



# Superior Court of California County of Santa Cruz BUDGET SNAPSHOT

February 2016



JUDICIAL COUNCIL  
OF CALIFORNIA  
GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

Hon. Denine J. Guy, Presiding Judge

Alex Calvo, Court Executive Officer

(831) 420-2401

## Court Service Highlights in the Current Year

- Completed the implementation of new case management system
- Implemented traffic and infraction amnesty program
- Held *“Build Your Future: Prop 47 Felony Record Change Resource Fair”*

## Court Service Highlights in Detail

### Case management system implementation

In 2014, the Court decided to move forward with the implementation of a new case management system. The project was only possible due to the multi-year accumulation of funds using trial court reserves. This new and modern case management improves public and justice party access to court case information, creates operational efficiencies and has positioned this court to implement eFiling and electronic case files in the coming months. Over time, the court will achieve significant efficiencies that will permit the improvement of services and access to the public.

### Traffic and infraction amnesty program

In October 2015, the court quickly implemented the traffic amnesty program which has provided members of our community with reductions of delinquent debt and restoration of driver’s licenses.

### Proposition 47 outreach

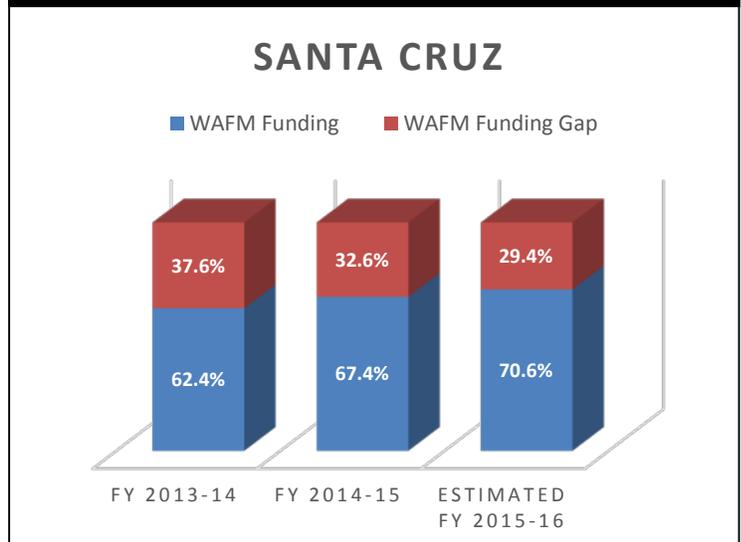
We collaborated with county justice partners to provide a comprehensive and coordinated approach to enable those with eligible felony convictions to reduce those convictions to misdemeanors. In January, we held the first ever *“Build Your Future: Prop 47 Felony Record Change Resource Fair.”*

## Budget Challenges and Priorities

**Staffing Levels:** 34% vacancy rate coupled with lower compensation is causing a decline in morale and difficulties in attracting and retaining high-quality employees.

**Commissioner Conversion:** The court has taken advantage of a salary savings from a vacant commissioner position since 2010. This position has now been converted to a judgeship, and the financial impact of this will put a significant strain on the court’s budget.

## Workload Allocation & Funding Gap (see reverse)



## Court Demographics

Population Served	271,595
Square Miles Covered	607
Total Number of Court Facilities	4

## 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.