



Superior Court of California County of Lassen BUDGET SNAPSHOT



February 2015

Budget and Program Priorities for FY 2015-16

The court's priority in 2015-16 is to implement a modern, robust case management system collaboratively with six other small courts to assist in mitigating inefficiencies in case processing and providing access to case records, calendars and, eventually, e-filing. Restoring reserves to a reasonable level as well as funding reinvestment are priorities so that the court is able to provide vital family law and self-help services to pro-per litigants while awaiting reimbursement for these grant funded programs.

Self-Help / Mediation / Facilitator Services

- We combined the family law facilitator, self-help, and research attorney positions, reducing self-help by 50%
- We no longer offer individual appointments, offering just one or two general informational self-help clinics per month

Court Reporters / Interpreter Services

We experience significant challenges obtaining interpreter services at reasonable costs due to our remote location and travel in inclement weather. The same is true for court reporters when we need more than the one we have on staff.

Counters / Clerks / Telephones

The court has had to reduce public service hours and telephone hours to be able to provide basic services and process workload

Staff Impacts / Furloughs / Layoffs / Unfilled Vacancies

- In FY 2012-13, we eliminated two management positions and two limited-term positions, resulting in a 19% vacancy rate, including three vacancies that were left open; we also reduced administrative analyst time
- In FY 2013-14, we eliminated 1 special programs position and 2 analysts, left supervisor position vacant (which was eventually eliminated)
- We have had six furlough days a year for two fiscal years

Court Security / Safety / Facilities

The court transitioned to contract with our Sheriff for security services, although this does not produce savings

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 Lassen was calculated at \$2.8 million but the court received \$2.0 million. See reverse for a detailed explanation of how WAFM is calculated.

Workload Funding
SHORTFALL
\$790,000 (28%)

Workload
Funding
(WAFM*)
RECEIVED
\$2.0m (72%)

Funding
Gap

Court Demographics

Population Served	32,581
Square Miles Covered	4,720
Total Number of Court Facilities	1

Court Leadership

Presiding Judge	Hon. Michele Verderosa
Court Executive Officer	Andi Barone
Executive Office Contact	(530) 251-8205 x139

Budget Challenges for FY 2015-16

Our staff vacancy rate has affected court services in that we cannot easily offer translation services, there is a reduction in litigant information services, and case flow and calendar management are compromised. Lassen is a two-judge rural court with one location; currently the Court's fund balance is the only thing keeping courtrooms open. With the fund balance limited to 1%, further operational challenges are anticipated such as reductions of family services and other self-help options so vital to pro-per litigants.

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.