this package include grants or pass-through funding to other entities? How much funding will be granted or passed through? List the types of grants and amount by fiscal year. Describe your assumptions in detail. Clearly identify one-time versus ongoing costs and relevant dates.

How does the package relate to the Judicial Branch principal policy objectives?

Each package should relate to a minimum of 1-2 policy objectives below. Be sure to answer thoroughly but succinctly and note outcomes that are expected in each policy objective.

- *Fair and Effective Administration of Justice*
- *Accessibility*
- *Access to Necessary Representation*
- *Commitment to Effective Court Management*
- *Sufficient Staffing and Support*

How does the package impact equity in the state?

- **Address any target populations or communities that will benefit from this proposal.**
Which communities are impacted by this proposal – consider both demographic and geographic communities? How will the population or community benefit? Consider overburdened, underserved, and sensitive populations potentially affected by this proposal (such as Tribes, Indigenous people, communities of color, low-income, or rural populations.) Does the proposal advance diversity, equity, inclusion, and respect within the judiciary and/or our workforce/workplace itself?
- **Describe the how the agency conducted community outreach and engagement.**
Did the agency partner with populations or communities who have been historically excluded and marginalized by governmental decisions? How was this proposal shaped by the engagement? Does it promote fair treatment, meaningful engagement, and equitable access?
- **Consider which target populations or communities would be disproportionately impacted by this proposal. Explain why and how these equity impacts will be mitigated.**
How are disparities in communities affected – positively and negatively? How are target populations or communities excluded, marginalized, or disproportionately impacted and how will these equity impacts be addressed? How does the proposal affect decision-making, outreach, assistance, monitoring, or other deliverables?

Are there impacts to other governmental entities?

Describe in detail any impacts to other state agencies; trial or appellate courts; tribal, regional, county or city governments; or any political subdivision of the state. Provide anticipated support or opposition.

Stakeholder response:

Identify non-governmental stakeholders impacted by this proposal. Provide anticipated support or opposition.

Are there legal or administrative mandates that require this package to be funded?

Describe in detail if this proposal is in response to litigation, an audit finding, or task force recommendations.

Does current law need to be changed to successfully implement this package?

If yes, describe in detail any necessary changes to existing statutes, court rules, or contracts. Also contact Brittany Gregory at Brittany.Gregory@courts.wa.gov in case you have not yet submitted a request for proposed legislation.

Are there impacts to state facilities?

The answer is typically “no”, but if yes, describe in detail all impacts to facilities and workplace needs.

Are there other supporting materials that strengthen the case for this request?

Please attach or reference any other supporting materials or information that will help analysts and policymakers understand and prioritize your request. Please provide a short bit of context for each item so that the reader understands the connection between the attachment and the request.

Are there information technology impacts?

*Does this Decision Package include funding for any IT-related costs, including hardware, software, services (including cloud-based services), contracts, or IT staff? If yes, please explain in detail below. **Please do not add information** if the only IT expenditures are standard computer equipment/software for new staff.*