

# Washington State Judicial Branch

## 2025-27 Biennial Budget

### Continue Funding Data Quality Initiative

**Agency:** Administrative Office of the Courts

**Decision Package Code/Title:** CC – Continue Data Quality Team

#### Agency Recommendation Summary Text:

The Administrative Office of the Courts requests \$2.340 million per biennium in ongoing funding and 6.0 FTEs to continue the Data Quality Program. This request has been funded on a one-time basis by the Legislature in the past, but without a guarantee of ongoing funding, staff hired over the past three years left the temporary appointments for more secure, permanent positions. The continuing transition from a centralized Judicial Information System to diverging case management systems implemented by certain courts has increased the volume of data issues and complexity of ensuring accurate and timely court data for statewide reporting, statistical analysis, and decision making. Permanent, secure funding will provide staff to adequately manage the existing and emerging backlog of data quality issues to improve data quality for the Washington's court system. (General Fund – State)

#### Fiscal Summary:

	FY 2026	FY 2027	Biennial	FY 2028	FY 2029	Biennial
<b>Staffing</b>						
FTEs	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0
<b>Operating Expenditures</b>						
Fund 001-1	\$1,170,000	\$1,170,000	\$2,340,000	\$1,170,000	\$1,170,000	\$2,340,000
<b>Total Expenditures</b>						
	\$1,170,000	\$1,170,000	\$2,340,000	\$1,170,000	\$1,170,000	\$2,340,000

#### Package Description:

The risk of poor data quality goes beyond negatively impacting the courts and justice partners, statewide reporting, and statistical analysis. A wide variety of stakeholders (people with matters before the courts, news agencies, researchers, and others using court data) are directly impacted when incomplete or inaccurate court data:

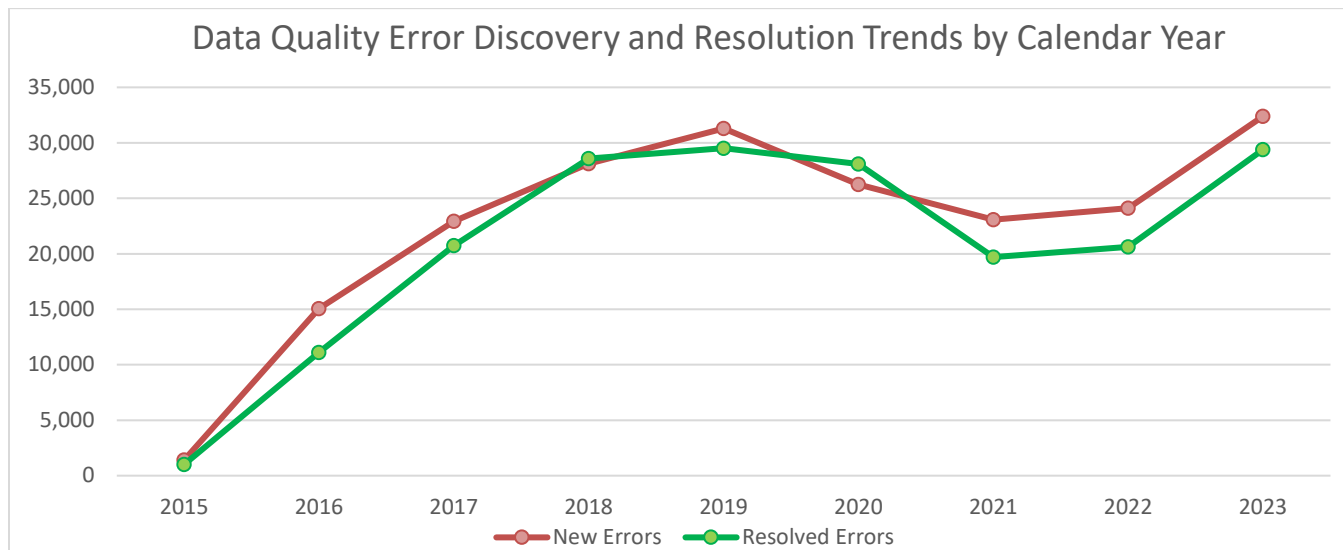
- impairs the ability of the court and justice partners to accurately identify a person.
- impairs the quality of case preparation and decisions by judicial officers, prosecutors, defense counsel, and attorneys.
- damages an individual's credibility resulting in denial of employment, housing, professional license, etc.
- impacts an individual's judgment and sentence, legal financial obligation, and supervision program.
- delays the progress of an individual's case.

The current court data environment is increasingly complex. As more court case management systems (CMS's) emerge across Washington's non-unified court system, preserving a statewide view and statewide access to accurate and complete court data is critical to courts and others who rely on the data to make decisions, conduct criminal investigations, perform backgrounds checks, hand down sentences, and compile reports. Public safety is at risk without an overall data and governance strategy designed to provide consistently accurate and complete data.

Between 2015 and 2024, the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) identified more than 232,064 data quality issues. The figure continues to grow. The growth is caused by past data conversions, technical bugs, process errors, and data entry errors. Now with the introduction of different CMS's in courts statewide, new data quality issues are emerging (e.g., person records mismatch, cases falsely reported as closed, etc.). The cost of operating and maintaining AOC applications and data exchanges has increased as these new CMS's introduce new data structures which introduce new pathways for error. Identifying an issue's root cause (or multiple causes) is not easy. Each data quality issue can impact millions of records, hundreds of courts, and multiple systems. Some pose greater impact and risk than others.

Securing ongoing funding for full-time data quality specialists is important. Data quality problems undermine the efficacy and credibility of judicial operations. By investing in dedicated personnel, the state will uphold the principles of transparency, accountability, and fairness in the administration of justice and safeguard the rights and interests of the public.

AOC and 350 courts across the state developed a process to identify and fix the highest risk issues. Since 2015, only 197,242 of those issues have been resolved and the error counts climb daily. Ensuring data quality requires resolving the backlog of known issues and monitoring the landscape as new issues crop up.



As additional courts implement local CMS's whose data must be integrated into the statewide system, the rate of unresolved errors will likely accelerate. As the chart above illustrates, more data quality errors have been discovered than resolved in all but two years since 2015 – one of which was during the COVID pandemic. Except for brief respites in 2018 and 2020, the number of unresolved data quality errors have increased by thousands every year and that trend is expected to continue.

#### Impacts and Challenges:

- 1. Inconsistent Data Entry Practices:** Different courts enter data in different ways. This leads to inconsistent data interpretation and analysis which undermines the reliability of case information.
- 2. Data Duplication and Redundancy:** Standard data protocols do not exist. This results in duplicate records across CMS's which produces redundant data and complicates case tracking and management.

3. **Quality Discrepancies:** Data entered with errors or omissions compromise its quality. This impedes decision-making processes and can influence case outcomes.
4. **Compliance Concerns:** Courts have regulatory requirements. Inadequate data quality management jeopardizes the courts' ability to comply which poses legal risks and liabilities.
5. **Resource Constraints:** Court personnel lack the specialized expertise and dedicated focus to effectively address the complex array of data quality challenges.

**Rationale:**

Full time data quality specialists would offer:

1. **Specialized Expertise:** They would possess the specialized knowledge and skills necessary to identify, assess, and solve data quality issues.
2. **Proactive Data Management:** They would proactively monitor, analyze, and enhance data quality, mitigating risks associated with erroneous data and ensuring the integrity of judicial information.
3. **Standardization and Consistency:** They would standardize data entry protocols and quality assurance measures, fostering consistency and coherence across the CMS's.
4. **Efficiency:** They would streamline judicial processes with improved data quality, reducing court and customer service staff time dedicated to researching and correcting data quality issues.
5. **Enhanced Decision-Making:** Improve the data's reliability and accuracy, empowering judicial stakeholders to make well-informed decisions, leading to fairer and more equitable outcomes for all parties involved.

**Fully describe and quantify expected impacts on state residents.**

The risk of poor court data quality impacts people in Washington. Court data is exchanged with other state and federal agencies. Erroneous records can negatively impact the public. The records are used by the Washington State Patrol (WSP), Department of Licensing (DOL), Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) and other state agencies:

- DOL
  - Uses Convicted Felon Notification data for concealed pistol license revocations.
  - Uses the Judicial Access Browser System to review case data when looking at records/change requests to determine if the change can be made. DOL also has various exchanges where it gets conviction data, failure to appear notices and adjudications, or vehicle holds and releases to add to or remove to its records for drivers or vehicles.
  - Receives reports directly from the county clerk on superior court judgments with no payments arising from an uninsured collision, RCW 46.29.310.
  - Adult Criminal DV-Related Misdemeanor Convictions – DOL Firearms for concealed pistol license revocations.
- WSP uses charge disposition data to update criminal background information.
- Washington State Institute for Public Policy (WSIPP) receives criminal and juvenile case information plus juvenile probation risk and needs assessment information from AOC's Assessment Research Database for research purposes. WSIPP also receives local and state law table updates.
- Office of Financial Management receives an extract of juvenile records from the Court Contact and Recidivism database.
- DOL and the FBI's National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS) Denied Person Database receives Mental Health Commitments for Treatment reports related to possession of firearms.

- Department of Social and Health Services receives data in fraud-related convictions for the purposes of recovering costs due to the state of Washington.
- Dependency case data is compiled and reported in the Dependency Dashboard available to the public. This data is also used to compile dependency interactive reports for dependency case managers for managing dependency timeliness requirements (state and federal). Dependency case data is also used to prepare the Timeliness of Dependency Case Processing Practices pursuant to 2007 legislation to information policy makers in creating and shaping dependency laws to improve outcomes for children in dependency actions.
- Department of Children, Youth & Families receives a weekly report of all approved Orders of Dependency entered in superior courts.

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

For years, AOC has attempted to resolve the known, on-going data quality issues using existing staff resources. This has not been successful because addressing these issues requires dedicated staff with the proper tools and skillsets to process huge volumes of data, side-by-side to efficiently identify anomalies.

Court data is complex. The complexities involve changes occurring through time (e.g., statute changes, code changes, court process changes), at various court levels, with regional variation, and with the general complexities in day-to-day court cases and operations. Any change affects data. Ensuring data quality requires working with more than 350 courts to manage the change.

**What are the consequences of not funding this request?**

Data quality issues will continue to occur and the unresolved backlog will grow. The risk to the public and organizations relying on court data will only magnify in both number and complexity.

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

No expansions or alterations are included in this request. This simply continues funding that was originally appropriated on a one-time basis in both the 2022 supplemental and 2023-25 biennial budgets.

**Decision Package expenditure, FTE and revenue assumptions:**

**Staffing Assumptions**

In both the 2022 supplemental and 2023-25 biennial budgets, the Legislature funded a Data Quality Program one-time. Both requests were for ongoing staff dedicated to resolving data quality issues and establishing a proactive, statistically-based data quality monitoring approach between related systems to mitigate risk going forward. Beginning July 1, 2025 and ongoing, AOC requires salary, benefits, and associated standard costs for:

*Senior Data Management Specialist.* 1.0 FTE to perform data quality analysis supporting the operations and management of the Data Quality Program framework for all data stored in the AOC's case management systems, the enterprise data repository (EDR), and data warehouse.

*Data Management Specialist.* 1.0 FTE to develop data-centric solutions supporting data quality processes.

*Business Analyst.* 2.0 FTE to focus on court business data for all court levels: Superior, Juvenile, Courts of Limited Jurisdiction, and Appellate.

*Senior Court Program Analyst.* 1.0 FTE to develop and support a data governance framework.

*IT Solutions Architect.* 1.0 FTE to modernize AOC’s data architecture, create a data strategy, and participate in the development and support of the data governance framework.

### Other Non-Standard Costs

None

<b>Expenditures by Object</b>	<b><u>FY 2026</u></b>	<b><u>FY 2027</u></b>	<b><u>FY 2028</u></b>	<b><u>FY 2029</u></b>	<b><u>FY 2030</u></b>	<b><u>FY 2031</u></b>
A Salaries and Wages	678,000	678,000	678,000	678,000	678,000	678,000
B Employee Benefits	211,000	211,000	211,000	211,000	211,000	211,000
E Goods and Services	36,000	36,000	36,000	36,000	36,000	36,000
G Travel	12,000	12,000	12,000	12,000	12,000	12,000
J Capital Outlays	12,000	12,000	12,000	12,000	12,000	12,000
T Intra-Agency Reimbursements	221,000	221,000	221,000	221,000	221,000	221,000
<b>Total Objects</b>	<b>1,170,000</b>	<b>1,170,000</b>	<b>1,170,000</b>	<b>1,170,000</b>	<b>1,170,000</b>	<b>1,170,000</b>

### Staffing

<b>Job Class</b>	<b>Salary</b>	<b><u>FY 2026</u></b>	<b><u>FY 2027</u></b>	<b><u>FY 2028</u></b>	<b><u>FY 2029</u></b>	<b><u>FY 2030</u></b>	<b><u>FY 2031</u></b>
DATA MANAGEMENT SPECIALIST	108,000	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
SENIOR DATA MANAGEMENT SPECIALIST	120,000	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
IT SOLUTIONS ARCHITECT	126,000	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
BUSINESS ANALYST	108,000	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0
SENIOR COURT PROGRAM ANALYST	108,000	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
<b>Total FTEs</b>		<b>6.0</b>	<b>6.0</b>	<b>6.0</b>	<b>6.0</b>	<b>6.0</b>	<b>6.0</b>

Explanation of standard costs by object:

A - Salary estimates are current biennium actual rates at Step L.

B - Benefits are the agency average of 31.10% of salaries.

E - Goods and Services are the agency average of \$5,800 per direct program FTE.

G - Travel is the agency average of \$2,000 per direct program FTE.

J – Ongoing Equipment is the agency average of \$1,900 per direct program FTE.

J – One-time IT Equipment is \$5,900 for the first fiscal year per direct program FTE.

Agency Indirect is calculated at a rate of 24.98% of direct program salaries and benefits.

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

#### Fair and Effective Administration of Justice

When judicial decision-makers have reliable data to inform their professional judgment, the outcomes improve life, liberty, and property.

#### Accessibility

When we identify data errors in the systems, we can correct and prevent inaccuracies and judicial errors due to poor information. Monitoring court data systems for data quality issues reduces risk and improves trust in the justice system.

#### Access to Necessary Representation

Better quality data helps produce better and more accurate research, which in turn provides insights into better judicial system functioning and fairness.

### **Commitment to Effective Court Management**

Good data quality leads to a more accurate understanding of judicial needs, court operation needs, justifies funding for judicial system needs, and enhances accurate understanding of judicial system outcomes.

### **Sufficient Staffing and Support**

Until recently, the AOC maintained all JIS systems for courts, statewide. Since these systems were linked together, AOC could ensure the data in them was timely, accurate, and consistent. Funding this package, ongoing would help ensure court data is an accurate representation of real-world events. And, resources would be in place to find and correct errors so consequences that may impact life, liberty, or property would be avoided.

The AOC currently has one Data Quality Coordinator. There are no dedicated staff to work with courts and perform data quality duties on the scale that is needed. A data quality process has been tested and applied with success. However, it is largely a reactive process and resources are often shifted to other priorities. In order to fully carry out the framework of the data quality process and provide the desired outcomes, the AOC needs permanent, dedicated staff to move the agency towards the ideal future proactive state.

### **How does the package impact equity in the state?**

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

1. Marginalized and underrepresented communities like racial and ethnic minorities and immigrant populations
2. Economically disadvantaged individuals
3. Women and gender minorities
4. LGBTQ+ community
5. Individuals with disabilities
6. Juveniles and younger population
7. Elderly population
8. Rural and remote communities
9. General public

#### **Describe the how the agency conducted community outreach and engagement.**

Agency did not conduct any community outreach for this decision package.

#### **Consider which target populations or communities would be disproportionately impacted by this proposal.**

#### **Explain why and how these equity impacts will be mitigated.**

##### **1. Court Employees and Data Entry Staff:**

**Impact:** Court employees may face increased workloads and responsibilities as they adapt to new data quality standards and processes.

**Mitigation:** This could be mitigated by providing comprehensive training and support to ensure a smooth transition. We could also implement phased rollouts of new protocols and processes to allow staff time to adjust.

##### **2. Small Rural Courts:**

**Impact:** Smaller, rural courts with limited resources might struggle to implement and maintain new data quality standards.

**Mitigation:** This could be mitigated by allocating additional resources and support to rural courts, including funding for technology upgrades and ongoing training for staff.

**3. Non-English Speaking Communities:**

**Impact:** Individuals who do not speak English may face language barriers in understanding new processes or accessing improved data.

**Mitigation:** This could be mitigated by ensuring that data quality processes and procedures are multilingual and provide translation services and materials in multiple languages to support non-English speakers.

**Are there impacts to other governmental entities?**

Yes. If data quality issues remain unresolved, other state and federal agencies will be impacted. Inaccurate and incomplete court data would result in poor or erroneous judicial decision making, criminal investigations, background checks, sentencing, and reporting.

**Stakeholder response:**

As noted in the Impacts Section above, the AOC provides or exchanges data with a number of agencies and data requesters. The AOC believes they would support receiving complete, accurate, and timely court related data.

**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?**

Not at this time.

**Are there information technology impacts?**

There are no information technology impacts as a result of this request.

**Agency Contacts:**

Christopher Stanley, 360-357-2406, [christopher.stanley@courts.wa.gov](mailto:christopher.stanley@courts.wa.gov)

Angie Wirkkala, 360-704-5528, [angie.wirkkala@courts.wa.gov](mailto:angie.wirkkala@courts.wa.gov)