



Judicial Council of California

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REPORT TO THE JUDICIAL COUNCIL

Item No.: 24-051

For business meeting on January 19, 2024

Title

Judicial Branch Technology: Branchwide IT Allocation Update, Fiscal Year 2023–24

Agenda Item Type

Action Required

Rules, Forms, Standards, or Statutes Affected

None

Effective Date

January 22, 2024

Recommended by

Judicial Council staff
Heather L. Pettit, Director
Information Technology

Date of Report

December 7, 2023

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Executive Summary

The Budget Act of 2022 appropriated funding for judicial branch technology modernization, of which \$8 million was allocated to the Judicial Council for branchwide modernization initiatives. The Judicial Council Information Technology office recommends allocating a portion of this funding directly to a trial court that is partnering with the Judicial Council to develop a branchwide project that aligns with the judicial branch's technology goals, thereby expanding the use of technology to best meet branchwide needs.

Recommendation

Judicial Council Information Technology staff recommend that the Judicial Council, effective January 22, 2024, approve the proposed allocation of \$331,751 from the Judicial Council to the Superior Court of Los Angeles County to continue the development and maintenance of branchwide automated solution services, specifically software to automate court messaging and notification services).

Relevant Previous Council Action

The Budget Act of 2020 included a two-year, \$25 million appropriation, the Court Technology Modernization Funding Program, for modernization of California's trial courts through

technology.¹ On July 24, 2020, the council directed the Technology Committee to make recommendations for allocating this funding to local court projects. At meetings in January, March, and October 2021, the council approved funding recommendations for fiscal year (FY) 2020–21 and FY 2021–22 to allocate funds to trial courts for local projects, digitization of paper records, and partnerships in branchwide initiatives.

The Budget Act of 2022 provided an ongoing appropriation of funding for the continued modernization of California’s judicial branch—including the Judicial Council and trial and appellate courts—through technology. At the Judicial Council meeting on September 20, 2022, the council approved \$12.5 million in direct allocations to courts for local projects from the IT Modernization Funding Program for FY 2022–23.

On January 20, 2023, the council approved the allocation of \$818,749 from the IT Modernization Funding to the Superior Court of Los Angeles County for the development of branchwide automated solution services. At the Judicial Council meeting on July 21, 2023, the council approved \$12.5 million in direct allocations to courts for local projects.

Analysis/Rationale

Background

Each fiscal year, \$8 million of the IT Modernization Funding Program (heretofore, “branchwide program funding”) is set aside for the Judicial Council to support and continue developing Judicial Council programs with branchwide benefits, in alignment with the California Courts Connected framework. Branchwide technology programs further the goals of the *Strategic Plan for Technology 2023–2026* and the *Tactical Plan for Technology 2023–2024* by promoting the digital court, advancing IT security and infrastructure, and innovating through the IT community.

Collaboration is a vital component in the success of branchwide initiatives. The collaboration between the Judicial Council and courts on branchwide programs brings together resources to create innovative solutions that meet diverse court needs while providing consistent experiences for the public and justice system partners across the state.

Branchwide programs include partnerships with courts to develop or deliver solutions that are shared across the branch. Each year, the Judicial Council Information Technology office evaluates its IT Modernization Funding Program funding and may propose a portion to be distributed to one or more courts that are directly contributing to the development and delivery of branchwide programs.

¹ Under the Budget Act of 2020, the program was referred to as the Court Technology Modernization Funding Program. The name of the program changed with the Budget Act of 2022 to the Information Technology Modernization Funding Program.

Proposed allocation from branchwide program funding

For FY 2023–24, staff proposes that \$331,751 of the branchwide program funding be allocated to the Superior Court of Los Angeles County in support of the branchwide Automated Messaging and Notification Solutions (AMNS) project. This project has developed a simple tool for courts to send timely and personalized court reminder messages to the public via text and emails.

Last fiscal year (FY 2022–23), the Judicial Council allocated \$318,750 to the Superior Court of Los Angeles County to provide hosting services for the CourtNotify service and Hearing Reminder Service platform; begin implementation at pilot courts; and provide development, maintenance, and support services for both platforms. Seven courts (Imperial, Lake, Los Angeles, Modoc, Placer, San Benito, and Santa Clara) currently use the Hearing Reminder Service. Two additional courts (San Luis Obispo and Sierra) are expected to go live by mid-2024. Two courts (Los Angeles and San Mateo) currently using CourtNotify, with three additional courts (Kings, San Benito, and San Diego) testing the software service.

This year, staff recommends continued funding for the Superior Court of Los Angeles County by allocating an additional \$331,751 of branchwide funding to support the ongoing development, hosting, deployment, and support of these solutions, including the continued implementation of Hearing Reminder Service and CourtNotify solutions to an estimated four additional courts for each service. The AMNS program enables courts to use these shared, enterprise-grade solutions more cost-effectively and with less technical overhead.

Additional uses of branchwide program funding

Beyond this automated services program, this year’s branchwide program funds will support 11 additional branchwide efforts led by the Judicial Council’s Information Technology office, including the Virtual Customer Service Center (website chat services), the California Court Translator solution for use at court clerk counters and self-help centers, and continued court website migrations to more modern and accessible designs that include hosting and support services. These other branchwide initiatives, beyond the AMNS program, are in various stages of development, piloting, and expansion by the Judicial Council and currently do not require further allocations to courts.

Policy implications

Branchwide programs provide solutions to common challenges and issues experienced by courts across the branch. Without development of branchwide solutions, courts would individually need to attempt to solve these common issues, with access to varying levels of resources. Their efforts would likely result in disparate solutions across the branch and unequal experiences between courts, court users, and justice partners.

Collaboration between courts and the Judicial Council allows for individual court innovations that could then benefit all courts. Courts can opt into those branchwide solutions, which provides a more uniform experience for the public across the entire state.

Comments

This proposal was not circulated for public comment. The recommendation was approved by the Technology Committee on November 11, 2023, and as part of the open meeting process, no comments were received.

Alternatives considered

The Judicial Council Information Technology office considered not funding the continued development work for the AMNS branchwide program; however, staff determined that ceasing funding would hinder the implementation of the project across the branch. Allocation of funds to partnering courts in branchwide programs is important in optimizing resources for deployment and collaboration.

Fiscal and Operational Impacts

All allocations are funded from the branchwide IT Modernization appropriation. Funds must be expended or encumbered by the end of the fiscal year. The allocation does not affect any other funding source.

Attachments and Links

None