

Washington State Judicial Branch

2023-25 Biennial Budget

Translate Pattern Court Forms

Agency: Administrative Office of the Courts

Decision Package Code/Title: T9 – Translate Pattern Court Forms

Agency Recommendation Summary Text:

The Administrative Office of the Courts requests \$150,000 in ongoing state funding to translate court forms. Unrepresented litigants heavily rely on state pattern forms to navigate the court system. Washington State’s pattern forms library is around 725 forms. Court forms help people request filing fee waivers, file family law cases, get Protection Orders, and set up guardianship or conservatorships. Many forms are statutorily required, like the protection order, dependency, and most family Law forms. However, current funding is sufficient to translate only about 9% of that forms library into other languages and there is no funding to update the current translations at this time. (General Fund-State)

Fiscal Summary:

	FY 2024	FY 2025	Biennial	FY 2026	FY 2027	Biennial
Staffing						
FTEs	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Operating Expenditures						
Fund 001-1	\$75,000	\$75,000	\$150,000	\$75,000	\$75,000	\$150,000
Total Expenditures						
	\$75,000	\$75,000	\$150,000	\$75,000	\$75,000	\$150,000

Package Description:

This request provides \$75,000 per year in sustainable funding for Washington’s Pattern Form translations.

Currently forms are translated through a mix of one-time, patchwork funding when legislation is first passed and grants. Due to changes in legislation and appellate court cases, many of the commonly used forms that are translated are out of date within a year or two of translation.

Continued funds for translation would allow high use forms to be translated into five languages and updated regularly.

This request would allow for increased and continued translations of Washington’s Pattern Forms.

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

The populations served are court users that do not speak English fluently but do speak one of the top five significant non-English speaking languages, currently Spanish, Vietnamese, Russian, Korean, and Chinese languages.

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

Currently, various programs at the Administrative Office of the Courts request grants for translation projects. Grants have led to an inconsistent budget for translations. Due to frequent form updates, some translated forms become stale before the money is available to update them.

What are the consequences of not funding this request?

Most of the Pattern forms are not translated, this creates an access to justice issues. Translated forms for civil matters will become stale and be pulled from the website until funds are available to update them, including forms related to protection orders and family law.

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

This not an alteration or expansion of a current program or service. The legislature sometimes allocates money for translations but there is not an ongoing monetary commitment specifically for translations.

Decision Package expenditure, FTE and revenue assumptions:

Contracts (Object C)

The Administrative Office of the Courts will contract with translators or a company that employs translator to provide translations. These contracts would be ongoing at \$75,000 per fiscal year. Currently, translations cost approximately \$0.15 cents per word with a minimum amount charged per form.

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>
C	Personal Service Contract	75,000	75,000	75,000	75,000	75,000	75,000
Total Objects		75,000	75,000	75,000	75,000	75,000	75,000

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

Having forms translated relates to accessibility and fair and effective administration of justice. Translated forms allow the non-English speaking populations to access courts in their language and clearly lays out the requirements to obtain the relief they seek. It promotes fair and effective administration of justice because court forms will be more understandable, thus limiting the need for additional hearings.

Are there impacts to other governmental entities?

There are no impacts on other governmental entities.

Stakeholder response:

Pro-se legal advocacy groups will support increased translations of forms as part of access to justice.

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

Some statutes require translations to be updated when the forms are updated, but funds are not provided for the updates. See RCW 7.105.115(c) and RCW 9.97.020(11)(e).

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

No changes to current law are necessary.

Are there impacts to state facilities?

No.

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

No

Are there information technology impacts?

No

Administrative Office of the Courts
Policy Level – T9 – Translate Pattern Court Forms

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