



# Superior Court of California County of Alameda BUDGET SNAPSHOT

February 2016



JUDICIAL COUNCIL  
OF CALIFORNIA  
GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

Hon. Morris D. Jacobson, Presiding Judge

Chad Finke, Court Executive Officer

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## Court Service Highlights in the Current Year

- Engaged in countywide reorganization of Court departments to promote efficiency and improve service to the public
- Preparing to launch a new case management system in most case types

## Court Service Highlights in Detail

### Court reorganization

In January we began the initial phases of what will be one of the largest reorganizations in recent memory for our Court. The Court's two primary goals in launching this effort are (a) to promote efficiencies by making better use of reduced staff resources, and (b) to improve service to the public, in particular self-represented litigants.

In general, once the reorganization is complete each courthouse will specialize in a particular case type, e.g., civil trials, felonies etc. Of tremendous value to the public, the Hayward Hall of Justice will become a "one stop shop" for self-represented litigants; all case types with a strong nexus to court users who choose to represent themselves or who cannot afford an attorney will be under one roof. This includes all Family Law matters, evictions, restraining orders, probate cases, and small claims. Further, the Court's Self-Help Center will be consolidated in Hayward, eliminating the need for users to travel to multiple courthouses, and cutting down significantly on repeat trips to court.

Also in an effort to improve court access, we are expanding the number of courthouses where traffic cases are heard, from two to five, because traffic cases make up the largest percentage of our filings.

### New case management system

In 2016 we will deploy a new case management system in nearly every case type. We project this will create efficiencies that will allow us to hold vacant staff positions open and use the resulting salary savings to offset budget reductions that we will see as a result of our status as a so-called "donor" court under WAFM. The new system will not support traffic cases.

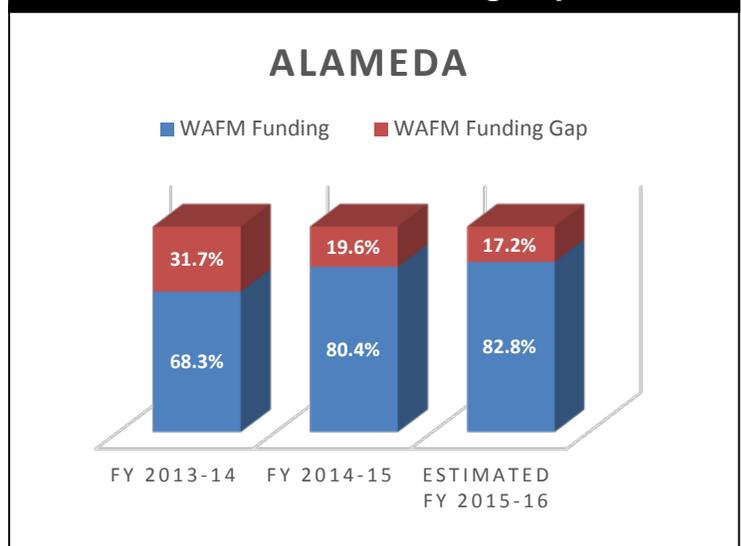
## Budget Challenges and Priorities

Our primary challenge is the fact that we have been classified as a "donor" court under WAFM, and therefore are facing additional years of budget reductions.

Our priority is to absorb the WAFM cuts without resorting to staff layoffs or reductions in our level of service to our users.

We believe we can achieve these goals through a combination of untapped efficiencies, aggressive management of expenditures, and restored funding from the Legislature and the Governor.

## Workload Allocation & Funding Gap (see reverse)



## Court Demographics

Population Served	1,573,254
Square Miles Covered	821
Total Number of Court Facilities	10

## The Workload-based Allocation & Funding Methodology (WAFM)

The Workload-based Allocation & Funding Methodology (WAFM) calculates the total funding needed for California's 58 trial courts based on case filings, workload and other factors.

To do this, WAFM relies on results from what we call the Resource Assessment Study (RAS) model to estimate total staffing needed using a weighted caseload model. Developed in partnership with national experts, the RAS model is based on a time study of over 5,000 case processing staff in 24 California trial courts. The study established a set of caseweights (amount of time in minutes to process a case from initial filing through any post-disposition activity) understanding that certain types of filings take more time and resources to handle than others. The weighted filings are used to estimate total staff needed in each court.

The WAFM model converts the staff need data into dollars, taking into account average salaries, benefits, operating expenses and equipment, and the local cost of labor using the Bureau of Labor Statistics as a benchmark. A "funding floor" is applied to the smallest trial courts because there is a basic operating threshold that must be met in order to provide service to the public. In other words, California's small courts do not have economies of scale, and yet there are basic expenditures that even the smallest courts must make. The result is, for each court, an estimate of the core operations funding required to adequately process its workload. This is known as the court's WAFM share.

Starting in FY 2013-14, a portion of each court's allocation is being recalculated according to its WAFM share. (A court's WAFM share is different from the courts' traditional share of the statewide funding. The WAFM calculation tells us what the trial courts need to function based on current filings, whereas the traditional share was based on the amount each court received from its county not taking into consideration the courts' filings or staff needs.)

Unfortunately, the total WAFM funding needed for all 58 courts exceeds the funding currently appropriated in the state budget. (This is the WAFM funding gap.) California's trial courts are underfunded by at least a collective \$444 million. The underfunding is made worse for those courts that experience a reduction of funding based on their WAFM share. To manage the budget reductions resulting from the implementation of WAFM in the absence of full trial court funding, the Judicial Council approved applying WAFM incrementally, applying it fully only to new money appropriated in the budget.

The rules of application adopted by the Judicial Council are:

- Each year beginning in FY 2013-14, and through/including to FY 2017-18, incrementally more of the historical (base) funding (using FY 2012-13 as the base) will be subject to WAFM, until 50% of the FY 12-13 base is distributed according to WAFM;
- All new state funding is distributed according to the WAFM shares; and
- For each dollar of new state funding, one dollar of the historical base will be reallocated using WAFM.