

Washington State Judicial Branch 2025-27 Biennial Budget Retain and Recruit Staff with Competitive Salaries

Agency: Administrative Office of the Courts

Decision Package Code/Title: BB – Retain and Recruit Staff

Agency Recommendation Summary Text: The Administrative Office of the Courts requests \$3.67 million in funding to implement salary adjustments to AOC staff, as identified in the recent 2024 Comprehensive Judicial Branch Salary Survey. This increase will make judicial branch agencies a competitive employer of choice in a job market tilted heavily in favor of job seekers. (General Fund-State)

Fiscal Summary:

	FY 2026	FY 2027	Biennial	FY 2028	FY 2029	Biennial
Staffing						
FTEs	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Operating Expenditures						
Fund 001-1	\$1,835,000	\$1,835,000	\$3,670,000	\$1,835,000	\$1,835,000	\$3,670,000
Total Expenditures						
	\$1,835,000	\$1,835,000	\$3,670,000	\$1,835,000	\$1,835,000	\$3,670,000

Package Description:

A salary survey recently commissioned by the Administrative Office of the Courts determined that there are a large number of judicial branch staff, including dozens of staff at AOC, who are paid at salaries far below the public sector market rate. The AOC requests \$1,835,000 per year to bring staff salaries closer to parity with the salaries of comparable positions in the public sector. Doing so will ensure that the hardworking staff that serve the judicial branch are paid fairly and equitably. The fair and equitable administration of justice begins with AOC's commitment to its staff.

Background

The AOC serves as the administrative, legal, and business infrastructure arm of the judicial branch and is responsible for administering the legal system, supporting all facets and functions of Washington's judicial branch and ensuring access to justice. AOC has four divisions: Administrative Services, Court Services, Information Services, and Management Services.

There is a significant market disparity between salaries in the AOC and comparable positions in both the private and public sectors. A comprehensive salary survey completed in the summer of 2024 by the Segal Group confirmed these disparities, finding that the salaries of AOC staff lagged behind market averages by 5 percent to 20 percent in aggregate, particularly at the midpoint and high points of the ranges (when staff have more experience). Prior studies in 2021 and 2014 showed similar disparities. AOC is asking for adequate funding to close these gaps.

Fully describe and quantify expected impacts on state residents.

Competitive salaries lead to lower turnover which results in more steady services to Washington's courts and ultimately more steady services to the users of those courts.

Explain what alternatives were explored by the agency and why this was the best option chosen.

AOC has no capacity in its existing budget to solve these salary issues, and could not identify any effective alternatives or options apart from the proposed package. There is no more effective means of improving staff morale, retention, and recruiting.

What are the consequences of not funding this request?

While we have a staff deeply committed to our work, we know that staff have left for higher paid positions in other courts, as well as private and other public sector work. If we fail to remedy salary disparity, we will struggle to attract applications who can bring the high level of professionalism and commitment to justice we require.

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

No

Decision Package expenditure, FTE and revenue assumptions:

Based on recommendations by the Segal Group, Table 1 below displays the amounts requested by AOC position benchmark and staff FTE.

		Fiscal Year (Object A&B average increases by year)			
Position Benchmark	FTE	FY 2026	FY 2027	FY 2028	FY 2029
ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT	15	\$7,526	\$7,526	\$7,526	\$7,526
BUSINESS ANALYST	35	\$1,386	\$1,386	\$1,386	\$1,386
COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER	3	\$17,223	\$17,223	\$17,223	\$17,223
CONTRACTS SPECIALIST	4	\$2,555	\$2,555	\$2,555	\$2,555
COURT PROGRAM ANALYST	60	\$1,254	\$1,254	\$1,254	\$1,254
CUSTOMER SERVICE SPECIALIST	12	\$3,446	\$3,446	\$3,446	\$3,446
DESKTOP SUPPORT	5	\$1,266	\$1,266	\$1,266	\$1,266
DIGITAL CONTENT OFFICER	2	\$24,067	\$24,067	\$24,067	\$24,067
ENTERPRISE ARCHITECT	2	\$11,421	\$11,421	\$11,421	\$11,421
FINANCIAL SERVICES ANALYST	15	\$12,113	\$12,113	\$12,113	\$12,113
HUMAN RESOURCES CONSULTANT	7	\$5,559	\$5,559	\$5,559	\$5,559
IT PROJECT MANAGER	4	\$8,236	\$8,236	\$8,236	\$8,236
IT SECURITY OFFICER	5	\$1,508	\$1,508	\$1,508	\$1,508
IT SOLUTIONS ARCHITECT	4	\$8,516	\$8,516	\$8,516	\$8,516
RESEARCH ASSOCIATE	12	\$3,107	\$3,107	\$3,107	\$3,107
SENIOR LEGAL SERVICES ANALYST	11	\$23,590	\$23,590	\$23,590	\$23,590
SENIOR SOFTWARE DEVELOPER	66	\$7,621	\$7,621	\$7,621	\$7,621
SOFTWARE QA TESTER	14	\$5,620	\$5,620	\$5,620	\$5,620
STAFF SERVICES CLERK	4	\$12,576	\$12,576	\$12,576	\$12,576
SYSTEM SUPPORT ANALYST	27	\$7,194	\$7,194	\$7,194	\$7,194

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

This package directly relates to the Sufficient Staffing and Support policy objective. The AOC provides administrative, legal and business infrastructure for the judicial branch of government in Washington. This includes direct support for the Supreme Court, Court of Appeals, Office of Public Defense, Office of Civil Legal Aid, and the State Law Library, as well as providing the same types of support for courts at all levels statewide. Having sufficient staff with the required skills

and professional commitment is essential to these tasks. The 2021 and 2014 salary surveys identified major discrepancies in AOC staff salaries when compared with similar positions in both the public and private sectors. That situation has continued with detrimental effects on staff morale, retention, and recruiting. This request will directly address this situation.

How does the package impact equity in the state?

Address any target populations or communities that will benefit from this proposal.

Not applicable.

Describe the how the agency conducted community outreach and engagement.

Not applicable.

Describe the disproportional impacts of this proposal.

Not applicable.

Are there impacts to other governmental entities?

It will improve the judicial branch's service to other agencies.

Stakeholder response:

Judicial customers of the AOC have been supportive of this effort to improve retention and recruitment.

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

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

2024 Comprehensive Salary Survey by the Segal Group

Are there information technology impacts?

None

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