

Washington State Judicial Branch

2025-2027 Biennial Budget

Maintain Chief Information Officer Position

Agency: Office of Public Defense

Decision Package Code/Title: A1 – Maintain CIO Position

Agency Recommendation Summary Text:

The Office of Public Defense (OPD) requests funding to retain the agency's 1 FTE chief information officer (CIO) position. The Legislature appropriated funding in the 2023-2025 biennium to establish the CIO position at OPD, but the funding did not carry forward. The CIO performs daily duties as well as essential strategic planning to ensure stable and secure IT for effective agency operations. Ongoing funding is needed to maintain this critical position.

Fiscal Summary: Funding is requested to maintain 1 FTE CIO position.

	FY 2026	FY 2027	Biennial	FY 2028	FY 2029	Biennial
Staffing						
FTEs	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
Operating Expenditures						
Object A/B	\$161,000	\$162,000	\$323,000	\$162,000	\$162,000	\$324,000
Total Expenditures						
	\$161,000	\$162,000	\$323,000	\$162,000	\$162,000	\$324,000

Package Description:

Background and Current Situation

Over more than two decades, the Legislature has directed and funded the Office of Public Defense (OPD) to establish and expand a variety of right-to-counsel services and public defense programs. Historically, OPD has relied on the WSU Energy Program for IT network and customer support for agency IT services. However, as OPD responsibilities have grown, so has the need for professional in-house IT leadership.

Problem

OPD received one-time funding for the 2023-2025 biennium for several IT-related activities as well as 1 FTE Chief Information Officer (CIO). While one-time funding was sufficient for some of the IT upgrade activities, OPD requires ongoing funding to maintain the CIO position. The CIO currently is OPD's only full-time IT position to serve an agency with more than 60 employees and 300 contractors.

Solution

OPD requests ongoing funding for the 2025-2027 biennium to maintain the agency's internal CIO position, which has proven to be an essential resource to ensure stable and secure IT services for OPD's statewide operations.

Maintaining the CIO position offers significant advantages over outsourcing IT services to third-party providers. The internal CIO ensures strategic alignment between technology initiatives and OPD's overall business objectives. Possessing an intimate understanding of the agency's needs and processes, the in-house CIO tailors IT strategies to maximize their contribution for success. Additionally, the CIO provides customization, flexibility, innovation leadership, and timely response that is lacking from contracted IT support. By developing and implementing IT solutions tailored to OPD's requirements, the CIO fosters efficiency, cost control, and long-term innovation. The CIO also plays a crucial role in managing risks, ensuring regulatory compliance, and building internal IT expertise, all of which are essential to sustain effective OPD operations.

Fully describe and quantify expected impacts on state residents.

Maintaining OPD's in-house CIO position benefits state residents by improving service delivery through streamlined IT systems and enhancing program accessibility with tailored technological solutions. OPD employees, contractors, and public defense clients benefit from heightened data security and privacy assurances, ensuring that OPD handles their personal information securely and in compliance with all regulations. Additionally, the CIO's initiatives enhance community engagement through improved communication channels, facilitating better feedback mechanisms and transparency in OPD's operations.

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

By investing in internal IT leadership, OPD aims to achieve cost efficiencies over the long term, reducing reliance on expensive external contracts while building in-house expertise and capabilities that can adapt and scale with future organizational growth and technological advancements. Maintaining the internal CIO position within OPD is a strategic move to enhance the agency's operational effectiveness, innovation, and service delivery while ensuring fiscal responsibility and regulatory compliance, which may be compromised or limited when relying solely on outsourced IT services.

Maintaining a CIO position presents several advantages over outsourcing all IT services.

- An in-house CIO develops a deep understanding of the OPD mission and through this understanding can more effectively align IT initiatives with OPD's business objectives. This alignment ensures that technology investments are closely tied to immediate operational needs as well as long-term strategic goals.
- The CIO offers greater customization and flexibility in IT solutions. They can tailor strategies and systems to precisely fit OPD's requirements, potentially enhancing service delivery to OPD staff, contractors, and public defense clients.
- The CIO strengthens OPD's ability to manage risks, ensure regulatory compliance, and maintain data security and privacy standards, which are critical in a governmental setting where data protection is paramount.

What are the consequences of not funding this request?

Not funding this decision package will leave OPD without sufficient resources to maintain the CIO position, which has proven to be valuable to critical agency operations. The absence of an internal CIO might compromise data security and compliance efforts, as outsourced services may not prioritize OPD-specific requirements as rigorously. This could expose OPD to increased risks of data breaches and regulatory non-compliance, undermining trust and integrity in service delivery to OPD contractors and public defense clients.

Not funding this decision package will hinder OPD's ability to align its IT initiatives with its critical mission and legislative directives. Without an internal CIO, OPD will have to rely on outsourced IT services, which lack the customization, flexibility, and strategic oversight necessary for long-term sustainability. Not funding this decision package could limit OPD's control over its IT strategies and operational flexibility, potentially delaying responses to technological needs or regulatory changes. Ultimately, not funding this decision package could lead to higher long-term costs associated with inefficient operations and missed opportunities for cost-saving innovations that an internal CIO can facilitate, impacting OPD's ability to deliver efficient and responsive services.

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

No. This decision package maintains funding for an existing 1 FTE CIO position, which is essential to agency operations. The Legislature approved and funded the CIO position in the 2023-2025 biennial budget but the funding was not carried forward.

Decision Package expenditure, FTE and revenue assumptions:
Staffing Assumptions

Job Title Classification	#s of FTE Round to Nearest Tenth				Workload Assumptions/Description
	FY 26	FY 27	FY 28	FY 29	
Chief Information Officer	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	15% Strategic planning; 30% Technology infrastructure management; 10% Data management; 10% Innovation and emerging technologies; 5% Vendor management; 10% External committee representation; 10% Policy and standard development and implementation; 10% other
					Salary is funded at Range 74M

				2025 SB	2025-2027 Biennial Budget		
	Expenditures by Object			FY25	FY26	FY27	25-27 Biennium
A	Salaries and Wages			\$0	\$128,676	\$128,676	\$257,352
B	Employee Benefits			\$0	\$32,169	\$33,456	\$65,625
C	Professional Service Contracts (PSC)			\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
E	Goods and other Services			\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
G	Travel			\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
J	Equipment & Software			\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
N	Client Services (Atty & SW Contractors)			\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
E/J	Start-Up Costs			\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
	TOTAL			\$0	\$160,845	\$162,132	\$322,977

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

Fair and Effective Administration of Justice

The CIO's role in ensuring effective, secure IT systems at OPD supports efficient case management, streamlined processes, and improved access to legal resources for OPD staff, contracted attorneys, and public defense clients. This decision package helps OPD ensure transparency, data security, and timely communication crucial for a trustworthy and accessible justice system.

Accessibility

Through strategic planning and technological innovations, the CIO position helps ensure that OPD's digital platforms are user-friendly, intuitive, and accessible across various devices.

Access to Necessary Representation

The CIO implements the technology needed to effectively operate OPD's various right-to-counsel programs such as Indigent Appeals, Parents Representation, NGRI, RCW 71.09, Youth Access to Counsel, Simple Possession Advocacy and Representation (SPAR), and the *State v. Blake* response. By leveraging advanced technology and strategic IT solutions, the CIO ensures that OPD's legal resources are readily accessible and effectively managed for OPD staff, contractors, and public defense clients.

Sufficient Staffing and Support

Maintaining the in-house CIO position is necessary to effectively implement OPD's technological infrastructure. The CIO is OPD's only full-time IT position to serve an agency with more than 60 employees and 300 contractors.

How does the package impact equity in the state?

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

By optimizing OPD's IT processes, the CIO directly benefits contracted attorneys throughout the state and indirectly benefits public defense clients by improving operational efficiency, facilitating faster information retrieval, ensuring data security, and enhancing overall service delivery.

Describe how the agency conducted community outreach and engagement.

OPD did not engage in community outreach regarding this decision package, which relates to internal agency IT management.

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

Explain why and how these equity impacts will be mitigated.

This decision package does not create disproportionate impacts. The CIO position allows OPD to timely review and respond if concerns arise about potentially disproportionate impacts from OPD's IT operations.

Are there impacts to other governmental entities?

The CIO position serves as a catalyst for improving IT governance, operational efficiency, innovation, and collaboration among government agencies, leading to better service delivery and outcomes across public organizations.

Stakeholder response:

At its September 12, 2024 meeting, the OPD Advisory Committee voted to approve this decision package. The in-house CIO position enhances stakeholder confidence by ensuring efficient and secure IT operations. OPD staff and contractors know they have a reliable in-house contact when an IT issue arises, and they are confident of a timely response.

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 laws need be changed to maintain the CIO position.

Are there impacts to state facilities?

No impact on other state facilities.

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

- [What Is A Chief Information Officer? CIO Role Explained \(forbes.com\)](https://www.forbes.com/sites/bernardmarr/2023/07/26/what-is-a-chief-information-officer-cio-role-explained/)
Identifies a baseline of 50 – 100 staff for needing a CIO.
- [5 Reasons you need a CIO](#) (Zuora, originally published at forbes)
Relevant to OPD, even though the agency is not a "startup."

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Are there information technology impacts?

No

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