

Imperial

Superior Court of California County of Imperial BUDGET SNAPSHOT



JUDICIAL COUNCIL
OF CALIFORNIA
GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

February 2015

Budget and Program Priorities for FY 2015-16

The Court is diligently working to tackle funding reductions while balancing its commitment to provide access to justice. The Court continues to experience delays in processing court documents due to staff reductions and increased backlog. The Court wishes to use new phone technology and work to upgrade our current case management system to improve information, resources, payment options, and communication with the public. Assisting the public and expanding self-help services is a priority for the Court.

Self-Help / Mediation / Facilitator Services

- Spanish language divorce assistance appointments set two months out due to inadequate staffing/availability
- Only 3 staff are available for public support, which is inadequate in a rural, medium-size Court where the majority of litigants are pro per. With current staff levels, 6,000 fewer customers are served each year

Court Reporters / Interpreter Services

- Reporter staff reduced by 28% for civil, family law and family support courtrooms
- Interpreters reduced by 20%; pro tem interpreter hired for 4 half-days per week
- Court proceedings ready to go at 9 am commonly must wait until 10:30 am for reporter/interpreter availability

Counters / Clerks / Telephones

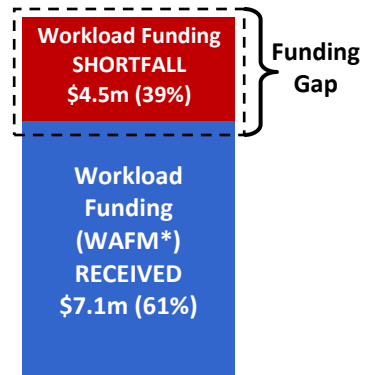
- Wait times at public counters for payments, case filings, and assistance with litigant case information have increased due to the closure of the Calexico court in 2013 and availability of only part-time hours at the Winterhaven facility
- Winterhaven facility is so busy with traffic cases on open days that one assigned clerk cannot keep up with timely input of traffic tickets or filing, creating massive backlog
- Technology department working on IVR telephone upgrade, which will provide additional prompts and information to callers, including the ability for them to enter their credit card payment information via phone

Courthouses / Facilities / Technology

- Main courthouse damaged by seismic activity in April 2010 finally received complete repairs in November 2014
- Court has a critical need to upgrade its Sustain case management system, support for which is being discontinued in the immediate future

Funding Shortfall

***WAFM is the Workload-based Allocation & Funding Methodology. It describes how much funding courts need based on their workload. In the current year, the workload-based allocation needed in Imperial was calculated at \$11.7 million but the court received \$7.1 million. See reverse for a detailed explanation of how WAFM is calculated.**



Court Demographics

Total Number of Staff	138
Population Served	180,672
Square Miles Covered	4,482
Total Number of Court Facilities	4

Court Leadership

Presiding Judge	Hon. Poli Flores, Jr.
Court Executive Officer	Tammy L. Grimm
Executive Office Contact	(760) 482-2255

Budget Challenges for FY 2015-16

- The loss of our fund balance - which was our savings account to pay for fiscal challenges and unforeseen expenses - is a concern. We need a significant technology upgrade, but without our savings account to draw on, we are balancing our technological needs against funding for critical staffing and crucial operations requirements.*
- Customer service is our #1 priority. However, budget challenges result in reduced service, decreased personnel, fewer revenues collected, less services available to self-represented litigants, and increased wait times for our court users.*

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' historical share of the statewide funding. The WAFM calculation tells us what the trial courts need to function based on current filings, whereas the historical share was based on the amount each court received from its county.)

Unfortunately, the total WAFM funding needed for all 58 courts exceeds the funding currently appropriated in the state budget by as much as \$800 million. (This is the WAFM funding gap.) 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 to each court's historical share of statewide funding, applying it 100% only to "new" money appropriated in the budget. New money is any undesignated general court operations funding increase above the FY 2012-13 State funding level.

The rules of application adopted by the Judicial Council are as follows:

- Each year beginning in FY 2013-14, and through/including 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 2012-13 base is distributed according to WAFM;
- All undesignated court operations state funding increases after FY 2012-13 are 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.