

Washington State Judicial Branch

2023-25 Biennial Budget

Replace Supreme Court Opinion Tracker

Agency: Administrative Office of the Courts

Decision Package Code/Title: P3 – Replace Sup Crt Opinion Tracker

Agency Recommendation Summary Text:

The Administrative Office of the Courts, as the information technology support for the Supreme Court, requests 5.0 FTEs and \$2.73 million in one-time expenditure authority for the staffing and financial resources needed to develop or procure an all-in-one, automated, and modern solution that supports the tracking, circulating, voting, and reporting of opinion matters from the time writing assignments are made to the filing of the opinion.

The Supreme Court does not have an adequate technology solution to manage, track, circulate, vote or view reports on their Opinion and Motion for Reconsideration matters. Instead, the justices rely on a brittle, outdated, underperforming, and unsupported Microsoft Access database to track their opinions. Only one person can use this antiquated tool, and it does not fully meet the Court’s needs. This requires the Supreme Court to manually process and track their work causing delays and frustrations from the Supreme Court, Case Participants, and Justice Partners. (General Fund—State)

Fiscal Summary:

	FY 2024	FY 2025	Biennial	FY 2026	FY 2027	Biennial
Staffing						
FTEs	5.00	5.00	5.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Operating Expenditures						
Fund 001-1	\$1,153,100	\$1,576,500	\$2,729,600	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total Expenditures						
	\$1,153,100	\$1,576,500	\$2,729,600	\$0	\$0	\$0

Package Description:

The Supreme Court does not have a technology solution to handle the circulation and voting for its Opinion work. This includes the drafting, circulating, and recirculating the majority and separate opinions until each opinion is final and agreed upon. Without a modern technological solution, this is done manually using network folders, email and Outlook calendars. The Supreme Court also has an outdated and unsupported Microsoft Access database for its coordination and reporting needs for their Opinion matters. The system was originally developed in the 1990s and was intended to be a stop-gap solution. This antiquated and outdated technology requires the Supreme Court to spend too much time using multiple manual business processes to ensure the needed work is done. In short – the system is little better than hiring a series of runners to shuttle paper back-and-forth between chambers.

The Administrative Office of the Courts requests funding to implement an all-in-one, automated, and modern solution leveraging the Microsoft 365 platform. The Microsoft 365 platform is the latest version of Microsoft’s productivity suite and features world-class security, cloud-based services, and improved communications. This solution will support the tracking, circulating, voting, and reporting of opinion matters from the time writing assignments are made by the court until the filing of the opinion. This solution will:

- Drive and control the flow of work in accordance with important deadlines associated with the circulation and tracking of the opinions.
- Allows for documents to be added to the case to provide streamlined and easy access to these documents.
- Provide the ability to circulate and vote on opinions.
- Support a robust data entry and reporting feature with security to prevent unauthorized access to information and documents. Each chamber will be able to enter its own data so that all of the data entry does not fall on the one Judicial Assistant in the Chief's office. In addition, Justices can run reports at any time, rather than having to request reports from the Judicial Assistant.

All of the above will result in better and more efficient management of Opinion work which ultimately results in improved access to justice for Washingtonians.

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

If this funding request is approved, approximately 30 Supreme Court staff, which includes the nine Supreme Court Justices, will benefit directly and approximately 150 Court of Appeals staff indirectly. This new technology will impact the Supreme Court users directly in several ways. First, the new solution will drastically improve their experience when working on their Opinion matters as described earlier in this document. Second, funding this project would ensure the project has adequate staffing and resources to complete the project while the maintenance and operations staff and resources can be used for those activities.

This funding request will also positively affect the justice partners and case participants communities as they will experience increased efficiencies due to the automation the new technology will provide.

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

The Administrative Office of the Courts considered modernizing the current application used by the Supreme Court to track the progress of Opinions. The current Opinion tracking application was developed in Microsoft Access, an outdated application that cannot be redeveloped into a secure and functional application. In addition, the requirements for the new application encompass many new functions which are far beyond the capabilities of the original application. For these reasons, the Administrative Office of the Courts has determined that the only viable option moving forward is to implement a solution leveraging the Microsoft 365 platform.

What are the consequences of not funding this request?

If this request is not funded, the Supreme Court will continue to use a brittle, outdated application to track the progress of Opinion development in the Supreme Court. This risks a severe disruption to the Supreme Court business process if this unsupportable application were to fail. If this request is not funded and the Administrative Office of the Courts must use existing resources to work on this solution, there will be significant impacts to the entire application portfolio for Appellate Courts. The Administrative Office of the Courts will not be able to adequately support the Appellate Courts as the maintenance and operations team would need to shift priorities from maintenance and operations work to project work delivering the Supreme Court Opinion solution. This would then hinder the courts and justice partners ability to operate effectively. Potential negative impacts could be experienced in electronically filing of pleadings by Appellate case participants, delays to enhancements of other Appellate applications, and increased time conflicts due to time required for staff to perform critical maintenance.

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

The Administrative Office of the Courts would be expanding the services provided to the Supreme Court to automate key processes such as Opinion circulation, voting, and reporting. This expansion would enable more secure processes by

providing security at a level above that offered by standard desktop productivity applications that are currently used for these processes.

Decision Package expenditure, FTE and revenue assumptions:

Staffing Assumptions

Business Analysts. Beginning July 1, 2023 and ongoing, AOC requires salary, benefits, and associated standard costs for 2.0 FTE. 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 the technology needs for the Supreme Court Opinion project. These positions will be crucial in establishing requirements that bridge the customer needs and the chosen technology solution.

Senior Software Developer. Beginning July 1, 2023 and ongoing, AOC requires salary, benefits, and associated standard costs for 2.0 FTE Senior System Integrator. These staff are highly skilled and experienced professionals who are crucial in formulating the necessary technical analysis needed for designing and developing applications based on agency architecture strategies and roadmaps.

Software Quality Assurance (QA) Tester. Beginning July 1, 2023 and ongoing, AOC requires salary, benefits, and associated standard costs for 1.0 FTE. Quality Assurance Testers examine new or modified software applications to evaluate whether or not they perform as intended.

Other Non-Standard Costs

Professional Services (Object C)

A one-time contract would be required for vendor professional services to produce a software solution based upon documented requirements for the Supreme Court Opinion application.

FY 2024 One-Time: \$224,000

FY 2025 One-Time: \$671,000

4,163 hours for the biennium * \$215 per hour = \$895,000

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	526,300	526,300				
B	Employee Benefits	167,800	167,800				
C	Personal Service Contract	223,800	671,200				
E	Goods and Services	19,000	19,000				
G	Travel	12,500	12,500				
J	Capital Outlays	32,000	8,000				
T	Intra-Agency Reimbursements	171,700	171,700				
Total Objects		1,153,100	1,576,500	0	0	0	0

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	2.00	2.00				
SENIOR SYSTEM INTEGRATOR	111,500	2.00	2.00				
SOFTWARE QA TESTER	101,100	1.00	1.00				
Total FTEs		5.00	5.00				

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. This package will implement a software application that will modernize and streamline the Supreme Court's Opinion circulation and tracking processes. This will reduce the overhead required to manage the current process.

Are there impacts to other governmental entities?

This request will only impact the Supreme Court, which is the governmental agency requesting this work from the Administrative Office of the Courts. The Supreme Court fully supports this request.

Stakeholder response:

No non-governmental stakeholders will be impacted by this proposal.

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?

Attached to this request are:

- Draft Supreme Court Opinion Project Charter that illustrates the project overview, objectives, scope, and dependencies.



ITG1313 SC Opinion
Routing-Tracking Proj

- High-level business requirements that illustrates all of the court business needs this funding request would support.

Administrative Office of the Courts
Policy Level – P3 – Replace Sup Crt Opinion Tracker



Supreme Court
Opinion Tracking High

Are there information technology impacts?

Approval of this request would result in the Administrative Office of the Courts procuring or developing a new software application to support the Opinion process of the Supreme Court. The IT-related costs would include contracts with service providers, software licensing, and hardware costs.

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