

Washington State Judicial Branch

2023-25 Biennial Budget

Dedicate Technical Support to Appellate Courts

Agency: Administrative Office of the Courts

Decision Package Code/Title: R2 – Dedicate Tech Supp Appellate Crts

Agency Recommendation Summary Text:

The Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) requests 4.0 FTEs and \$2.62 million in ongoing expenditure authority to better support the applications used by the Supreme Court and the Court of Appeals and to better meet both Courts' technology needs. Today, the Appellate technology support team supports both the Supreme Court and the three divisions of the Court of Appeals. The current level of resources is insufficient to meet the growing technology needs of the appellate courts. This significantly impedes efforts to provide modern and efficient technology for the Supreme Court and Court of Appeals.

AOC is requesting sufficient staffing and financial resources to 1) develop a Supreme Court application support team, and 2) increase staffing and resource levels for ACORDS, OnBase, and web applications to benefit both the Supreme Court and the Court of Appeals to ensure adequate staffing and resources are available to address complex maintenance and operations work. (General Fund —State)

Fiscal Summary:

	FY 2024	FY 2025	Biennial	FY 2026	FY 2027	Biennial
Staffing						
FTEs	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00
Operating Expenditures						
Fund 001-1	\$1,318,000	\$1,298,800	\$2,616,800	\$1,298,800	\$1,298,800	\$2,597,600
Total Expenditures						
	\$1,318,000	\$1,298,800	\$2,616,800	\$1,298,800	\$1,298,800	\$2,597,600

Package Description:

The Appellate Court Operation Support model is an overarching program to provide the technical and business support infrastructure necessary to support all applications used by the Appellate Courts. The current support structure consists of three business staff and eight technical staff. The support model used by the program is a multi-level approach. Level One (L1) is typically handled by the business team which consists of Business Analysts, Customer Service Specialists, and Court Technology Educators. They answer general questions about software usage and provide instructions to solve simple issues, such as login problems, software reinstallation, checking hardware configurations. L1 support agents usually resolve problems either by verbally walking a user through to resolution or via remote desktop capabilities. The user support staff is also the first point of contact for all incoming support queries. They register user problems, collect their comprehensive description, prioritize, and escalate advanced queries to technical support.

Level Two (L2) support is typically handled by the technical team which consists of software developers, system engineers and solution architects. They deal with more advanced and complex issues that require the introduction of

minor changes to an application, such as configuration issues, account administration, code changes, database changes, hot fixes, and services restart. They also perform application monitoring activities to proactively fix evolving slowdowns and failures.

The support team needs to be expanded to address the unique needs of the Supreme Court such as direct appeals, attorney circulation (attorney discipline) matters, attorney admissions matters, and Motions for Reconsideration. Currently, the support team supports the Supreme Court and the three divisions of the Court of Appeals and do not have adequate staffing to support both court levels at effective and acceptable levels. This budget request seeks \$1.3 million in yearly ongoing funding for:

- Three new support resources to better support the Supreme Court. The three positions include a Business Analyst, skilled OnBase Document Management Developer and Senior Software Developer. Adding a Supreme Court Business Analyst will help meet the Supreme Court business needs and the two developers will help meet the Supreme Court technical needs for the applications and web-based systems used by the Supreme Court.
- Additional resources dedicated to support both the Supreme Court and Court of Appeals. The technical team does not have adequate staffing to support the Appellate Court Document Management System. Currently, the Administrative Office of the Courts is receiving support from ImageSoft (vendor) with development hours purchased by the courts and the Administrative Office of the Courts, which is set to run out in March 2023. In the next six years, the courts would like to add complex functionalities that requires technical staff with expert OnBase development skills. Funding is also needed to hire a skilled software developer to maintain the Appellate Courts' complex case management system to ensure the system remains functional and secure.
- Both the Supreme Court and Court of Appeals would like to expand their respective web content and make improvements on existing websites to better serve the public. Such requests include building and maintaining an online credit card application so that case participants can pay for their filing fees online as well as members of the general public paying for copies of appellate case files online. Improvements include consolidating appellate information and documents into one website. Today, Opinions are posted for a case on a webpage, the briefs for that same case is on a different website, commissioner statements on another, oral argument videos on another, etc. The appellate courts would like those websites to be consolidated into one website making it easier for the public to view all case related information in one place. This will require significant amounts of work by a business analyst and a web developer.

Because of the increase in systems and applications in the Appellate Court portfolio and the increase in the customer base, the Administrative Office of the Courts has formalized the appellate support team and added a technical and business owner to help manage the day-to-day operations and oversee the continuous development and management of long-term support and operation strategies.

Fully describe and quantify expected impacts on state residents and specific populations served:

If the funding request is approved, Washingtonians will be impacted in a positive way. Adding additional business and technical application support personnel for the Supreme Court and Court of Appeals impacts Washingtonians by having more resources that will result in faster resolution for system issues and system enhancements. Court staff will not have to use system workarounds while waiting for the issues to get fixed or enhancing the system(s). And, fully supported, working systems help ensure cases are resolved faster and the courts are able to respond to questions and/or concerns for Washingtonians.

Below are a few examples of how inadequate support negatively impacts the Washingtonians, justice partners, and/or Appellate case participants:

- **Appellate Case Participant:** If the OnBase system is down for an extended period of time and cannot produce an Appellate decision document (Ruling, Order or Opinion) which is used to report and deliver the judiciary's decision, the courts will either need to wait for the system to be fixed, or the courts will need to spend more time to manually create the decision document, manually apply the filed time and date stamp, manually apply the signature from the judicial officer(s), and manually email and/or mail the document to the case participant(s) and their attorney. Once the system is back up and running, the court will then upload the document to the system.
- **Justice Partner:** The Washington State Bar Association (WSBA) sends the attorney admissions documents to the Supreme Court via an automated data and document exchange called the WSBA Admissions Processor. The attorney admissions application materials are sent automatically to the Supreme Court and arrives in OnBase. This service relies on business and technical staff from both the Administrative Office of the Courts and the WSBA. If this service is interrupted due to a technical issue, both teams spend time researching and fixing the issue. If the service is down for an extended period of time, the WSBA, Supreme Court, potential attorneys, and the attorney's client are impacted as the Supreme Court cannot process the application order, the WSBA cannot issue a Bar or License number, and the attorney or law practitioner cannot practice law and their client will not see timely case resolution. Instead, the application would need to be sent from the WSBA to the Supreme Court via physical mail, the Supreme Court Order will need to be sent to the WSBA via physical mail, and then the Bar or License Number is sent from the WSBA to the Supreme Court via email all of which adds more time to the process.
- **General Public:** The Appellate case management system (ACORDS) automatically displays Appellate calendar data on a public facing website. This is used by members of the general public to view all current and historical appellate calendar information. If ACORDS is down or if this automated service is down for an extended period of time, the courts will experience increased calls for assistance from the general public as they are not able to view court calendar information. The courts will need to share this information via telephone or email until the issue is resolved.

Explain what alternatives were explored by the agency and why they were rejected as solutions:

The Administrative Office of the Courts considered using existing maintenance and operations staff to better support the Supreme Court. However, it was quickly discovered that if we dedicate existing business analyst resources to the Supreme Court, which is currently two business analysts, this would result in decreased support for the Court of Appeals resulting in support issues. If AOC dedicates some of the OnBase developer resources, this too would result in decreased support for the Court of Appeals, again resulting in support issues. The level of support needed is growing due to additional technology being requested and implemented to support the appellate courts and provide service to the public. For example, the Department of Corrections and the Appellate Courts would like to expand Inmate E-Filing by adding additional institutions to the application. This will result in higher volumes of files coming into the system resulting in increased need for support. Also, in the fall of 2022, the team will be implementing the Public Web Access Document Portal also resulting in increased need for support. For these reasons, the Administrative Office of the Courts

has determined that the only viable option moving forward is to request for additional resources to support the appellate courts.

What are the consequences of not funding this request?

If this request is not funded, Administrative Office of the Courts will not have the resources necessary to support, maintain, operate, and enhance the systems and associated products used by the Appellate Courts. This could jeopardize the ability of Administrative Office of the Courts to adequately support the Appellate Courts, therefore, hindering the ability of courts and justice partners to operate effectively. Appellate case participants could experience delay in electronically filing their pleadings if filing portals cannot be maintained timely. The Supreme Court would continue to have inadequate business and technology support from the Administrative Office of the Courts, limiting the ability of the Court to automate its processes.

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

This proposal would expand the AOC support portfolio by offering new business and technical support resources to the Supreme Court and Court of Appeals. This expansion would enable the support portfolio to better support both the Supreme Court and Court of Appeals without the need of decreasing support elsewhere.

Decision Package expenditure, FTE and revenue assumptions:

Staffing Assumptions

Business Resource (AOC Staff). Beginning July 1, 2023 and ongoing, AOC requires salary, benefits, and associated standard costs for 1.0 FTE Business Analyst to serve the Supreme Court. Business analysts serve as the key link between business needs and technology solutions. They coordinate, elicit, and update, Information Technology (IT) and Business Processes through requirements, documentation, and standards. Business Analysts contribute crucial business perspective and analysis to find solutions and business needs for management and processing of case data and documents. They communicate with AOC staff, vendor technical staff, and customers about requirements, education, processes, and the risks and benefits associated with multiple case and content management systems. This position will be important for establishing requirements that bridge the differences between the various statewide Appellate Court Systems used by the Supreme Court.

Technical Resource (AOC Staff). Beginning July 1, 2023 and ongoing, AOC requires salary, benefits, and associated standard costs for 3.0 FTE Senior Software Developers described below.

1.0 FTE Senior Software Developer with responsibility for the design, development, and implementation and production support of Supreme Court applications including the OnBase Document/Workflow management system. The position is also the backbone for integrating the content management with the case management system with advanced understanding of the overall impact and interconnections of the Administrative Office of the Courts system infrastructure. This position is also responsible for coordinating and working with other Senior Developers that are part of Appellate Portfolio to come up with innovative solutions to address the specific needs of Supreme Court and will plan and resolve issues and perform needed maintenance activities. This position will lead the technical analysis needed for designing and developing Supreme Court applications based on Administrative Office of the Courts architecture strategy and roadmaps.

1.0 FTE Senior JAVA Developer will support the case management system used by the Appellate Courts (ACORDS). ACORDS uses the JAVA programming language and the team needs a Senior JAVA developer to help support the case management system for the Appellate Courts. Without a Senior JAVA Developer, the ACORDS team will not be able to do any major enhancements or be able to complete the new library upgrades which are essential for the Administrative Office of the Courts to keep maintaining the application and to keep the application secure. The ACORDS support team was getting this support from a senior JAVA developer who was part of another team who was instrumental in helping with major library upgrades and enhancements on the application. That senior JAVA developer has left the agency. ACORDS is the only application using the legacy WebSphere Application server (WAS) Full Profile server which needs to be replaced with the more modern, lightweight, and secure WebSphere Liberty application server that is utilized by other JAVA applications at the Administrative Office of the Courts. In order to move from WAS Full Profile to WAS Liberty, we need to implement some changes to the code which require assistance from a senior JAVA developer. The Appellate Courts are in the early discussions about replacing ACORDS (which will most likely result in a budget decision package request in the coming years) and this Senior JAVA Developer will be instrumental when decommissioning ACORDS and will help transition to the new case management system.

1.0 FTE Senior Web Developer with responsibility for Web Services Publication portfolio modernization efforts. Part of the portfolio includes opinion postings, briefs, calendars, oral arguments, dockets, court rules and forms, public subscriptions and notifications. This position will be in charge of redesigning, enhancing & developing new modern user interface and consolidating different sites. This position will work alongside with the Information security group to upgrade web applications security. This position is also responsible for coordinating and working with other Senior Developers that are part of Appellate Portfolio to come up with innovative solutions to address the specific needs of the Supreme Court and Court of Appeals.

Other Non-Standard Costs

Technical Resource (Contractors - Object C)

Beginning July 1, 2023 and ongoing, AOC requires salary, benefits, and associated staff costs for one and a half contractors skilled in OnBase.

Full-Time OnBase Developer to address needs unique to the Supreme Court. The Administrative Office of the Courts application team needs a dedicated and skilled OnBase Developer to initially stand up complicated workflow solutions and to train existing permanent staff who can maintain the system while this contract developer moves to the next complex work item/assignment. Currently, the Administrative Office of the Courts is struggling to recruit for and hiring of a skilled OnBase Developer needed to enhance and maintain this complex document management system. The lack of this expertise will impact the Supreme Court customers due to the resulting delays for delivering functionalities and support services.

This contract support is ongoing and assumes 1,560 total hours per year @ \$215 per hour for a total of \$335,400 per fiscal year.

Part-Time OnBase Document Management Support for both the Supreme Court and the Court of Appeals. The OnBase Content Management System requires expert Document Management Development skills, knowledge, and experience that the Administrative Office of the Courts staff does not have. Currently the Administrative Office of the Courts is getting the needed support from ImageSoft with development hours purchased by the

courts and the Administrative Office of the Courts. In the next six years, the program plans to add and enhance requested functionalities that are complex and requires expert OnBase development skills.

Adding funding for contractor hours will enable the Administrative Office of the Courts Appellate Application Support Team to provide the needed support to the Appellate Courts by working on and completing complex and large OnBase tasks as well as providing expert assistance and support.

This contract support is ongoing and assumes 1,000 total hours per year @ \$215 per hour for a total of \$215,000 per fiscal year.

Expenditures by Object	<u>FY 2024</u>	<u>FY 2025</u>	<u>FY 2026</u>	<u>FY 2027</u>	<u>FY 2028</u>	<u>FY 2029</u>
A Salaries and Wages	435,600	435,600	435,600	435,600	435,600	435,600
B Employee Benefits	139,000	139,000	139,000	139,000	139,000	139,000
C Personal Service Contract	550,400	550,400	550,400	550,400	550,400	550,400
E Goods and Services	15,200	15,200	15,200	15,200	15,200	15,200
G Travel	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000
J Capital Outlays	25,600	6,400	6,400	6,400	6,400	6,400
T Intra-Agency Reimbursements	142,200	142,200	142,200	142,200	142,200	142,200
Total Objects	1,318,000	1,298,800	1,298,800	1,298,800	1,298,800	1,298,800

Staffing

Job Class	Salary	<u>FY 2024</u>	<u>FY 2025</u>	<u>FY 2026</u>	<u>FY 2027</u>	<u>FY 2028</u>	<u>FY 2029</u>
BUSINESS ANALYST	101,100	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
SENIOR SYSTEM INTEGRATOR	111,500	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
SENIOR SYSTEM INTEGRATOR	111,500	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
SENIOR SYSTEM INTEGRATOR	111,500	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Total FTEs		4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.0	4.00

Explanation of standard costs by object:

Salary estimates are current biennium actual rates at Step L.

Benefits are the agency average of 31.89% of salaries.

Goods and Services are the agency average of \$3,800 per direct program FTE.

Travel is the agency average of \$2,500 per direct program FTE.

One-time IT Equipment is \$4,800 for the first fiscal year per direct program FTE. Ongoing Equipment is the agency average of \$1,600 per direct program FTE.

Agency Indirect is calculated at a rate of 24.73% of direct program salaries and benefits.

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

This package directly advances the Judicial Branch policy objective of Commitment to Effective Court Management and Sufficient Staffing and Support. This package will increase the business and technology support staffing levels to better support both the Supreme Court and Court of Appeals. The increased support staffing levels will also improve the technology used by the courts which improves the courts ability manage their courts effectively.

Are there impacts to other governmental entities?

This request will only impact the Appellate Courts, which is the governmental agency requesting the increased staffing support from the Administrative Office of the Courts. Both the Supreme Court and Court of Appeals fully supports this request.

Stakeholder response:

Non-governmental Stakeholder	Support or Oppose?	Explanation
Attorneys	Support	Attorneys would support and benefit from this decision package as they would have easier access to the Appellate Court decision documents and case data as the systems used by the appellate courts would likely experience shorter down times and better efficiency.
Self-Represented Litigants	Support	Self-Represented litigants would support and benefit from this decision package as they would have easier access to the Appellate Court decision documents and case data as the systems used by the appellate courts would likely experience shorter down times and better efficiency.
Media	Support	The media would support and benefit from this decision package as they would have better access to case data and documents via the public facing websites due to better website design and efficiency.
General Public	Support	The general public would support and benefit from this decision package as they would have better access to case data and documents via the public facing websites due to better website design and efficiency.

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

There are no legal or administrative mandates that require that this package be funded.

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

No changes to current law are required to successfully implement this package.

Are there impacts to state facilities?

This request does not impact any state facilities.

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

None

Are there information technology impacts?

The IT-related costs would include contract with service providers, software licensing, and hardware costs.

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