



# Superior Court of California County of San Mateo BUDGET SNAPSHOT



JUDICIAL COUNCIL  
OF CALIFORNIA  
GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

February 2015

## Budget and Program Priorities for FY 2015-16

We work diligently with our unions and justice partners to create efficiencies, and utilize technology and innovation to provide the best trial court services possible with the resources available. In 2014 we re-engineered our business processes and strengthened agreements that allow us to maximize technology, systems and tools to support our reduced workforce, create access to justice, and best serve the public. With a minimum \$230 million augmentation for the trial courts, we would be able to restore some criminal trials in our Northern Branch and incrementally restore public telephone and counter hours in FY 2015-16.

### Workforce Actions/Innovation

- Reduced budget by 122 positions (32%) over last six years through layoffs, attrition, and voluntary incentive programs.
- Implemented innovative term employment program to curb the growth of pension liability by instituting portable, defined contribution benefits for term employees while preserving defined benefit pension commitments for existing court employees. Allows court to fill vacancies and restore positions at 18% less cost, and operate as efficiently as possible, ramp up staffing as funds are restored and provide essential services that best serve the public.
- Restored 8 lower cost positions (from original 130 reduced positions) to address workload and service gaps.
- Transition to full compliance with PEPRA for Management and Unrepresented Employees.

### Self-Help / Mediation / Facilitator Services

- Phone and counter hours for ADR and Family Court Services reduced by 50%
- Wait times for self -help services exceed three hours

### Court Reporters / Interpreter Services

Reduced court reporter staff through attrition; no longer providing a court reporter in civil case management conferences

### Counters / Clerks / Telephones

Continued curtailment of public counter and phone hours of over 30%. Clerk's Offices are only open until 2:00p.m. Mon-Thurs and until noon on Fridays.

### Closed Courtrooms (4) and Court Houses

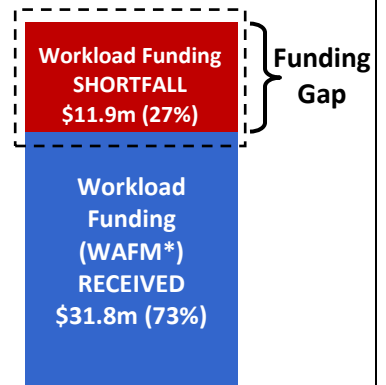
- Closed the equivalent of four courtrooms.
- The San Mateo branch courthouse will only be used for trials and operations at the South San Francisco branch courthouse have been severely curtailed.

### Availability of Judicial Officers

Reduction of 43% of Commissioner positions (3 of 7).

## 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 San Mateo was calculated at \$43.8 million but the court received \$31.8 million. See reverse for a detailed explanation of how WAFM is calculated.**



## Court Demographics

Population Served	745,193
Square Miles Covered	741
Total Number of Court Facilities	5 (3 open, 2 substantially closed)

## Court Leadership

Presiding Judge	Hon. John L. Grandsaert
Court Executive Officer	John Fitton
Executive Office Contact	(650) 261-5016

## Budget Challenges for FY 2015-16

Eight restored positions cannot cover the workload of the original 130 that were lost due to ongoing state cuts – even after all reasonable efficiencies, best practices, and productivity measures are implemented. As a result, until reasonable levels of trial court funding are restored, delays will continue, including:

- Delays in criminal, traffic, civil, child custody and family law matters. Specifically, backlogs in Clerk's Office processing of documents resulting in civil judgments requiring 4-6 months to process, and family law judgments taking as long as 6 months to process.
- Trials, which were never continued prior to 2008 due to court operations, are often continued due to lack of courtrooms.
- Wait times on the phone can now be up to 60 minutes. Wait times in line can still be up to 30 minutes.

## **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.