

Superior Court of California County of Amador BUDGET SNAPSHOT



JUDICIAL COUNCIL
OF CALIFORNIA
GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

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Court Service Highlights in the Current Year

- Identifying and implementing technology solutions for court operations
- Implementation of an enhanced comprehensive collections unit
- Reorganization of the court’s traffic civil assessment program

Court Service Highlights in Detail

Identifying and implementing technology solutions for court operations

As a result of our efforts to identify and implement technology solutions, a new e-warrant process is in place that speeds up the delivery of warrants from the Amador Superior Court judges to law enforcement. The process enables officers to get the warrants to the judges without having to drive to judges’ homes, and results in a quick turn-around time for getting the arrest warrants reviewed, signed and delivered. This process is efficient and eliminates down time. There is a plan to expand this service to juvenile warrants.

Implementation of an enhanced comprehensive collections unit

With the assistance of Ventura Superior Court, Amador Superior Court established a successful comprehensive collections unit to address the collection of outstanding court-ordered debt. Having a dedicated collections person ensures our ability to comply with best practices as statutorily required, and to continue to focus on collection efforts with a focus on discharge of accountability for old and uncollectible debt.

Reorganization of the court’s traffic civil assessment program

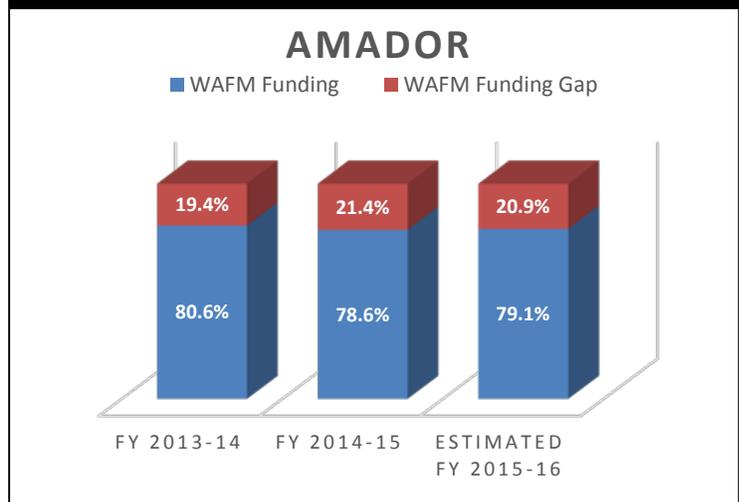
In early 2015, the Court began reorganizing the traffic civil assessment program. As of this year, we have all but eliminated what once was a full-scale civil assessment calendar, which now averages fewer than 10 cases a week. These are strictly aged cases that are routinely audited by the collections specialist.

Budget Challenges and Priorities

Staffing Level: Budget cuts had a significant impact on rural courts. In FY 2010-11 our court had nearly 38 FTE staff. Today we have just over 27 FTE, a 29% reduction. The WAFM FTE calculation would reduce our FTEs to 30%. This is unsustainable; budget restraints and inadequate staffing continue to prevent Amador from restoring public services, addressing backlogs, and implementing critical technological needs.

Technology: Our court’s priorities for the next three fiscal years include implementing technology strategies to enhance access to justice, especially with regard to e-filing, and further automating jury services. Our greatest challenge remains funding.

Workload Allocation & Funding Gap (see reverse)



Court Demographics

Population Served	36,151
Square Miles Covered	605
Total Number of Court Facilities	1

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.