



Court System Education Funding Task Force 2020

Frequently Asked Questions and Answers

Funding Request

- The Washington Judiciary is requesting \$207,000 in 2020 and approximately \$550,000 in the next Biennium to ensure new judicial officers and court personnel get timely access to the training needed to effectively serve the public. Funding will ensure equal access for small and rural courts that struggle to afford sending judges and court staff to training opportunities.
- The Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) requests \$207,000 in Fiscal Year 2021 to begin the development of a comprehensive online training system that provides access to timely and essential training. Funding will support the development of a learning management system and staff to develop curriculum, courses, and manage the learning management system. Initial development of training courses will be designed for new court administrators, court personnel, and judicial officers. Special emphasis will be on small and rural courts.
- Ongoing funding of approximately \$550,000 for full implementation will be required in the 2021–2023 Biennium.

Funds will be used to develop a comprehensive statewide online training system.

- Online training provides timely and flexible statewide training options, specifically on changes to laws, forms, and procedures for court personnel.
- Funding will support the development of a statewide online delivery system to provide immediate and sustainable training opportunities.
- Rural and small courts often do not have sufficient resources to send court personnel to trainings. Online training will help rural courts access up-to-date information on best practices.
- A learning management system reduces learning and development expenditures and training time, targets diverse learning audiences, and ensures access to up-to-date information and required trainings.

New Legislation

- Last year alone the Legislature passed more than 130 bills that impacted the court system, including protection orders, family law and parentage, guardianship, mental health, public records, and juvenile justice. That was a significant increase from the 150 bills that impacted the courts that were passed between 2016 and 2018.

- An online training system can provide timely training on changes to laws to ensure the intent of the legislature is carried out in the cases that come through the courts.
- Judicial officers need to know how these changes affect their sentencing practices and influence their decisions.
- Staff need to know how to implement new processes and procedures so they can appropriately advise the public and properly carry out judicial orders.

Don't judges already have experience?

New judges are typically highly experienced legal professionals in specialty practice areas. Judges are required to be proficient in all areas of the law. Training ensures they have all of the knowledge, skills, and abilities they need to serve on the bench.

There is huge turnover on the bench and among court personnel:

- The “age wave” is here and is creating huge turnover on the bench and among court staff. Nearly a third of all the trial court judges were replaced in the last few years. Court of Appeals judges are retiring in similar numbers. We need additional dollars to train these new judges.
- There is also an increase in the turnover of court administrators which needs to be addressed.
- New employees begin work without critical training. Almost 50% of judicial officers and almost 63% of new administrators received no training during their first six months on the job.

How are current funds being used?

- Funding provided for education has remained relatively flat for over ten years.
- Limited funds (\$312,500 annually) are available currently to train thousands of court personnel, many of whom have limited or no training opportunities.
- There is no additional funding available through the current AOC budget.

Why should the state pay for judicial education?

- Your constituents deserve well-trained public servants. You don't put a state trooper on the road without adequate training. Judges and court personnel need proper training as well.
- The court education funding requests are for all court personnel, not just judicial officers.
- The lack of resources make it particularly difficult for small and rural court personnel to access training opportunities.
- Other agencies depend on judicial officers and court personnel to understand and correctly apply changing legal requirements and to submit accurate data necessary for those agencies to fulfill their own mandates. Inadequate training can lead to inefficiencies, delays, and added expense or lost revenue by other agencies.