

Washington State Judicial Branch

2025-27 Biennial Budget

Continue Data for Justice (D4J) Initiative

Agency: Administrative Office of the Courts

Decision Package Code/Title: AD – Continue D4J Initiative

Agency Recommendation Summary Text:

The Administrative Office of the Courts requests 2.5 FTEs and \$930,000 in funding to maintain the Data for Justice Initiative previously funded in the 2023-25 biennial budget. This critical initiative develops information for courts to manage their programs in support of fair and effective justice and helps courts build local capacity to interpret and use performance information. (General Fund-State)

Fiscal Summary:

	FY 2026	FY 2027	Biennial	FY 2028	FY 2029	Biennial
Staffing						
FTEs	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5
Operating Expenditures						
Fund 001-1	\$465,000	\$465,000	\$930,000	\$465,000	\$465,000	\$930,000
Total Expenditures						
	\$465,000	\$465,000	\$930,000	\$465,000	\$465,000	\$930,000

Package Description:

Courts need specific information and skills to understand and improve their program operations. Courts need to know whether:

- They are being effective.
- They deliver equal administration of justice.
- Their processes are experienced as fair and respectful
- Information and aid with the legal system are accessible.
- Any member of the public with court business is going to encounter a court designed to serve.

Judges, court managers, and staff need specific skills and experience to recognize the need for information, to use information to guide decision-making, and to plan and implement ongoing performance review and improvement.

Experience and research show that, when combined with transparency, government organizations that initiate their own performance improvement programs have better results. But trial courts in Washington face very low public investment in the delivery of effective, equitable justice. Courts lack essential local capacity for managing court operations in a way that serves people who are involved with court, their families, and their communities. Courts are generally on their own, with marginal access to the resources needed to develop management capability. When they find support for information development and program assessment, the support is usually with a consultant or university—a short term solution rather than building long-term capacity.

Sustaining the Data for Justice program will support local learning and improvement in court operations. During its first two years of implementation it has focused on:

- Guiding data development on court programs such as pretrial, therapeutic courts, community supervision, or jury management;
- Providing feedback on program implementation and evaluation of program results from highly trained subject matter experts; and
- Building permanent relationships between the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) and court staff. AOC learns from court staff about their routines, challenges, and strengths; and court staff are more likely to view AOC as informed, responsive, and valuable partners. The result is a strong and productive relationship between courts and AOC which results in better court services delivered to the public.

This budget request will maintain current staffing for Data for Justice staff who work with other Washington Center for Court Research (WSSCR) staff collaboratively across an array of court programs from self-help centers to community supervision programs.

Fully describe and quantify expected impacts on state residents.

The greatest impact will be on people who are court-involved. Data for Justice supports an improved court experience, whether its in easier access to information, reduced time in process, effective therapeutic responses, or hearing from the people who were court-involved about being treated fairly and with respect. By supporting effective, equitable, and responsive courts Data for Justice also promotes public trust and confidence in the judicial branch and the legal justice system.

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

For decades, AOC assistance to trial courts was mainly a combination of holding judicial conferences, offering training for court data entry, providing judicial needs estimates, and hosting electronic case record information management systems. When it came to court programs, such as pretrial, therapeutic courts, and assessing the equal administration of justice, courts had to look to internal resources or grant funding to work with outside contractors who would work temporarily with only one court. The Data for Justice Initiative is an innovative approach whereby AOC and court staff work together to improve the operation of Washington's courts.

What are the consequences of not funding this request?

Courts would not have the minimum level of support that they need to be responsive, effective, and equitable toward the court-involved population. Even with programs and approaches that have been designated as evidence-based, positive results are not guaranteed. Results vary across time and across locations. Attaining hoped-for outcomes depends on how programs are implemented and managed. Whether the court program area is alternatives to detention or behavior change support for youth under community supervision, courts need to understand their local program performance and to exercise the ownership and initiative to make changes when needed. Data for Justice works with courts to deliver relevant information and support them as they apply the information to decision making. In other words, the consequences of not funding are lower levels of effectiveness, less equal administration of justice, and more challenges for the communities served by the courts.

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

No, this is a request for sustained funding of an existing program.

Decision Package expenditure, FTE and revenue assumptions:

Staffing Assumptions

Senior Research Associate. 1.0 FTE would be devoted to developing feedback from court users and court staff, to provide the courts insight to process improvement that can only from creating effective, professional, and respectful channels for user voice.

Data Management Specialist. 1.0 FTE would be devoted to data development. Court Research staff are often required to spend time gaining permission to access much of the data they need and then, once the data is obtained, they must devote even more time prepping the data for analysis in advanced statistical software. Our current data staff is not able to adequately support researcher access to data because they are at capacity maintaining other WSCCR data resources that are relied on by researchers supporting programs like Family Youth Justice, Behavioral Health, and Equity and Access. Adding a second data handling position will give all researchers more time and support to developing insights, and make administrative data available for analysis, including data dashboards.

Court Program Assistant. 0.5 FTE would coordinate scheduling, communications, compliance with AOC policies, maintenance of web pages and software licenses, among other administrative support.

Expenditures by Object	<u>FY 2026</u>	<u>FY 2027</u>	<u>FY 2028</u>	<u>FY 2029</u>	<u>FY 2030</u>	<u>FY 2031</u>
A Salaries and Wages	269,000	269,000	269,000	269,000	269,000	269,000
B Employee Benefits	84,000	84,000	84,000	84,000	84,000	84,000
E Goods and Services	15,000	15,000	15,000	15,000	15,000	15,000
G Travel	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000
J Capital Outlays	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000
T Intra-Agency Reimbursements	87,000	87,000	87,000	87,000	87,000	87,000
Total Objects	465,000	465,000	465,000	465,000	465,000	465,000

Staffing

Job Class	Salary	<u>FY 2026</u>	<u>FY 2027</u>	<u>FY 2028</u>	<u>FY 2029</u>	<u>FY 2030</u>	<u>FY 2031</u>
SENIOR RESEARCH ASSOCIATE	120,000	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
DATA MANAGEMENT SPECIALIST	108,000	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
COURT PROGRAM ASSISTANT	60,000	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5
Total FTEs		2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5

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

To be fair and effective, the administration of justice must be assessed, and assessment requires valid information to be competently interpreted. Data for Justice supports both information development and appropriate interpretation and application of the information.

Accessibility

The staff funded through Data for Justice work with the AOC's Equity and Access program on assessing court customer help centers in Grays Harbor and Spokane counties, working with courts on reviewing accessibility of court websites, and on getting feedback from court users.

Commitment to Effective Court Management

Effective court management in the public interest is at the heart of Data for Justice.

Sufficient Staffing and Support

Assessment of court program operations often surfaces information about the need for staffing and support.

How does the package impact equity in the state?

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

Data for Justice emphasizes the equal administration of justice through its support of access and its focus on understanding the sources and impact of disparity in court operations. The affected populations include those that experience barriers to access and that belong to communities that are disproportionately involved in court.

Describe the how the agency conducted community outreach and engagement.

Helping courts develop and implement programs of outreach, engagement, and feedback is a core element of Data for Justice.

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

Explain why and how these equity impacts will be mitigated.

Not applicable.

Are there impacts to other governmental entities?

No.

Stakeholder response:

The courts that have requested help from Data for Justice have responded favorably to the experience.

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?

The Data for Justice approach is exemplified in the operations of AOC's Family and Youth Justice Programs, the Behavioral Health Program, the strategic plan for the Equity and Access section, in WSCCR's role with the Juvenile Detention Quality Assurance Committee, among other manifestations. For part of our work with Family and Youth Justice Programs, see the public facing Dependency Dashboard at [DependencyDashboard | Tableau Public](#).

Are there information technology impacts?

No.

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