



Judicial Council of California

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REPORT TO THE JUDICIAL COUNCIL

Item No.: 25-067

For business meeting on April 25, 2025

Title

Trial Court Budget: Court Interpreters
Program Fiscal Year 2024–25 Midyear
Reallocation and Augmentation

Report Type

Action Required

Effective Date

April 25, 2025

Rules, Forms, Standards, or Statutes Affected

N/A

Date of Report

March 28, 2025

Recommended by

Trial Court Budget Advisory Committee
Hon. Jonathon B. Conklin, Chair
Ms. Rebecca Fleming, Vice-Chair

Contact

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Executive Summary

High rates charged by independent contractors are one of several factors that has led to the recent marked increase in court interpreter expenses. Based on identified court need for Court Interpreters Program funding in the Trial Court Trust Fund, the Trial Court Budget Advisory Committee recommends a midyear reallocation of approximately \$637,000 and an augmentation of \$11.6 million for fiscal year 2024–25 to address anticipated funding shortfalls due to increasing interpreter costs and expenses. The allocations will help maintain the current levels of interpreter services for court users.

Recommendation

The Trial Court Budget Advisory Committee recommends that the Judicial Council, effective April 25, 2025:

1. Approve the fiscal year (FY) 2024–25 midyear reallocation of \$637,000 and augmentation of \$11.6 million from the remaining \$30.4 million Court Interpreters Program savings balance, as outlined in Attachment A;

2. Direct council staff to conduct an additional survey before the end of FY 2024–25 to reallocate available savings to those courts with a funding shortfall based on final expenditures for the current year; and
3. Direct council staff to repeat the midyear survey and reallocation process in FY 2025–26 and determine whether the trial courts need additional funding from the remaining program savings balance of \$18.8 million to support court interpreter services.

Relevant Previous Council Action

With the adoption of the Judicial Council’s *Strategic Plan for Language Access in the California Courts* in 2015, the council has approved budget change proposals to augment the Court Interpreters Program (CIP) to support expansion of interpreter services to all case types.¹ Expenditure increases in the CIP are a result of multiple factors including increased usage of contractors, high contractor rates, wage growth on ratified agreements, merit salary adjustments, increases in the number of mandated staff interpreters and mandated contractor usage, and expansion of interpreter services to all case types. Courts have reported that many contractors are requesting rates that exceed the council’s standard rates for contractors² and that are commensurate with current federal rates.

Before FY 2020–21, trial courts were reimbursed for all eligible court interpreter expenses. Effective July 1, 2022, the Judicial Council approved Trial Court Budget Advisory Committee (TCBAC) recommendations for an ongoing, workload-based allocation methodology for CIP funding, including cross-assignments, benefit cost changes, and unspent funds.³ The change from a reimbursement model to an allocation methodology recognized the need to address insufficient funding to reimburse trial courts based on actual expenditures. The council’s approved allocation methodology is based on the three-year average expenditure data, excluding FY 2020–21 due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

As of June 30, 2024, the CIP had program savings of approximately \$35 million.⁴

¹ Available at https://languageaccess.courts.ca.gov/sites/default/files/partners/default/2024-01/CLASP_report_060514.pdf.

² *Payment Policies for Independent Contractor Interpreters* (Effective July 1, 2021), www.courts.ca.gov/documents/CIP-Payment-Policies-for-Independent-Contractor-Interpreters.pdf.

³ Judicial Council of Cal., Advisory Com. Rep., *Allocations and Reimbursements to Trial Courts: Court Interpreters Program Funding and Allocation Methodology* (Dec. 14, 2022), <https://jcc.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=F&ID=11533862&GUID=BF5043BE-FE6C-4464-B2CE-336C36D5DB40>.

⁴ The CIP is a restricted part of the Trial Court Trust Fund. Following the annual reconciliation process, any unspent funds remain in the CIP as savings and are carried over for future use as needed to address annual program deficiencies.

In July 2024, the council approved FY 2024–25 funding from the Trial Court Trust Fund (TCTF) to the trial courts, including the annual allocations from the CIP for court interpreter expenditures.⁵

At its February 21, 2025, business meeting, the council approved the Trial Court Budget Advisory Committee recommendation to utilize program savings of \$4.6 million to address the shortfall in FY 2023–24.⁶ Approval of the allocation for the \$4.6 million current-year augmentation is contingent on approval of the Legislature.

At the same meeting, the council also approved a midyear allocation of CIP fund balance from the TCTF to courts to address any anticipated CIP shortfalls for FY 2024–25 and FY 2025–26, based on available program savings. Finally, the council directed Judicial Council staff to continue to monitor CIP funding and program expenditures, provide regular updates to the Trial Court Budget Advisory Committee to report any changes, and work with the trial courts to develop a funding request for additional CIP resources beginning in FY 2026–27. (*Ibid.*)

The recommendations in this report were presented to the Judicial Branch Budget Committee on March 14, 2025, and approved for consideration by the Judicial Council.⁷

Analysis/Rationale

As described in the January 2025 council report, court interpreter expenditures exceeded the appropriation from FY 2015–16 through FY 2018–19. This was due to the expansion of court interpreter services to include civil cases, which began in the superior courts in FY 2014–15, as prioritized by Assembly Bill 1657 (Stats. 2014, ch. 721) and the creation of Evidence Code section 756.

Beginning in FY 2019–20, expenditures for the CIP were below the appropriation for several years due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting reduction in case filings, leading to \$35 million in cumulative program savings as of June 30, 2024.

In FY 2023–24, however, due to increased interpreter costs, program expenditures once again began to exceed the appropriation by approximately \$4.6 million.

The *Trial Court Interpreters Program Expenditure Report for Fiscal Year 2022–23*, as required by the Budget Act of 2022, found that contract interpreter expenditures in FY 2022–23

⁵ Judicial Council of Cal., Advisory Com. Rep., *Trial Court Budget: Allocations from the Trial Court Trust Fund and Trial Court Allocations for Fiscal Year 2024–25* (June 17, 2024), <https://jcc.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=F&ID=13077708&GUID=08C509A8-B264-4D66-AFDC-B3EC97A5D296>

⁶ Judicial Council of Cal., Advisory Com. Rep., *Trial Court Budget: Use of Court Interpreters Program Savings to Augment 2024–25 and 2025–26 Allocations for Trial Courts* (Jan. 24, 2025), <https://jcc.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=F&ID=13703531&GUID=E64FD46A-FE23-43D7-BADA-96EA524836B2>.

⁷ An update to the midyear survey results was made, which resulted in a revised amount for the current-year reallocation. This adjustment was presented to and approved by the Judicial Branch Budget Committee.

represented 26.7 percent of total expenditures, reflecting an increase from FY 2021–22, when contractor expenses were 21.7 percent of the total expenditures (see the expenditure report, table 4).⁸ Compared to FY 2021–22, expenditures for contract interpreters in FY 2022–23 increased by \$8.264 million (32.7 percent) and expenditures for court employees in FY 2022–23 increased by \$850,000 (0.9 percent). (*Ibid.*) Given the reduction included in the Budget Act of 2024, courts are identifying cost-saving measures to ensure prudent use of limited CIP funding.

In February 2025, council staff sent out a midyear survey to the 58 trial courts to obtain their anticipated additional funding requests for FY 2024–25. The courts based their funding requests and projections on expenditure information from the Phoenix Financial System (through January 31, 2025). The courts’ midyear survey responses are included in Attachment A.

A total of 43 courts requested additional funding totaling \$12.3 million, 12 courts requested no additional funding, and 3 courts estimated unspent funding of approximately \$637,000 in FY 2024–25. After reallocation of the available \$637,000, the CIP augmentation request from the TCTF program reserves is \$11.6 million based on the survey data.

The following table demonstrates the program savings balance of \$30.4 million and the midyear reallocation and augmentation plan for FY 2024–25 and FY 2025–26. Following the distribution of the FY 2024–25 midyear augmentation of \$11.6 million, the remaining program savings balance of \$18.8 million is available for the FY 2025–26 midyear augmentation.

Table 1: Midyear Reallocation and Augmentation Plan for FY 2024–25 and FY 2025–26 (Dollars in Millions)

CIP Detail	2022–23	2023–24	2024–25	2025–26
Appropriation	\$135.5	\$133.8	\$134.8	\$135.5*
Current-Year Surplus or Midyear Augmentation Amount	\$9.8	–\$4.6	–\$11.6	\$TBD
Program Savings Balance	\$35.0	\$30.4	\$18.8	\$TBD
*FY 2025–26 appropriation is an estimate based on the Governor’s Budget.				

Council staff will also conduct an additional survey before the end of FY 2024–25 to reallocate available savings to those courts with a funding shortfall based on final expenditures for the current year.

⁸ *Trial Court Interpreters Program Expenditure Report for Fiscal Year 2022–23*, https://courts.ca.gov/sites/default/files/courts/default/2024-12/lr-2024-trial-court-interpreters-program-expenditure-report_fy22-23.pdf.

Policy implications

The funding methodology of using CIP savings to address interpreter expenditure shortfalls is consistent with council policy to make courts whole using CIP savings, as available. Due to rising interpreter costs, courts will need to carefully evaluate their program expenditures, including considering cost-saving measures, in order to stay within funding allocations and maintain current levels of interpreter services.

Comments

This proposal was not circulated for public comment. However, the recommendations were considered at meetings that were open to the public, and no public comments were received.

Alternatives considered

The recommendations are consistent with current law and approved council policies. No other alternatives were considered.

Fiscal and Operational Impacts

For FY 2024–25, following council approval and approval by the Legislature, \$11.6 million of the CIP reserve fund will be distributed to courts that anticipate a shortfall. (See Attachment A, *Fiscal Year 2024–25 CIP-TCTF Midyear Reallocation and Augmentation Amounts*.) The remaining program savings balance of \$18.8 million is available for the FY 2025–26 midyear augmentation.

Courts will need to be notified of the program savings balance and budget their interpreter expenditures accordingly. Spending beyond the allocation, including any midyear increases approved by the council and the Legislature, could result in a shortfall that would need to be covered by the impacted courts' operating budgets.

Based on current projections, the program savings are expected to be depleted at the end of FY 2025–26. To address the continued anticipated growth in interpreter expenses and ensure critical services are provided to court users, Judicial Council staff are working with the trial courts to develop a funding request for additional resources beginning in FY 2026–27.

Attachments and Links

1. Attachment A: *Fiscal Year 2024–25 CIP-TCTF Midyear Reallocation and Augmentation Amounts*

Attachment A

Fiscal Year 2024-25 CIP-TCTF Midyear Reallocation and Augmentation Amounts

#	Court	FY 2024-25 CIP Allocation	FY 2023-24 \$4.6 Million Allocation to Address Shortfall	FY 2024-25 Returning Funding	FY 2024-25 Additional Funding Requested	Total CIP Allocation
		A	B	C	D	E = (A+B+C+D)
1	Alameda	5,892,193.43	233,322.68	-	299,336.39	6,424,852.50
2	Alpine	30.01	576.97	-	1,400.00	2,006.99
3	Amador	65,954.82	(114,960.59)	-	-	(49,005.77)
4	Butte	266,351.16	24,009.34	-	-	290,360.50
5	Calaveras	63,271.17	(44,922.39)	(43,271.17)	-	(24,922.39)
6	Colusa	131,109.18	71.82	-	15,000.00	146,180.99
7	Contra Costa	3,078,398.14	349,296.59	-	319,850.86	3,747,545.59
8	Del Norte	41,806.42	(32,613.83)	-	-	9,192.59
9	El Dorado	244,967.38	139.60	-	12,000.00	257,106.98
10	Fresno	2,624,048.55	184,350.71	-	340,000.00	3,148,399.27
11	Glenn	151,427.06	21,805.51	-	-	173,232.57
12	Humboldt	141,864.71	(85,709.26)	-	-	56,155.45
13	Imperial	703,475.92	189,155.97	-	143,000.00	1,035,631.90
14	Inyo	66,522.97	2,481.40	-	15,000.00	84,004.37
15	Kern	4,110,583.34	1,698,826.74	(93,802.00)	-	5,715,608.08
16	Kings	668,173.46	135,464.83	-	65,000.00	868,638.29
17	Lake	156,981.38	78,525.19	-	30,000.00	265,506.58
18	Lassen	55,369.83	8,670.87	-	15,000.00	79,040.70
19	Los Angeles	40,455,765.23	(4,029,552.01)	-	601,000.00	37,027,213.22
20	Madera	831,030.41	153,333.79	-	149,550.00	1,133,914.21
21	Marin	817,906.44	60,233.82	-	73,000.00	951,140.26
22	Mariposa	47,600.95	12,826.58	-	9,000.00	69,427.53
23	Mendocino	496,369.95	230,110.22	-	-	726,480.17
24	Merced	1,182,663.32	144,502.40	-	67,245.00	1,394,410.72
25	Modoc	3,813.54	1,619.74	-	10,000.00	15,433.28
26	Mono	70,612.25	(561.49)	-	10,000.00	80,050.76
27	Monterey	1,690,627.73	255,355.57	-	336,000.00	2,281,983.30
28	Napa	809,880.55	173,431.55	-	48,550.00	1,031,862.10
29	Nevada	90,338.19	36,131.35	-	42,926.83	169,396.37
30	Orange	10,443,675.30	(2,184,565.93)	(500,000.00)	-	7,759,109.38
31	Placer	734,356.95	499,011.80	-	125,000.00	1,358,368.75
32	Plumas	6,276.66	(8,888.83)	-	-	(2,612.17)
33	Riverside	7,212,352.58	451,475.74	-	118,000.81	7,781,829.13
34	Sacramento	5,137,381.83	376,825.16	-	50,000.00	5,564,206.99
35	San Benito	142,876.91	27,026.46	-	-	169,903.37
36	San Bernardino	6,618,874.43	(690,844.69)	-	110,707.57	6,038,737.31
37	San Diego	7,109,728.79	63,619.12	-	-	7,173,347.91
38	San Francisco	4,351,286.40	1,016,751.39	-	1,900,000.00	7,268,037.79
39	San Joaquin	2,056,883.05	275,924.15	-	449,000.00	2,781,807.20
40	San Luis Obispo	942,318.04	(61,075.88)	-	20,000.00	901,242.16
41	San Mateo	3,262,089.61	760,059.38	-	381,997.12	4,404,146.11
42	Santa Barbara	2,795,799.96	526,773.85	-	457,656.09	3,780,229.90
43	Santa Clara	6,292,705.10	846,417.84	-	2,561,111.28	9,700,234.22
44	Santa Cruz	988,850.32	98,319.88	-	150,000.00	1,237,170.21
45	Shasta	487,549.97	200,462.09	-	50,000.00	738,012.06
46	Sierra	568.71	(345.37)	-	500.00	723.34
47	Siskiyou	63,682.84	4,783.48	-	25,000.00	93,466.32
48	Solano	832,375.35	115,529.91	-	205,000.00	1,152,905.26
49	Sonoma	1,716,236.43	775,913.58	-	700,000.00	3,192,150.01

Attachment A

#	Court	FY 2024-25 CIP Allocation	FY 2023-24 \$4.6 Million Allocation to Address Shortfall	FY 2024-25 Returning Funding	FY 2024-25 Additional Funding Requested	Total CIP Allocation
50	Stanislaus	1,670,088.41	77,554.91	-	425,000.00	2,172,643.32
51	Sutter	309,864.48	4,163.57	-	50,000.00	364,028.05
52	Tehama	239,615.42	15,822.54	-	-	255,437.96
53	Trinity	71,805.70	(7,470.36)	-	-	64,335.33
54	Tulare	2,302,156.22	1,025,793.47	-	721,930.00	4,049,879.69
55	Tuolumne	67,214.47	9,638.70	-	16,600.00	93,453.17
56	Ventura	2,539,896.73	735,119.60	-	1,111,785.00	4,386,801.34
57	Yolo	774,093.18	(94,635.17)	-	-	679,458.01
58	Yuba	76,258.67	55,481.97	-	50,000.00	181,740.65
TOTAL		\$134,206,000	\$4,600,566	-\$637,073.17	\$12,282,146.95	\$150,451,639.85