

Washington State Judicial Branch

2023-25 Biennial Budget

Create Supreme Court Administrator

Agency: Supreme Court

Decision Package Code/Title: SA – Create Supreme Court Administrator

Agency Recommendation Summary Text:

The Supreme Court requests \$611,600 in ongoing funding to establish a new position of Supreme Court Administrator. There are a number of areas of court administration that do not fall within scope of responsibility of the Court's Chief Justice, Justices of the Court, any Court departments (Clerk's Office, Commissioner's Office, Reporter of Decision's Office, or the State Law Library), or even the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC). As a result, these areas have been neglected over the years, resulting in significant deficiencies in the Supreme Court's facilities, information technology management, personnel programs, and overall administrative support.

Like other courts in the State, the Supreme Court receives certain types of administrative support from the AOC in areas such as IT support, basic HR functions, staffing for certain Supreme Court committees and accounting. But the Supreme Court has many specific administrative needs that fall outside the scope of the support AOC can provide. Notably, the Supreme Court is the only court in the State at any level that does not have a court administrator, and so key administrative responsibilities have fallen, often by default, on the shoulders of the Chief Justice's Office, individual justices, or the Clerk of Court. (General Fund-State)

Fiscal Summary:

	FY 2024	FY 2025	Biennial	FY 2026	FY 2027	Biennial
Staffing						
FTEs	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Operating Expenditures						
Fund 001-1	\$308,200	\$303,400	\$611,600	\$303,400	\$303,400	\$606,800
Total Expenditures						
	\$308,200	\$303,400	\$611,600	\$303,400	\$303,400	\$606,800

Package Description:

There are key areas in which the Court needs additional support from a dedicated administrator, mainly centered on the work of the Supreme Court Committees for (1) personnel, (2) technology, and (3) facilities and security. The Court Administrator will also act as the liaison for inter-committee cooperation, and support other workgroups and task forces as directed by the Court.

In regard to support of the facilities and security committee, the Court Administrator will be responsible for creating and overseeing safety and security policy including COVID-19 response (this task is currently handled by a Supreme Court Justice). The Court Administrator will address the Court's legal compliance for our facilities (such as the ADA and public health mandates). The Court Administrator will be responsible for overseeing the planning for long-term facilities issues and supporting administrative aspects of court security and facilities management including coordination with the Department of Enterprise Services (DES). The Court Administrator will ensure that the Court has adequate emergency and disaster planning efforts and safety training.

Supreme Court
Policy Level – SA – Create Supreme Court Administrator

In regard to support of the personnel committee, the Court Administrator would be responsible for onboarding new Justices and judicial administrative assistants. Due to the separation of duties and responsibilities between each of the Court chambers and Departments the Court does not have a streamlined and cohesive process for onboarding new Justices and judicial administrative assistants. The Court Administrator would also lead efforts to advance racial equity at the Supreme Court, including developing policies and training efforts. The Court Administrator will be responsible for providing strategic leadership to the Court regarding personnel matters, such as inclusive hiring practices. The Court Administrator will be tasked with implementing robust staff training related to court-wide policies and practices. The Court Administrator will be responsible for assisting in the implementation of HR and IT system changes, in coordination with the AOC Human Resources Office and Information Services Division.

In regard to support of the technology committee, the Court Administrator will act as the liaison between the Court and AOC regarding technology systems. The Court Administrator will provide strategic leadership regarding technology at the Court and develop content and structure for the Supreme Court's external communications including website and social media, in coordination with the AOC Public Information Office. The Court Administrator will ensure that the Court is utilizing modern technology solutions to improve efficiency and accessibility.

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

The addition of a Court Administrator would lead to more efficient and effective operations at the Supreme Court which in turn leads to better services and access to justice for the residents of the state. The physical building which is open to the public will be better managed and more accessible to the public and information provided to the public through external channels will be more up to date and accessible once there is a dedicated staff member tasked with overseeing them.

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

The Supreme Court committees currently tasked with managing personnel, technology, security and facilities for the Court are chaired by Justices and composed of Department Heads. However, the Court does not have any dedicated staff to administer and accomplish tasks or ideas generated by the committees. Given the increasing complexity of the committees' work, the fact that every committee member has full-time obligations outside of the committee, and the truth that many committee members lack expertise in managing court administrative projects, a court administrator is needed.

What are the consequences of not funding this request?

The Court will continue operating with many of its administrative needs unmet which will prevent the Supreme Court from meeting its policy objectives.

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

No

Decision Package expenditure, FTE and revenue assumptions:

Staffing Assumptions

Beginning July 1, 2023 and ongoing, the Supreme Court requires salary, benefits, and associated standard costs for 1.0 FTE to serve as the Supreme Court Administrator.

Supreme Court
Policy Level – SA – Create Supreme Court Administrator

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	179,600	179,600	179,600	179,600	179,600	179,600
B Employee Benefits	57,300	57,300	57,300	57,300	57,300	57,300
E Goods and Services	3,800	3,800	3,800	3,800	3,800	3,800
G Travel	2,500	2,500	2,500	2,500	2,500	2,500
J Capital Outlays	6,400	1,600	1,600	1,600	1,600	1,600
T Intra-Agency Reimbursements	58,600	58,600	58,600	58,600	58,600	58,600
Total Objects	308,200	303,400	303,400	303,400	303,400	303,400

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>
SUPREME COURT CLERK	179,600	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Total FTEs		1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00

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 relates to all of the Judicial Branch principal policy objectives. A Court Administrator would streamline the work being done to meet all policy objectives. For example, the Court Administrator would be responsible for implementing accessibility initiatives and would be responsible for providing dedicated court management services to the Supreme Court. The Court Administrator would also be tasked with creating staff onboarding programs for new and existing staff and would support the Court Committees in implementing new policies and procedures that would ultimately increase the ability for the Court to ensure fair and effective administration of justice.

Are there impacts to other governmental entities?

None

Stakeholder response:

None

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

No

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

No

Are there impacts to state facilities?

No

Supreme Court
Policy Level – SA – Create Supreme Court Administrator

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

No

Are there information technology impacts?

No

Agency Contacts:

Christopher Stanley, 360-357-2406, christopher.stanley@courts.wa.gov

Angie Wirkkala, 360-704-5528, angie.wirkkala@courts.wa.gov