



Judicial Council of California

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REPORT TO THE JUDICIAL COUNCIL

Item No.: 24-052

For business meeting on January 19, 2024

Title

Judicial Branch Technology: Allocation of Funds for AB 716 Legislative Mandate, Fiscal Year 2023–24

Agenda Item Type

Action Required

Effective Date

January 19, 2024

Rules, Forms, Standards, or Statutes Affected

None

Date of Report

December 29, 2023

Recommended by

Judicial Council Technology Committee
Hon. Kyle S. Brodie, Chair

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Executive Summary

The Budget Act of 2022 appropriated funding to upgrade the audio equipment of courtrooms in support of Assembly Bill 716, which requires courts, at a minimum, to provide a public audio stream or telephonic means with which to listen to the courtroom proceedings when the courthouse is physically closed. The Technology Committee recommends the Judicial Council allocate approximately \$25 million among trial courts for fiscal year 2023–24, as itemized in the attached summary. The recommended allocations provide funding for needed audio upgrades to courts eligible for funding that submitted requests.

Recommendation

The Technology Committee recommends, effective January 19, 2024, that the Judicial Council approve the proposed allocations as itemized in the attached *Courtroom Audio Modernization: Proposed Allocations for FY 2023–24*.

The proposed allocations for fiscal year 2023–24 are included as Attachment A of this report.

Relevant Previous Council Action

At its meeting on March 24, 2023, the council approved an allocation of \$32 million for fiscal year (FY) 2022–23 funding for courtroom audio upgrades that satisfy the statutory mandate of Assembly Bill 716.¹

Analysis/Rationale

To support the courtroom modernization program, AB 716 (Stats. 2021, ch. 526) requires courts to provide, at a minimum, a public audio stream or telephonic means by which to listen to the courtroom proceedings when the courthouse is physically closed. To achieve this, the Budget Act of 2022 appropriated \$33.2 million from the General Fund for FY 2022–23 and \$33.2 million for FY 2023–24, and a total of four positions and \$1,632,000 in ongoing funding to implement, support, and maintain remote access to courtroom proceedings as required by AB 716.² Courts that were not fully funded, or that did not request funding, for FY 2022–23 had an opportunity to submit funding requests for FY 2023–24. Seventeen courts requested funding of approximately \$25 million to upgrade the audio equipment needs of courtrooms built before the year 2000.

To determine the proposed allocation, Judicial Council staff asked courts to provide an inventory of their courtroom audio and video equipment upgrade needs. For the 49 courts that returned the survey, the results were analyzed and prioritized to fund courtrooms aged 20 years or older needing audio upgrades with a focus on civil case types. The average courtroom upgrade for audio equipment is estimated to cost \$50,000 per courtroom. Courts that began but could not complete upgrades using previously allocated Information Technology Modernization Funding could request additional funding. All courtroom audio equipment upgrades will follow the technical recommendations developed by the Information Technology Advisory Committee’s Hybrid Courtroom Workstream.

Policy implications

By allocating funding for courtroom audio infrastructure modernization directly to trial courts, the Judicial Council will improve how the public is served, continue the courtroom upgrade progress made during the pandemic, and further the collaborative relationship that has been central to advancing the judicial branch’s technology goals and expanding access to justice. Allocating money directly to individual courts for their audio upgrades that meet the key criteria described above allows courts to best serve the needs of their communities, while meeting the mandate in AB 716.

Comments

This proposal was not circulated for public comment. The recommended allocation was presented and approved by the Judicial Council Technology Committee at its December 11,

¹ See Link A.

² See Link B.

2023, open meeting. The committee then voted to approve one additional court in an action by email on December 18, 2023. On December 28, the committee voted to update the allocations to include one of the courts that applied for year 2 funding that was misidentified. No public comments were received.

Alternatives considered

The committee considered recommending allocations to upgrade video equipment in addition to audio equipment. However, because the minimum mandate of AB 716 is to provide audio solutions for remote access to proceedings and the costs to upgrade eligible courtrooms with audio alone will exhaust the current funding appropriation, the committee concluded that requests to upgrade video equipment had to be deferred.

Fiscal and Operational Impacts

All allocations are from the current Budget Act appropriation and will allow courts to provide access to courtroom proceedings.

Attachments and Links

1. Attachment A: *Courtroom Audio Modernization: Proposed Allocations for FY 2023–24*
2. Link A: Assem. Bill 716,
https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill_id=202120220AB716
3. Link B: Budget Change Proposal: Remote Access to Court Proceedings (AB 716),
https://esd.dof.ca.gov/Documents/bcp/2223/FY2223_ORG0250_BCP5003.pdf

**Courtroom Audio Modernization:
Proposed Allocations for FY 2023–24
AB 716**

Court	Locations to be Upgraded	Courtrooms to Upgrade	Distribution
Alameda	2	23	1,150,000
Contra Costa	2	20	1,000,000
Kern	8	17	612,000
Los Angeles		278	13,900,000
Monterey	4	16	625,000
Nevada	2	8	78,353
Orange		21	1,050,000
Riverside	8	44	565,650
Sacramento		27	1,350,000
San Diego		11	550,000
San Francisco		40	1,990,000
San Luis Obispo	3	3	150,000
San Mateo		2	100,000
Santa Clara		39	1,950,000
Solano	4	17	340,000
Ventura	2	5	73,940
Yuba	1	1	6,648
17 Courts	36	572	\$ 25,491,592