

Superior Court of California County of Merced BUDGET SNAPSHOT



JUDICIAL COUNCIL
OF CALIFORNIA
GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

Hon. Brian L. McCabe, Presiding Judge

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Court Service Highlights in the Current Year

- Implemented e-filing in Civil, Family divisions as phase 2 of our case management system upgrade
- Assumed responsibility for court ordered debt collections from the county
- Enabled justice partner access to case data via web portal

Court Service Highlights in Detail

Implemented e-filing in Civil, Family divisions

In our work towards greater operational efficiencies and improved services to the public, we implemented e-filing for Civil and Family Law case types. Civil e-filing is now mandatory. Additionally, case index information is available via web portal, and court documents will be available online as of the 2nd quarter of this year. Also, all 4,200 microfilmed reels containing old case records have been digitized, expediting retrieval of archival case information. All case files continue to be scanned into our case management system for system wide access.

Assumed responsibility for court ordered debt collections

On July 1, 2015, we assumed responsibility of collections from the county. Now, collections staff members are located in all courthouses to better assist the public. To date, we have collected \$971,765, and our cost of collections is 18%. (The county's cost rate was 70%.)

Justice partner access via web portal

All our justice partners as well as the general public are able to access court cases online, providing for greater efficiency in accessing information at any time.

Other court services

Facilities: We relocated our Traffic division staff to a newer, larger leased facility that, unlike the prior space, is ADA compliant and includes a waiting area, allowing us to better serve the public. The main courthouse lobby remains inadequate for security screening and queuing of those that enter the courthouse. The new Los Banos Courthouse will open in late September 2016, although we have two judicial vacancies (Merced and Los Banos).

Clerk's offices: We continue to close at 3PM in order to allocate staff to address the high volume of backlogged documents that require attention as we remain understaffed.

Budget Challenges and Priorities

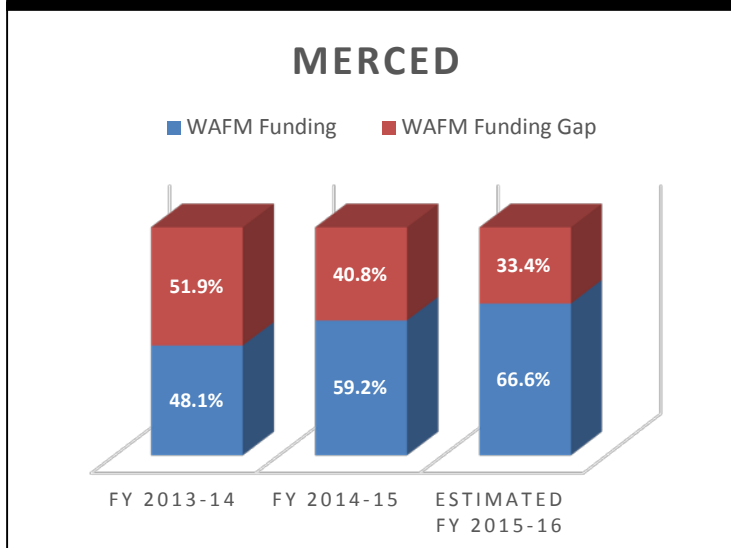
Traffic amnesty program: Launched October 1, 2015, amnesty has reduced civil assessment revenue by 68% in a single year while significantly increasing our workload.

Facility upgrades: The relocation to the new Los Banos facility will increase our costs for janitorial and IT. Our main courthouse lobby needs to be expanded to accommodate the public.

IT system upgrades: We must revisit and devise a plan for our IT system's security.

Recruitment: Due to flat wages and our inability to provide regular raises, we experience difficulty in hiring and retaining qualified candidates.

Workload Allocation & Funding Gap (see reverse)



Court Demographics

Population Served	264,922
Square Miles Covered	1,972
Total Number of Court Facilities	6

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.