



Superior Court of California

County of Sutter

BUDGET SNAPSHOT



JUDICIAL COUNCIL
OF CALIFORNIA
GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

February 2015

Budget and Program Priorities for FY 2015-16

- Relocation to new Courthouse which will allow court users to conduct business in a safer and more secure environment with adequate space and accommodations
- Implementation of new case management system which will enhance efficiency and the public's access to court information; secure funding necessary to maintain the court's information systems
- Continue to advocate for stable and adequate funding including an adequate fund balance necessary to cover cash flow, manage multi-year projects, and the efficient management of court resources

Self-Help / Mediation / Facilitator Services

- Parents and children face loss of contact due to long waits to access mediators and a reduction in available funding for attorneys to represent children in child custody and visitation proceedings
- Number of litigants seeking assistance has increased almost 80%

Proposition 47

- Over 350 Petitions filed from November 5, 2014-December 31, 2014.
- Projections for Petitions for Reclassification are unknown but expected to be significant
- Absorbed workload within existing resources creating backlogs in other areas such as traffic processing.

Counters / Clerks / Telephones

- Court has maintained counter filing hours of 8:30 – 4:30
- Backlogs and waits have increased
- Delays in processing result in more telephone calls and inquiries, further increasing workload

Staffing

- Restored two positions
- Additional positions needed in Technology, Self-Help, Legal Processing, Fiscal, and Human Resources

Facilities

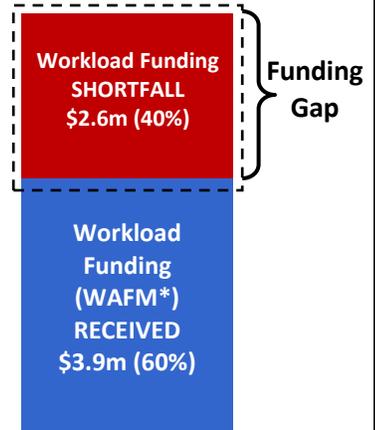
- Will relocate to new Courthouse in Summer 2015
- New facility will replace two inadequate and unsafe facilities
- New court includes Jury Assembly, Central Holding, Adequate Size Courtrooms, Self-Help Clinic Rooms, Improved Public Areas and Separated Circulation for Judges and Staff, Inmates and the Public

Judicial Officers

Currently identified to receive one additional judgeship if funded

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 Sutter was calculated at \$6.6 million but the court received \$3.9 million. See reverse for a detailed explanation of how WAFM is calculated.**



Court Demographics

Population Served	95,733
Square Miles Covered	609
Total Number of Court Facilities	2

Court Leadership

Presiding Judge	Hon. Brian R. Aronson
Court Executive Officer	Mary Beth Todd
Executive Office Contact	(530) 822-3309

Budget Challenges for FY 2015-16

The court continues to struggle with backlog due to insufficient staffing levels. This problem is made worse by the loss of well-trained employees who are leaving the court for positions in other sectors, both public and private, that either pay better and/or offer enhanced retirement benefits. The court has two large projects (new courthouse and new case management system) that will culminate in the late Summer and early Fall 2015. Once implemented, these projects will greatly enhance access to justice in our community.

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.